An **Evangelical** Tradition

Featuring

Biblical Egalitarianism and the Inerrancy of Scripture
by Roger Nicole

Egalitarians: A New Path to Liberalism? Or Integral to Evangelical DNA?
by Mimi Haddad

Assessing Hierarchist Logic: Is Egalitarianism Really on a Slippery Slope?
by David C. Cramer

...and more

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Contents

3 Editor's Reflections
Tim Krueger

4 Biblical Egalitarianism and the Inerrancy of Scripture
Roger Nicole

10 Egalitarians: A New Path to Liberalism? Or Integral to Evangelical DNA?
Mimi Haddad

19 Equating "Feminisms"
Allison Quient

25 Assessing Hierarchist Logic: Are Egalitarians Really on a Slippery Slope?
David C. Cramer

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On the Cover:

A few of the many prominent egalitarian evangelical leaders spanning the history of the evangelical movement.

A.J. Gordon (1836–1895)

Baptist preacher and egalitarian scholar. Founder of Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Roger Nicole (1915–2010)

World-renowned egalitarian theologian and proponent of biblical inerrancy. Founding member of both ETS and Christians for Biblical Equality.

William Booth (1829–1912)

Egalitarian advocate for the poor. Best known as the cofounder—along with his wife, Catherine Booth—of the Salvation Army.

Catherine Booth (1829–1890)

Preacher, egalitarian activist, and cofounder of the Salvation Army with husband William Booth. Often called the "Mother of the Salvation Army."

Theodore Weld (1803–1895)

Influential American abolitionist, author, and advocate of women's education. Husband of egalitarian activist Angelina Grimké.

Editor's Reflections

My first grade teacher was one of the few missionaries in our little corner of the Philippines who remembered what it was like fifty or sixty years ago. She told me that the rice and sugar cane fields that now stretch to the distant mountains had once been fields of tall grass, with blades sharp enough to cut skin. The narrow strip of jungle along the river was the remnant of a massive rainforest that had been home to hundreds of now-endangered tropical birds. All I'd ever seen were sparrows and the occasional kingfisher. I realized that my view of the world was severely limited without the input of previous generations.

There were a few others who had been around as long as her. All were elderly, and most were single women. At the time, I just thought of these women as old, intimidating, and unduly bothered by little boys trampling their gardens and destroying their carefully-tended orchids. But as I grew older, I began to realize that these women were the pillars of our community.

They had been there, dutifully serving God since the time my parents were children. Why did so many in the neighboring towns know and love God? Who had waged war against the spirits that held entire villages in bondage for generations? How had minority people groups all across the island learned to read and write, and why had they built churches and seminaries and come to Jesus in droves? God accomplished these things through the work of these women, who had devoted their lives to Jesus long before I was born.

Historically, evangelicals have affirmed the participation of women in all positions of service, not in spite of, but because of Scripture.

Families like mine came and went. Children grew up, moved back "home," and eventually the parents followed. Very few single men seemed to become missionaries, and those that did tended to get married and follow the same pattern as other families. Sometimes we tell women that the biblical ideal for them is to marry, bear children, and raise those children up to follow God. These are admirable goals, to be sure, but is this always the best for the global family of believers? Countless people around the world would have been born and died without knowing Jesus if women like my teacher had quietly pursued marriage, rather than traveling alone to the other side of the world. But they answered God's call, using their leadership, resourcefulness, devotion, and initiative to bring thousands to Christ.

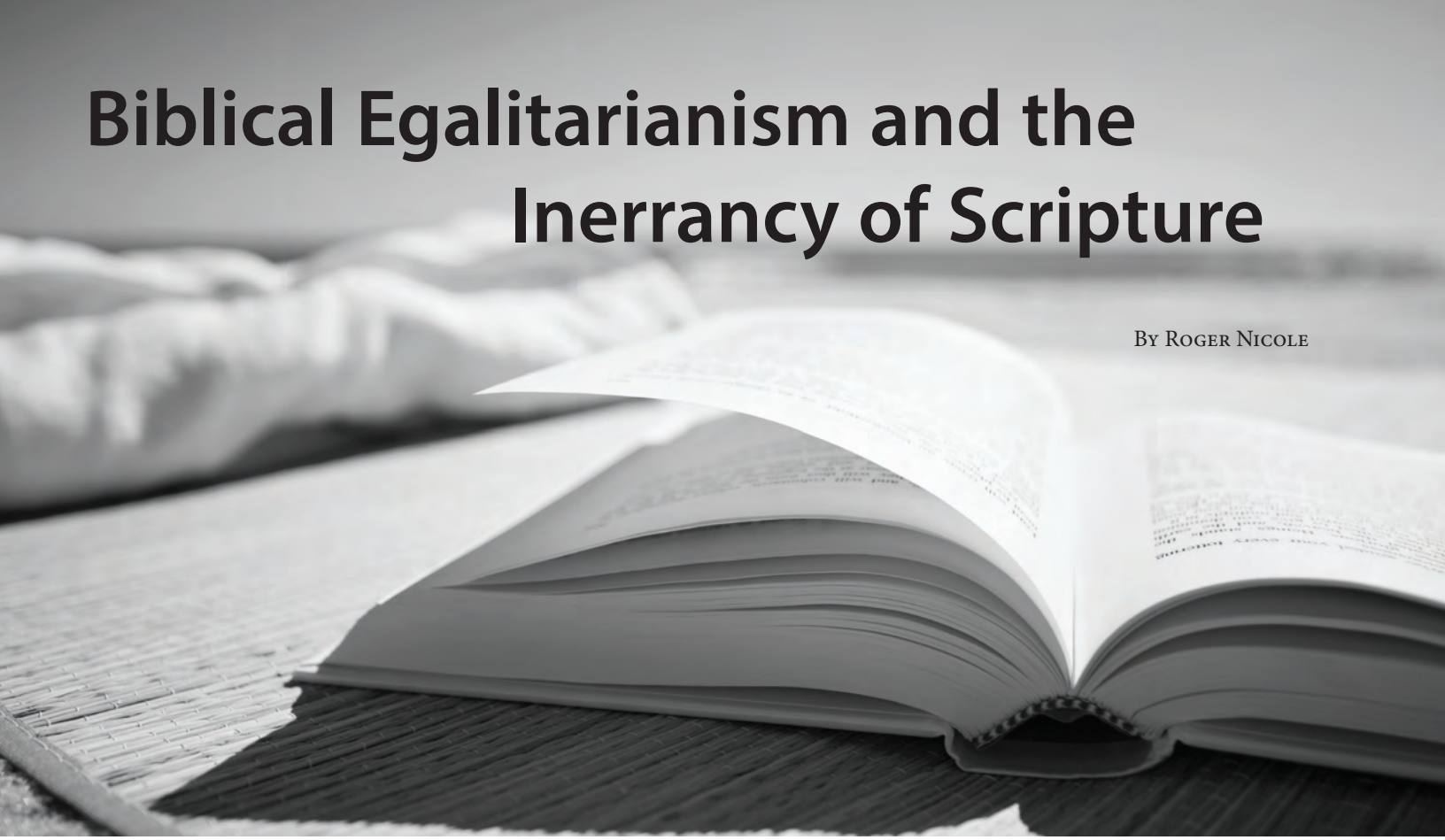
For centuries now, evangelical women have answered the call to every conceivable kind of service. The single women I knew as a child are part of this proud tradition. So are the women who fought against slavery in the United States, the women who served the poor and impoverished, who fought to end child labor, and who championed prohibition as a means to rescue society from domestic abuse. Evangelicals have long recognized the urgency of God's call to share the gospel with the world in word and in deed—and have long acknowledged that the task requires the full engagement of the gifts God gives all people, regardless of gender.

Historically, evangelicals have affirmed the participation of women in all positions of service, not in spite of, but because of Scripture. The Quakers who combatted slavery realized the connection between the perverted theological justifications for slavery and the oppression of women and girls. Others recognized that the urgency of the Great Commission required both men and women to pour out their lives for Christ. But it was not just social workers and missionaries. Evangelical scholars like A.J. Gordon stood with them in affirming an egalitarian understanding of Scripture—a tradition passed down to respected ETS leaders like Dr. Roger Nicole and Dr. Walter Kaiser, Jr. For evangelical abolitionists, social workers, missionaries, and scholars alike, the Bible taught the full equality and mutuality of men and women in all things; the Great Commission demanded the gifts of all people, regardless of gender; and the love of God compelled women and men to serve the people of the world side by side.

Just as I never knew a world of wild grasses, endless jungles, and exotic birds, we as evangelicals often lack the perspective of those who came before us. Many are now skeptical of egalitarian ideas, supposing them to be an attempt to reinterpret Scripture to accommodate secular values that place our own desires and experience above the authority of God's Word. The articles that follow explore this claim and find that quite the contrary is true. So-called "evangelical feminism" exists precisely because evangelicals held the Bible as authoritative and sought to apply it to every aspect of life. As we look back at evangelical history, we find that egalitarian values are not only consistent with traditional evangelical teachings, but are also historically inseparable from the evangelical movement as a whole.

Tim Krueger is the editor of *Mutuality* magazine and is publications coordinator at Christians for Biblical Equality. He was raised in the Philippines and studied history and Bible at Bethel University (MN). He and his wife, Naomi, live in Saint Paul, MN.

Biblical Egalitarianism and the Inerrancy of Scripture



By Roger Nicole

Since biblical egalitarianism is still viewed by many as inconsistent with biblical inerrancy, it is desirable to state in a very brief manner my position on this subject.

The matter of the place of women in the home, in society, and in the church is not an issue that can be conclusively determined by a few apparently restrictive passages that are often advanced by those who think that subordination represents God's will for women.

The starting point must be at the creation of humanity, as our Lord himself exemplified by quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in response to a question by the Pharisees (Matt. 19:4–5, Mark 10:6–7). The climactic point must be at the consummation of the redemptive plan in the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9, 21–22), as St. Paul notes in discussing marriage in Ephesians 5:22–33. These two moments are the only ones in which sin has not damaged the institution. Thus, the line that connects creation and the *eschaton* of redemption represents the relationship of males and females in its unadulterated form. What comes in between may include factors due to human "hardness of heart" (Matt. 19:8).

Equality at Creation

The first two chapters of Genesis provide the fundamental statement of God's purpose in the creation of humanity. Both man and woman were created in God's image and likeness (1:26– 27, 5:1–2), called human (Gen. 1:26, 5:2), were blessed alike (1:28, 5:2), jointly were given rule over the animal realm (1:26, 28), and were entrusted with the propagation of the species (1:28). Both sexes are here placed on precisely the same footing.

In Genesis 2, we have fuller details about the chronology in the creation of humans. Adam was created first (2:7), presumably with sexual organs that were provided in anticipation of the appearance of Eve. God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden and made an appeal to his mental capacity in distinguishing and naming the species of animals (2:19–20). This exercise would show animals in pairs, while he, Adam, was solitary (2:20). God responded to Adam's yearning by the supernatural creation of Eve (2:18, 21–22), and Adam responded to this divine provision by an enthusiastic cry of joy (2:23). The word "suitable" (2:18) emphasizes equality, for it means "face to face." At this point, the book of Genesis provides the fundamental principle of marriage, which is stated by the Creator (Matt. 19:4) and to which both Jesus (Matt. 19:5) and Paul (Eph. 5:31) appeal:

> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh (Gen. 2:24).

This passage constitutes the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman as exclusive and permanent as long as both shall live. Only death and adultery can dissolve this relationship (Matt. 5:31–32, 19:3–9; 1 Cor. 6:16).

God has placed marriage as the authentic means of the propagation of humanity and provision for the care of the young under the responsibility of a father and a mother, in the great majority of cases.

There is no mention of subordination until the end of Genesis 3:16, where God outlines the woman's punishment for her disobedience: "He [your husband] will rule over you."

In that context, only relations within the home are in view, not those in society or the church. This passage is not a commandment, but a prophecy that has been fulfilled extensively over the centuries in all the earth. Whatever we may do to alleviate God's curse is legitimate in the matter of subordination, no less than in providing some relief from the pains of the delivery of children (3:16) and the sweat in cultivating the ground and earning a living (3:17–19).

The seriousness of any tampering with the institution of marriage is demonstrated when polygamy is seen first in the home of a veritable scoundrel, Lamech, descendant of Cain (Gen. 4:19–24), while monogamy is reasserted on Noah's ark (Gen. 7:1–2, 1 Pet. 3:20). While Genesis 6:1–4 remains rather mysterious, it would appear that the terrifying human wickedness that precipitated the flood (Gen. 6:5, 7, 11–13) was at least in part due to certain wrong marriages (Gen. 3:2, 4). In this way, Satan himself bears witness to the centrality of marriage by directing his attack on the center rather than the periphery of human life.

The Treatment of Women in Scripture

The oppression of women as "the weaker sex" has been over the ages a notable feature of human history, thus fulfilling and amplifying the divine prophecy of Genesis 3:16. In special revelation, however, God has shown by contrast a remarkable care and protection of women. God rebuked Abraham and Isaac for their stratagem to protect their own lives by endangering their wives (Gen. 12:10–20, 20:1–18, 26:1–11). The first theophany on record was granted to Hagar, a humble slave who had been wronged (Gen. 16:7–16). God showed concern for Leah the unloved (Gen. 29:31–35); for Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah, the barren (Gen. 25:21, 30:22; 1 Sam. 1:11); for Tamar the victimized (Gen. 38); for Rahab the believing prostitute (Josh. 6:22–23); and for Ruth the foreigner (Ruth 4:14). The two main cases of resurrection in the Old Testament were occasioned by the plight of mothers (1 Kings 17:22–23, 2 Kings 4:36). A third case (2 Kings 13:21) appears to be a desultory event.

God's concern for women is potently expressed in the Mosaic legislation. In the Decalogue, Sabbath rest is provided and enjoined for females as well as for males; the honor due to one's mother is the same as that due to one's father; the murder of a woman is forbidden as severely as that of a man, because both are created in the image of God (Gen. 9:5–6); adultery, that sin that destroys the marital union, is forbidden to males as well as to females, as Jesus has shown in his interpretation (Matt. 5:32, 19:9); and the most serious covetousness that is forbidden is that of another man's wife. Thus, five of the Ten Commandments are specifically related to women, and all of them are enjoined to both sexes.

God's approach to the family is made manifest by at least fifty-six passages in the Old Testament wherein mothers and fathers are juxtaposed, followed by twenty-six such passages in the New Testament with the same feature. In Proverbs, father and mother appear twelve times in parallel passages. Twenty-eight times the Old Testament provides the mother's name for significant persons. One also finds numerous expressions such as "his mother's law" (Prov. 1:8, 6:20), "the mother's house" (Gen. 24:28; Ruth 1:8; Song 3:4, 8:2), and "his mother got him a wife" (Gen. 21:21).

The solemnity of the burial of women also reflects their importance in early Israel; see the burials of Sarah (Gen. 23), the nurse Deborah (Gen. 35:8), Rebekah (Gen. 49:31), Leah (Gen. 49:31), and Rachel (Gen. 35:19).

Additionally, God's mercy is manifested in a special way in legislation regarding widows (Exod. 22:22; Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 24; 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19). The rights of a woman even in slavery must be protected (Exod. 21:7–11, 22–24, 22:16, 22; Lev. 19:20–22, 29).

Three offices in the Old Testament were so important as to warrant a special anointing from God: kingship, priesthood, and prophecy (1 Kings 19:15–16, Lev. 8:30). The position of queen is often acknowledged in other nations than Israel and particularly in the case of Esther. Athaliah "ruled the land" of Judah (2 Kings 10:3, 2 Chron. 22:12) between Ahaziah and Joash, but she was an interloper on the throne of David and is not actually called "queen" in Scripture. Clearly, the wife of a king exercised authority over the king's servants, male and female. In the home, the slaves, male and female, were subordinate to the mistress. In the *eschaton,* women and men share kingly authority (Exod. 19:6, Rom. 5:17, 1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 20:4, 6).

While the Aaronic priesthood was strictly limited to male descendants of Aaron, in the New Testament women also are priests, as stated in 1 Peter 2:5, 9 and Revelation 20:6, and as anticipated in Exodus 19:6 and Isaiah 61:6.

Miriam the prophetess, sister of Moses, wrote a song recorded in Scripture (Exod. 15:21). She was followed by Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Hulda (2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chron. 34:22), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36), all of whom also were called prophetesses, while Noadiah (Neh. 6:14) and Jezebel (Rev. 2:20) wrongly claimed that same title. The climax of the Old Testament on this issue is surely the great prophecy of Joel 2:28–29: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons *and your daughters* will prophesy . . . on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days." The repeated emphasis on "both men and women" reflects the divine breadth of spiritual blessing.

Not only this, but the most sacred function ever to be performed by a human being, to be the agent through whom the *Logos* entered into the human race, was entrusted to a woman, Mary the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:42, Gal. 4:4). Perhaps 1 Timothy 2:15 is a reference to this fact.

In the course of history, the Jewish nation was far from reflecting God's gracious concern for women. Because of the existence of the Old Testament Scriptures, the condition of women was somewhat better in Judaism than in surrounding cultures. Yet, there were lapses even with Abraham and Isaac, as well as more serious failures by Laban and Lot (Gen. 19:8), Judah (Gen. 38), and others, culminating in the atrocity of Judges 19. Polygamy, particularly among the rich and powerful, reached the scandalous excess of Solomon's 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Nevertheless, the prophets protested vehemently about the oppression of the weak, using the word "daughter" nearly 150 times to describe the plight and destiny of the Jewish people.

In the period between Malachi and the New Testament, we observe some very chauvinistic elements in Ecclesiasticus (25–26,

42). Seven chapters (44–50) are devoted to praising twenty-four men, without mention of any woman, whereas Hebrews 11, in one chapter, names three women, and speaks of Moses' "parents," along with the faith of "women who received back their dead through resurrection" (Heb. 11:35). Jewish leaders often averred that it is not worthwhile to teach women and that, sometimes, one should avoid talking to them.

Jesus' Treatment of Women

By contrast, the attitude of Jesus was revolutionary. In the Lukan story of the nativity, Elizabeth and Mary outshine Zechariah and Joseph, and Anna the prophetess matches Simeon. Jesus was willing to give private instruction to the Samaritan woman (John 4) and to Mary, sister of Lazarus (Luke 10:39, 42). He accepted the companionship and even the support of women (Luke 8:2–3). He entertained a special friendship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (John 11:5). He validated the homage and repentance of a sinful woman (Luke 7:36–50), as well as the similar devotion of Mary (Matt. 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, John 12:3–8). Four parables center on the experience and life of women: the yeast (Matt. 13:33, Luke 13:21), the lost coin (Luke 15:8–10), the importunate widow (Luke 18:1–8), and the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–13). Jesus performed healing on women (Matt. 8:14–15, 9:22; Luke 13:11–16; Mark 7:24–30), and the three resurrections that he performed were for the benefit of women (Matt. 9:23–25, Luke 7:12–15, John 11:43–44). After his own resurrection, Jesus appeared first to the women (Matt. 28:9) and specifically to Mary Magdalene alone (John 20:10–20). He commissioned women to be apostles to the apostles (Matt. 28:7, 10; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:9, 23; John 20:17).

In the Old Testament, a woman's relation to the covenant was through a father, a husband, or perhaps a brother or a son; in the New Testament, it is direct: grace, not race or gender, is what counts.

In the first chapter of the book of Acts, Mary the mother of Jesus and the women are listed among those who joined in prayer with the eleven apostles in the upper room (Acts 1:14). In chapter 2, we have the fundamental account of Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, initiating the Spirit's new relationship to God's people made possible by Christ's ascension (John 16:7, Acts 1:3–4). A universal reference is anticipated by the use of many human languages rather than just the Hebrew tongue (Acts 1:4–12). This event indicated also a new economy for women: the first Scripture that Peter quoted in his inspired address was the great prophecy of Joel 2:28–32, emphasizing that "sons *and daughters*" will prophesy. Peter actually adds to the text a second "they will prophesy" (Acts 2:18) to emphasize the participation by women in the gift of prophecy.

Luke concludes this narrative by saying that those who accepted the message were baptized and that about 3,000 *souls* were added to their number (Acts 2:41). Compare this with Acts 4:3 that lists "5,000 *men*," or again Matthew 14:21 that mentions "5,000 men, besides women and children." In Acts 5:14, Luke specifies, "men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number." We are not surprised, therefore, to find in Acts 8:12 that "they were baptized, both men and women," and in Acts 16:15, "[Lydia] . . . was baptized."

In the Old Testament, circumcision as the sign of the covenant was anatomically perforce limited to males. In the New Testament, as baptism, the sign of the covenant is available to women as well. In the Old Testament, a woman's relation to the covenant was through a father, a husband, or perhaps a brother or a son; in the New Testament, it is direct: grace, not race or gender, is what counts. St. Paul expresses this in the triumphant cry, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Salvation is individually applied and received.

Women in Christian Service

In terms of Christian service, St. Paul lists a number of activities that are particularly fitting for elder widows. In 1 Corinthians 11:5, he indicates that a woman may pray or prophesy in the church with her head covered. In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, he discusses various gifts of the Spirit "for the common good," without specifying whether men and/or women are recipients. He emphasizes the gift of prophecy as having a greater value for the church than the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 14:1–25), saying specifically, "One who speaks in tongues edifies oneself, one who prophesies edifies the church" (1 Cor. 14:14). Philip the evangelist had "four unmarried daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21:9). Whether this was a private activity or one performed in the church meetings is not specified, but it is mentioned together with the ministry of Agabus, who did speak in public (Acts 21:10–12, cf. Acts 11:28). It is a precarious position to assert that prophecy by a woman was deemed illegitimate in the early church. Whatever 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12 forbid, it cannot be the exercise of a woman's gift of prophecy.

It is very instructive to consider what we may know about the women who are mentioned in connection with St. Paul's ministry. There are eighty-nine individuals listed, some of them by name, in Acts and St. Paul's thirteen epistles, as his companions. Out of these eighty-nine, twenty are women! In Romans 16:1–15, there is a mention of Phoebe, and salutation to twenty-eight persons, not counting mentions of church, household, brothers, and saints with others. Out of twenty-eight individuals, eight are assuredly women: Prisca, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother (who was also a mother to Paul), Nereus' sister, and Julia. The name of Junia must be added to these. Furthermore, some women must be assumed to be included in "the church that meets in Prisca and Aquila's house" (v. 5), the "household of Aristobulus" (v. 10), of Narcissus (v. 11), and "all the saints with Nereus and Olympus" (v. 15). The names of Patroba[s], Herma[s] and Olympa[s], with their accusative form, *–an,* could possibly be those of women, although being masculine is not ruled out. We know nothing whatsoever about these except that St. Paul greeted them. Apart from those three, there are sixteen masculine names, and, of these, only Urbanus is identified as a coworker of Paul.

In contrast to this, out of ten women referred to in this chapter, seven are described as participating in ministry. Phoebe is called a "deacon" (note the masculine form related to an office rather than the gender of the person who holds it) of the church in Cenchreae, "who

has been a benefactor (from *proistemi,* "to rule, to help") of many people," including St. Paul (vv. 1–2). Prisca, to whom Luke refers as Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26), is named ahead of her husband Aquila. They undertook to explain God's way more accurately to Apollos, an adult man (Acts 18:26), and are called here St. Paul's "coworkers in Christ Jesus," a term used additionally only of Urbanus (v. 9) and Timothy (v. 21) in Romans 16.

Junia's name is listed with that of Andronicus, presumably her husband (v. 7), and they are called St. Paul's fellow Jews who came to faith before him. They are characterized as "outstanding among the apostles," which led Chrysostom to exclaim: "How great is the devotion of this woman, that she would be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle."[1] This appeared so incredible to Aegidius de Columna (1245?–1316) that, by a remarkable sex-change operation, he posited that the name should be a masculine Junias rather than feminine, as had been understood for more than a thousand years. Unfortunately for Aegidius, there is no evidence elsewhere for this name, while Lampe records more than 250 examples of Junia, mostly in Latin, as noted by J. D. G. Dunn in his commentary on Romans.[2] The feminine has been restored in most recent learned commentaries on Romans, including those by Lagrange, Bruce, Cranfield, Fitzmyer, Dunn, Moo, and Schreiner.

Mary (v. 6), Tryphena and Tryphosa, and Persis (v. 12) are described as "women who worked hard" or "very hard" in the Lord. This is the language used by Jesus for Christian workers (John 4:38), by St. Paul for his own apostolic ministry (Gal. 4:11, Phil. 2:16, Col. 1:29), and for that of his coworkers (1 Cor. 16:16, 1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim. 4:10, 5:17).

Surely St. Paul would not, in 1 Timothy 2:8–15, condemn on the basis of Genesis 1–3 what he had so freely commended in Romans 16. Some claim that the solution is to posit that 1 Timothy is not authentically written by Paul, a desperate expedient that is wholly unacceptable to evangelicals and that would raise serious questions about Timothy's place in the canon and even as to its inspiration.

The alternative appears to be that we are not at liberty to imagine that St. Paul condemned in Timothy what he had sanctioned in Romans. Then, in interpreting Timothy, our exegesis of St. Paul's prohibition would have to remain at all times conscious of what he has permitted. The unity of the divinely inspired Word of God demands no less and permits no less.

The Roles of Prophet, Priest, and King

What confirms this view is that the total course of Scripture, and of God's purpose for men and women, is oriented in a way that is impressively gracious toward women. This is manifested in that in the New Testament, and supremely in the *eschaton,* sexual differentiation vanishes, and women have access to the three main human functions marked by God with a special unction. Here the New Testament reasserts what was only anticipated in the Old Testament:

1. They will be prophets, as articulated at Pentecost:

> Joel 2:28–29, "I will pour my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy . . . On my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."
>
> (cf. Acts 2:17–18)

2. They will be priests, a function that was restricted to the male descendants of Aaron in the Old Testament:

> 1 Peter 2:4–5, 9, "As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood . . ." (cf. Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; Rev. 1:6, 5:10, 20:6).

The ultimate priesthood is coextensive with the divine election.

3. They will be kings:

> Exodus 19:6, "You will be for me a *kingdom* of priests"
>
> 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a chosen people, a *royal* priesthood"
>
> Revelation 1:6, "He has made us to be a *kingdom* and priests"
>
> Revelation 5:10, "You have made them to be a *kingdom* and priests to serve our God and they will *reign* over the earth"
>
> Revelation 20:6, "They will be priests of God and of Christ and will *reign* with him"

Ultimately, the whole body of the redeemed will be assimilated to the glorious Bride of Christ as indicated in Ephesians 5:27 and Revelation 19:7–8, 21:9–10. This will not be a demotion to a subordinate sex; it will be the supreme promotion for God's people, women and men, to a union with Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 7, where St. Paul discusses marriage in its relationship to the Christian outlook, the reciprocity of husband and wife is spelled out in a way that is in sharp contrast to the Greek as well as the Judaic custom:

> 7:2 each man . . . each woman
>
> 7:3 husband . . . wife
>
> 7:4 wife's body . . . husband's body
>
> 7:5 mutual consent
>
> 7:10 wife must not separate . . . 7:11 husband must not divorce
>
> 7:12 wife . . . 7:13 husband
>
> 7:14 unbelieving husband . . . unbelieving wife
>
> 7:15 man or woman
>
> 7:16 wife . . . husband
>
> 7:28 you marry . . . a virgin married
>
> 7:33 please his wife . . . 7:34 please her husband
>
> (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11–12)

Major Arguments by Heirarchicalists

Argument	Response
1. Subordination of women is taught in Genesis 1 and 2.	1. This is flatly denied. The first time subordination is used is Genesis 3:16.
2. In Genesis 3:16, God commanded subordination.	2. This was not a commandment at all, but a prophecy that surely came to pass. Any alleviation of the curse of sin may be sought.
3. Equality of essence is quite compatible with subordination. It is true in the Trinity when the Son is equal to the Father but subordinate to Him.	3. We need to distinguish subordination in function from subordination in essence. Subordination in function is occasional and transitory. Egalitarians have no difficulty in recognizing such in the relationship of CEO to employee, parent to child, colonel to sergeant, etc. Hierarchicalists actually permit this to be reversed, as in the case of a colonel who is the wife of a sergeant. All of these are equal in essence: the human essence. To assert a subordination of essence in the Trinity, however, is a most dangerous move in the direction of Arianism. This is precisely what the word *homoousios* (of the same essence) was intended to deny. Passages like John 14:28, 10:18, etc., relate to the state of humiliation in the incarnation of the *Logos.* Subordination in essence violates John 1:1, 10:29, etc. No subordination, any more than anteriority, is implied in the names Father and Son in the Trinity (see Kevin Giles, *Trinity and Subordinationism,* InterVarsity Press, 2002).
4. Jesus chose twelve male disciples. Perhaps the seventy-two disciples were also all men (Luke 10:1).	4. And so no women betrayed him, denied him, or partook of dispute about who was the greatest (Luke 9:46)! Jesus included women among those who were following him (Luke 8:2–3). Perhaps the seventy-two disciples were not all men (Luke 24:28). The choice of the twelve may have been made in recognition of who was likely to get a hearing at that point in time and place.
5. God endorsed and blessed a patriarchal society in the Old Testament and through much of the Christian era.	5. God projected his revelation against a hierarchical background and included many elements that were to help women who were victimized. Some people imagine that God blessed the Crusades, which were a major blunder of the Christian church.
6. Paul enjoins silence to women in the church (1 Cor. 14:34).	6. Since he permits women to pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11:5, 13), it is clear that this is not a blanket prohibition against making any sound. He forbids women to disturb the worship by questions that could be answered at home. In Corinth, apparently some women were the culprits, but men and children are not free either to disturb the worship. In 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul does not say one word to suggest that women should not speak in tongues in the church.
7. In 1 Timothy 2:8–15, Paul expressly forbids women to teach or take authority over a man. His argument is based on the order of creation and on the fact that Eve permitted herself to be deceived by Satan.	7. This passage contains a significant number of exegetical difficulties. Surely, the propriety of teaching is not a function of age. Jesus taught many people who were born before him, including Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:49, John 2:4). If gullibility is a disabling factor against teaching, it is incomprehensible that women could teach other women (Tit. 2:3) or children (Prov. 1:3, 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:5). These, rather than adult males, are the ones who could most easily be led astray by gullible teachers. Because of the many difficulties in this whole passage, I follow the principle "Do not doubt in darkness what you have seen in the light."

This is revolutionary! Thus, we see that only the glorious marriage of unsullied Adam and Eve could be an appropriate antetype to the supreme prototype of the union of the Redeemer, God Incarnate, with his elect people:

> "A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (See Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5, Eph. 5:31).
>
> "This is a profound mystery, yet I am talking of Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32).

In the fullest sense, St. Paul was right: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). This is biblical egalitarianism.

Hermeneutical Approach

In an article entitled "Hermeneutics and the Gender Issue,"[3] I show that hermeneutics has first of all to recognize the difference between the *literal* and *metaphorical.* Clearly, there are some things in Scripture that are metaphorical, as when God says, "I will come down." God teaches us in terms of the kind of world in which we live, and so we need to understand the representation that is made, without necessarily going to a literal application that God has eyes and ears and feet that can step down, and so on.

Then, we must distinguish between what is *prescriptive* and what is *descriptive.* We may have a presentation in the Bible that is not meant to be an exemplary situation that we ought to follow, but is instead a presentation of things as they are or as they were. A sound hermeneutic is able to distinguish between what merely happened and what God actually requires of us.

Even in the prescriptive, we need to distinguish between what is *general* or *universal* and what is *personal* or *limited to a particular group.* A good example of this is when Jesus told the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. This is not a permanent instruction for all blind people, but it is for one particular case. Similarly, the commandment of God to annihilate the Canaanite nations was a commandment for one group of people for one time, and it is not a permanent commandment or lasting policy for the establishment of international law.

A distinction must also be made between what is *central* in the Christian faith and what is *peripheral.* In this respect, I should think that God's gifts to the church through women are more central than constant debates over whether they may talk in church or teach and oversee males.

We must also discern between elements of conduct that are *essential* and *perennial* and those that are *occasional, situational,* and *provisional.* The latter should certainly be true of the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament that became obsolete in the New Testament (sacrifices, circumcision, distinctions between foods, etc.). While it is extreme to make a sweeping assertion that 1 Timothy 2:8–15 is related merely to the cultural situation in Ephesus, a good case can be made that there were certain difficulties in Ephesus, such as its worship of Artemis, which called for correction of the wrongful tendency toward domination by the Ephesian women.[4]

Finally, we must maintain the emphasis on *canonical* interpretation, where a position is repeatedly presented in varied parts of Scripture, and *fragmentary* interpretation, where a passage is lifted out of its biblical context and thought to teach something that is out of harmony with other biblical teaching. A good example would be to absolutize 1 Corinthians 14:34 when 1 Corinthians 11:5 expressly teaches that a woman may pray or prophesy in the church with covering on her head.

These hermeneutical principles lead me to believe that my view of egalitarianism is biblical. Proper humility demands of me that I not be too hasty in condemning people who do not see it that way. Therefore, I can get along rather well with people who do not share in that position. But, at the same time, I think I can help them to make provision in their own frame of reference for a much more gracious and biblical approach to women, something which many people have achieved even better than I have.

Conclusion

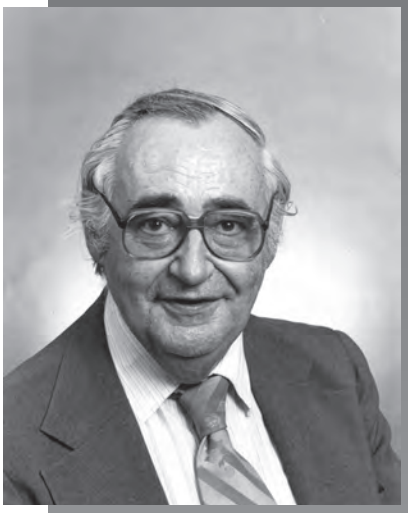
Inasmuch as the view outlined here has not achieved an almost universal recognition among evangelicals, as the inappropriateness of slavery has achieved since the nineteenth century, it is paramount that all evangelicals should strive to provide, particularly in the church, opportunities for our sisters to exercise the gifts of the Spirit that they have received, even where it is not thought permissible by Scripture for them to exercise the office of pastor or teacher. Thus, the church would not lose the benefits that God's gifts were intended to provide, nor would our sisters be compelled to hide their light under a bowl (Matt. 5:15).

Notes

1. John Chrysostom in *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers I*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksen, 1994), vol. 11, 555.
2. James G. Dunn, *Romans* (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books, 1998).
3. Roger Nicole, "Hermeneutics and the Gender Issue," in *Discovering Biblical Equality,* eds. R. W. Pierce and R. M. Groothuis (Westmont, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005), 355–63.
4. See Linda Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," in *Discovering Biblical Equality,* 203–23.

"Biblical Egalitarianism and the Inerrancy of Scripture" was originally published in *Priscilla Papers*, volume 20, number 2 (Spring 2006).

The late Roger Nicole taught theology at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (1945–1986) and Reformed Theological Seminary (1989–2000). His publications include *Standing Faith* (2002). He was a founding member and former president of ETS, and a founding member of Christians for Biblical Equality. A biography of Dr. Nicole, entitled *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Life and Legacy of Roger Nicole,* by Dr. David Bailey, was published in 2006.



Roger Nicole (1915–2010)
Distinguished theologian and founder of the Evangelical Theological Society

Catherine Booth (1829–1890)
Co-founder of the Salvation Army

A.J. Gordon (1836–1895)
Baptist preacher and scholar. Founder of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Egalitarians

A New Path to Liberalism? Or Integral to Evangelical DNA?

By Mimi Haddad

"*Nescire autem quid ante quam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerim*."
"To be ignorant of what occurred before you, is to remain always a child."
Cicero (106-43 B.C.)

I selected the title, "Egalitarians: A New Path to Liberalism? Or Integral to Evangelicals DNA?" in order to examine the claim often made that Christians who advance the shared leadership, authority, and ministry of men and women in the church and home do so only by circumventing the authority of Scripture. Because of this claim, egalitarians are accused of theological liberalism.

I was inspired to write this paper after a member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) confessed candidly to me that though he was trained in a tradition that viewed egalitarian theology as pernicious, through a series of circumstances including a positive encounter with an egalitarian leader, he determined to study egalitarian thought more thoroughly. Cicero reminds us that a fair hearing of any position will always include a full grasp of the historical context. This paper will briefly consider historical material often overlooked in assessing the theological orthodoxy of egalitarians.

Defining Terms

Egalitarianism: Egalitarians are Christians who affirm that when Scripture is interpreted consistently, it teaches the fundamental equality of men and women, both in being and service, so that gender is not a criterion by which to exclude women from public service in church, society, or the home. As early as the late 17th century, Christians began publishing interpretations of Scripture that supported women's public preaching and teaching, so that by 1930, more than fifty scriptural treatises were circulated, from many different branches of the evangelical church.[1] Egalitarians today share the same exegetical methods of these early egalitarians, concluding that women may serve in any position, including senior pastor; elder; deacon; board member; professor of any field; or president of a Christian college, seminary denomination, or country. The criteria for service are holiness, giftedness, and calling—not gender.

Evangelicalism: Defining evangelicalism is a difficult endeavor to be sure. Yet, the following examples offer significant theological qualifications in defining the theological identity of evangelicals:

- The Nicene Creed[2]
- The ETS Doctrinal Basis (written in 1949—a very interesting year to take note of for the purposes of this discussion).[3]
- Bebbington's quadrilateral, which offers a definition of evangelicalism by two noted historians, Mark Noll and David Bebbington. In an effort to capture the depth and scope of evangelical history, Bebbington and Noll assessed the earliest usage of the term "evangelical" as it embodied both theological ideals and also evangelical praxis.[4]

Noll and Bebbington not only considered what evangelicals affirmed theologically. They also considered how evangelicals lived out their theological ideals in daily life—in their churches, denominations, and organizations. Their analysis of the evangelical movement gave way to Bebbington's quadrilateral: four theological ideals that capture the DNA or fundamental theological focus of evangelicals which, (to quote Noll) "drove its adherents in their lives as Christians."[5] These include:

- *Conversionism*: The belief that sin has corrupted every life. Thus everyone needs redemption from sin.
- *Activism*: The expression of the Gospel through effort. Activism generally takes two forms—evangelism and social action, two elements that work together symbiotically.
- *Biblicism*: A particular regard for the Bible. . . . that all spiritual truth is to be found on its pages.
- *Crucicentrism*: A stress on Christ's sacrifice on the cross.[6]

These four qualities comprise the focus of evangelical theology and enterprise, which fueled the modern missionary movement, and also led to sweeping social reform. Evangelical missionaries had a difficult time separating the good news of the gospel from efforts to make life better for the poor and the abused. Evangelicals challenged injustice because they were biblicists of the highest order, and the teachings of Jesus, such as "treat your neighbor as you would want to be treated" drove their social reform. They believed that Scripture was supremely authoritative, and a consistent reading of the Bible and living out its teachings brought moral, theological, and social wholeness to communities influenced by evangelicals, especially the evangelical revivals. It was to Scripture that evangelicals turned when resolving the challenges of each age, such as suffrage, slavery, and whether women preach and teach or hold positions of authority beside men.

Bebbington's quadrilateral offers us, I believe, the most complete definition of an evangelical, particularly in understanding why many evangelicals gave women and also slaves positions of leadership, a freedom that was unknown to them in the culture in which they lived.

Liberalism: Finally, let us consider liberalism. The term "liberal" is used to suggest that egalitarians place their so-called feminist ideals—their demand for social equality with men in any sphere—ahead of a commitment to the authority of Scripture. Rather than allowing Scripture to shape culture, egalitarians are accused of giving secular culture greater authority than the Bible when the two are at odds. The charge of "liberal" typically means that the teachings of Scripture have been ignored in the wake of self-interest and cultural pressure. The following are some examples of how some understand egalitarianism through the lens of liberalism:

- Sarah Sumner, formerly a professor of theology and ministry at the Graduate School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University, in the June 2008 issue of *Christianity Today*, said the following: " . . . I believe that many egalitarians tended to appeal more to political liberal thought than to Scripture."[7]
- Wayne Grudem, in his book *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism*, in explaining why he writes this book, suggests that he has a deep concern "about the widespread undermining of the authority of Scripture in the arguments that are frequently used to support evangelical feminism."[8]
- A headline from the August 25, 2008 *Dallas Morning News* reads: "Woman's turn in pulpit at Irving Bible Church brings buzz, beefs."[9] After eighteen months of study, an all-male board of elders decided to give a woman access to the pulpit, for the first time in its forty years history, a decision that raised cries of concern among many Baptists. Chief among these was that of the Rev. Tom Nelson of Denton Bible Church. Nelson believed that his friends in Irving were on "dangerous" ground. "If the Bible is not true and authoritative on the roles of men and women, then maybe the Bible will not be finally true on premarital sex, the homosexual issue, adultery or any other moral issue," he said. "I believe this issue is the carrier of a virus by which liberalism will enter the evangelical church."

Is there a necessary connection between egalitarianism and liberalism, as Sumner, Grudem, and Nelson suggest? To answer this question, consider the observations made by three evangelical women, in their eighties. All three were raised in evangelical homes. All three attended evangelical churches from childhood, and all were members of Baptist General Conference churches. All three attended Wheaton College and each remembers hearing the female evangelist team Stockton and Gould preach in evangelical churches and institutions throughout the greater Chicago area. Alvera Mickelsen, one of these women, said with a chuckle, "You, know, it wasn't until 1950 that women preachers were considered liberal. Before that, no one thought twice about women preaching."

Alvera's Hypothesis

If Alvera's observation is correct, we would expect to see fewer women preaching and teaching in conservative Christian institutions after 1950, which indeed we do. Contrary to the claim that today's egalitarians capitulate to secular feminist ideology, history offers another perspective. There are numerous examples of Christians whose egalitarian views are the result of a consistent reading of Scripture, particularly with the rise of the modern missionary movement.

Even as early as the 1660s, a focus on the egalitarian teachings and practices of the New Testament church became popular among

evangelicals, as seen in the writings and teachings of Margaret Fell Fox, an English Quaker and leading evangelical.[10] What started with Fell Fox gained momentum in what is called the "Golden Era of Missions," a movement in which new centers of Christianity flourished in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, leading to an unprecedented shift of Christian faith in the Global South.[11] This movement was led by evangelical women, who outnumbered men two to one. What is more, these women became founders and often the sole financial providers of missionary and humanitarian organizations, holding all positions of service and leadership. Significantly, the success of women and slaves serving in the most challenging circumstances globally gave the church ample reason to examine gender and ethnic bias biblically.[12] World-renowned scholars joined this conversation, including Dr. Adoniram Judson Gordon (1836–95), perhaps the most prominent evangelical pastor of his day. For Gordon, Pentecost was the "Magna Charta of the Christian church," in which those who were considered inferior by birth inherited a new spiritual status through the power of the Holy Spirit. God's gifting no longer rests on a "favored few, but upon the many, without regard to race, or age, or sex."[13] As with Pentecost, so today, all people regardless of class, ethnicity, or gender are one in Christ, with equal (ontological) value and therefore equal (teleological) spheres of service.

Gordon was joined by leading evangelicals like Catherine Booth, cofounder of the Salvation Army. Like Gordon, Catherine Booth also engaged the whole of Scripture, insisting that the biblical texts be understood in their historic and cultural context. She wrote:

> If commentators had dealt with the Bible on other subjects as they have dealt with it on this [gender], taking isolated passages, separated from their explanatory connections, and insisting on the literal interpretation of the words . . . [oh] what errors and contractions would have been forced upon the Church, and what terrible results would have accrued to the world. [14]

But, perhaps the most systematic biblical assessment of gender was put forward by Katharine Bushnell (1856–1946), the youngest graduate of Chicago Women's Medical College. After completing her medical training, Bushnell worked briefly as a medical missionary in China, but returned home to eventually lead the "Social Purity Department" with the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)—an organization that typifies the four theological priorities of Bebbington's quadrilateral. Within the WCTU, Bushnell served as an evangelist and activist of the highest order,[15] saving girls from forced prostitution in the US and India. After two decades of rescuing girls from brothels, Bushnell believed that God was asking her to turn her attention from addressing the symptoms—trafficking—in order to discern and dismantle the roots of gender-based abuse. This was the beginning of her theological reflection, which constitutes the pinnacle of her reforming work.

Bushnell observed that most religious traditions, including Christianity, create a gender-caste system that declares females innately depraved. It is not their character, giftedness, education, or devotion to God that renders them corrupt. It is their materiality, their gender—which is fixed and unchangeable. In such a system, virtue is believed to be the result of gender, through which the character of females is deemed incorrigible, irredeemable, and therefore perpetually in need of their moral superiors—males. The Bible, the Koran, and the teachings of Hinduism have been consistently interpreted to make this case. For Bushnell, the devaluation of females was the root idea that subjugated females and also drove the sex industry.

Bushnell and her colleagues perceived that religion provides the most exalted, convincing, and irreproachable devaluation of individuals, whereby their *subjugation* is justified. Because religious ideas have consequences, Bushnell believed any effort to dismantle the sex industry, though necessary, would inevitably fail without addressing the spiritual or philosophical presuppositions that fueled the industry. Of course, there is a great irony here: while religious commentators portray women as morally and intellectually feeble, God uses those who are considered weak to shame human pride. It was women's acumen that exposed the flawed reasoning and shallow theology that devalued individuals because of their materiality. And, their example seems to suggest that effective social reform is nearly always inseparable from a robust philosophical and theological deliberation. Again, biblicism and activism work in tandem to advance the gospel. Few accomplished this with greater elegance than Katharine Bushnell.

To expose the interpretive errors that led directly to the suffering and subjugated females, she writes:

> . . . until [we]—come to understand that a woman is of as much value as a man; and [people] will not believe this until they see it plainly taught in the Bible. Just so long as [Christians] imagine that a system of caste is taught in the Word of God, and that [men] belong to the upper caste while women are of the lower caste; and just so long as [we] believe that mere flesh—fate—[birth, materiality] determines the caste to which one belongs; and just so long as [we] believe that the "he will rule over you" of Genesis 3:16 is [prescriptive—that is—part of the moral teachings of the Bible, rather than descriptive—describing life in a fallen world] . . . the destruction of young women into a prostitute class will continue. [16]

Bushnell was among the first to reason that male rule is *not* a biblical ideal. Rather, it is part of the chaos and domination resulting from sin, which Christians must dismantle and oppose. Male authority, privilege, and patriarchy are consequences of sin. They are therefore at odds with justice and the moral precepts of Scripture, as Bushnell reasoned throughout her writings, which represent the first systematic biblical approach to gender justice.

Beginning in Genesis, Bushnell observes that because both Adam and Eve are created in God's image,[17] both were given dominion in Eden.[18] Scripture does not fault Eve as the source of sin, and God does not curse females because of Eve.[19] It was Satan, not God, who inspires the domination of men over women.[20] God extends leadership to those who do what is right in God's sight, regardless of their gender, birth order, ethnicity, or class.[21]

In assessing Paul, Bushnell shows that the apostle did not oppose the authority and leadership of women unless their leadership was domineering (1 Tim. 2:12), when they failed to teach the gospel consistently (1 Tim. 2 :11–12, Acts 18:26, Rom. 16:1–5, 7, 12–13, 15), or when their clothing or chatter were disruptive (1 Cor. 11:5, 14:34). Fundamentally, Bushnell locates women's ontological status not in Eve's

disobedience, as so many theologians had, but in Christ's completed work on Calvary. To be consistent, an assessment of "woman's spiritual and social status"[22] should be determined in the same manner as "man's spiritual and social status," [based] on the atonement of Jesus. To quote Bushnell, "[We] cannot, for women, put the 'new wine' of the Gospel into the old wine-skins of 'condemnation.'"[23] Calvary is good news for men and women because it is the means to reconciliation and also sanctification for God's people.

In addition to providing an egalitarian hermeneutic, the activism of early evangelicals aimed at institutionalized injustices by working toward the abolishment of slavery and by helping women gain the vote. Therefore, the egalitarian movement was a deeply biblical movement that began not in the 1970s with secular feminists such as Gloria Steinem or Betty Friedan, but in the 1800s with evangelicals such as A.J. Gordon, Catherine Booth, and Katharine Bushnell. According to Alvera Mickelsen, it was after 1950 that evangelicals retracted their earlier support of women's leadership. Consider the following examples of evangelicals who supported the leadership of women, biblically, prior to 1950.

Frank E. Gaebelein (1899–1983)

A prominent evangelical theologian, educator, prolific writer, founder of Stony Brook Christian School, and one of the founders of *Christianity Today*, Frank Gaebelein was also an early member of the ETS. Trained at Harvard, Gaebelein believed that faith should impact all of life, including the arts, literature, science, and social action. A strong supporter of civil rights and the equality of women, Gaebelein probably coined the phrase, "All truth is God's truth." To grasp the breadth of his erudition, review a list of his publications on the Talbot School of Theology's web site.[24]

Gaebelein's daughter, Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, now in her eighties, was a founding board member of Christians for Biblical Equality. As a child, Gretchen learned that it was her Christian duty to discover her God-given abilities in order to develop and use these with all of her strength. When considering her childhood, Gretchen recalls no encounter with Christian teaching that suggested ministry and work were limited by gender. It was not until the 1960s that CBE founders like Gretchen Gaebelein Hull and Alvera Mickelsen encountered sermons and publications from evangelicals that made gender the basis of Christian vocation. And it was this very shift in emphasis from "Christian vocation," centered on God's gifting and calling, to "gender vocation," rooted in gender, that led evangelicals like Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, Catherine Clark Kroeger, Alvera Mickelsen, Roger Nicole (founder and former president of ETS), Gilbert Bilezikian, Stan Gundry (former president of ETS), Alan Johnson (former president of ETS), and others to inaugurate Christians for Biblical Equality—an organization that promotes the biblical foundations for the shared service and leadership of women and men. The roots of egalitarian thought also included other early ETS leaders.

J. Barton Payne (1922–1979)

Former president of the ETS and professor of Old Testament at Princeton, Bob Jones, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Wheaton College, and Covenant Seminary (Creve Coeur/St. Louis), J. Barton Payne was a vocal advocate of women in ministry. His son, Dr. Philip Payne, a noted New Testament scholar and author of *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, published by Zondervan, recalls his father's egalitarian commitment in this way:

> My father argued that women were not excluded from any form of Old Testament ministry with the possible exception of priest. He argued that in that instance, it was the standard association of priestesses with temple prostitutes combined with the Old Testament principle that God's people should avoid the appearance of evil practices that would reflect poorly on God that explains why there is no mention of priestesses approved by God in the Old Testament. He saw no solid basis in the account of creation in Genesis for a second class status for women. Not long before he died climbing Mt. Fuji, he gave an annual lecture at Presbyterian Theological Seminary in [Dehradun, India] in which he argued that women should not be excluded from any form of ministry in the church. The editor of the journal in which these annual lectures were always published, refused to publish it since there was no advocacy of a contrasting opinion, even though they had published George Knight III's advocacy of the other side the previous year."[25]

When the biblical defense of women's equal service by accepted evangelicals such as J. Barton Payne is censored, it may explain why egalitarians are viewed as liberal. Perhaps *JETS* should publish Dr. Payne's final address at Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Fundamentally, Bushnell locates women's ontological status not in Eve's disobedience, as so many theologians had, but in Christ's completed work on Calvary.

The Prairie Bible School (PBS)

Founded in 1922 in Alberta, Canada, Prairie Bible School (today's Prairie Bible Institute) has for "more than eight decades . . . helped prepare thousands of Prairie Bible School (PBS) alumni to become faithful servants of Jesus Christ, reaching out to people in more than 114 countries around the globe."[26]

Prairie Bible Institute's Doctrinal Statement is compatible with Bebbington's quadrilateral, making clear the school's commitment to biblical authority: "We believe the Old and New Testament Scriptures as originally given by God are divinely inspired, inerrant, trustworthy, and constitute the only supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and conduct."[27] Prairie's doctrine clearly differentiates it from liberal or feminist theology. Yet, this supremely evangelical institute gave women strategic positions of leadership on their board of directors; as professors of theology and Bible doctrine; as principal of Prairie's high school; and as preachers, not only during their summer conferences, but also on Sunday mornings in PBS's auditorium, the Tabernacle—the largest religious auditorium in Canada.

From the time PBS opened its doors to eight students in 1922, women's spiritual leadership was endorsed by Prairie's first principal, L.E. Maxwell (1895–1984). The school grew to become the most prestigious missionary training school for evangelicals in

all of Canada. During Maxwell's 58-year presidency, his passion for evangelism and his respect for the authority of Scripture drew thousands of evangelicals to Three Hills, Alberta.

Maxwell was one of the most zealous advocates of missions. He was also an outspoken advocate of women preaching and teaching at all levels. If you were in favor of missions you had to be egalitarian.

Maxwell was not only passionate about training students as missionaries; he was equally determined to include women in every aspect of the Great Commission, according to ETS member Dr. Robert Rakestraw, a graduate of Prairie Bible School and a retired professor of theology at Bethel Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Rakestraw attended Prairie Bible School from 1963–1967, earning a diploma in Bible and missions in 1967. According to Rakestraw:

> Maxwell was one of the most zealous advocates of missions. He was also an outspoken advocate of women preaching and teaching at all levels. If you were in favor of missions you had to be egalitarian. I remember Maxwell preaching on Psalm 68:11, the great company of women who published the glad tidings. For L.E. Maxwell, the cause of Christ was shared by both men and women alike.[28]

Maxwell claimed to have located over 300 passages that support the leadership of women. Together with his long-standing colleague Ruth Dearing, they published a book on this topic in 1987, entitled *Women in Ministry*. What is more, the 1960 yearbook, the *Prairian*, was dedicated to a female graduate who had distinguished herself as a missionary in China. Maxwell writes:

> It was some forty years ago that I heard Miss Louisa Vaughan of China speak on John 14:13–14. She recited her heart-braking experience with an "impossible" class of 25 ignorant Chinese women.
>
> Like a flash of light to her dark unbelieving heart came the words: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do . . . If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."
>
> She said, "My burden rolled away as I realized that I had nothing to do but to ask, and Christ would fulfill His promise, 'I will do it.'"
>
> Through mighty faith and prayer Miss Vaughan saw revival work advanced in China during the following years. She was used of the Spirit to bring Ding Le Mei through for God. Never man spake like this woman. Ding Le Mei became "the Moody of China." Miss Vaughan conquered wherever she went on her knees—in His Name.

My own father-in-law also attended Prairie Bible School from 1958–1961. After graduation he and his wife worked for thirty-seven years as missionaries in Brazil. Both Rakestraw and my father-in-law were students of Ruth Dearing, who not only taught Bible at Prairie Bible School, but also preached frequently in chapel.

Dearing served in leadership for 59 years at Prairie Bible School, as a member of the faculty of Bible, theology, and doctrine; as a board member; and as principal of Prairie's high school. Both male and female high school teachers reported to her. It was L.E. Maxwell who first hired Dearing, initially inviting her to teach at Prairie's high school. Yet, her administrative abilities were prominent and she was promoted to vice principal, and then principal—a position she held for 18 years. Holding a degree in religious education from Seattle Pacific College (today's Seattle Pacific University), Dearing was invited by Maxwell to teach introductory Bible to Prairie's freshman college class. She eventually became full time faculty at Prairie Bible College. When challenged as to the biblical propriety of a woman teaching adult males, Dearing responded:

> . . . that, based on careful interpretation of certain Bible verses—"there are only two or three that are used to suggest that women should not teach—that they have been misinterpreted in their absolute ban on women teaching." If that explanation did not satisfy, she would refer the student to either Maxwell, or Dr. Ted Rendall, who later succeeded Maxwell as Principal of the Bible College.[29]

In 1928, Ruth Miller joined the Bible faculty of PBS. Like Dearing and the other members of faculty, Miller was invited to preach from the pulpit of Prairie's Tabernacle on Sunday morning. Women were frequently platform speakers during summer conferences sponsored by PBS. Conferences included women such as Gladys Aylward and Helen Roseveare, who addressed enormous audiences at events sponsored by Prairie Bible School.

Prairie's female graduates were as pioneering as Dearing and Miller. They too courageously ventured off alone, to distant and dangerous places around the world, a fact touted in *Prairian* yearbooks perhaps as means of inspiring the service of other students. The 1958 *Prairian* gave a realistic view of dangers embraced by female missionaries, perhaps also aimed at shaming a few men into joining them. The following solicitation was entitled, "Opportunities for Young Women!"

> There are still some areas where refrigerators and washing machines are scarce, where the food becomes monotonous, where rough trekking through mosquito-infested jungles and bridgeless rivers is common, where people do not want the Gospel and think they do God a service if they kill you.
>
> It is still possible to endure loneliness and apparent frustration amid heat, filth and stench. Probably you will not marry, as the percents of men going to the mission fields is very small.
>
> But, if you have given your life to Jesus and can trust Him to supply your needs (or give you grace to die joyfully), we will be glad to consider you application as one of the four hundred urgently needed on the W.E.C. [World Evangelization Crusade] fields.
>
> This is an opportunity to prove the Omnipotent God! If there are still some old-fashioned young men who feel called to serve the Lord in hard places, with no earthly security, they too may apply.

Prairie Bible School was unabashedly evangelical in its high view of Scripture; its devotion to evangelism and the gospel; and its commitment to preparing students as missionaries, evangelists, pastors, Bible expositors, and Christians ready to give their lives for the gospel. Gender bias was eclipsed by the Great Commission, and it was to this that Prairie,

under the leadership of L.E. Maxwell, devoted itself. Serving in more than 114 countries, Prairie graduates, both men and women, recognized that much of the world was unacquainted with Christ. What did it matter if a woman carried the good news to these souls for whom Christ died? Roused by Maxwell's "Great was the company of women who brought the glad tidings (Psalm 68:11)," women and men set their sights on leading the world to Christ, and gender was no deterrent because the task was great, the harvest was ripe, and the workers were few.

Fredrik Franson (1852–1908)

There is perhaps no other individual more compatible with the evangelical ethos of Prairie Bible School and its founder L.E. Maxwell than Fredrik Franson, founder of the Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM). Born in Sweden in 1852, Franson immigrated to the US and came to faith in Nebraska in 1872. After an encounter with D.L. Moody, Franson was unsurpassed in his zeal for evangelism and missions, driven by the belief that Christ's return was imminent. A passionate dispensationalist, Franson traveled extensively, training missionaries on four continents, while also publishing popular biblical treatises and establishing strategic partnerships with other like-minded evangelicals such as A.B. Simpson and Hudson Taylor. Ultimately, Franson is credited for founding not only TEAM, but also the Danish Mission Confederation, the Swiss Alliance Mission, the Barmea Alliance Mission, the Finnish Alliance Mission, the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Japan, and the Swedish Alliance Mission. Franson, like Maxwell, was an ardent supporter of women missionaries. Determined to make known the biblical basis for women's evangelistic service beside men, Franson wrote "Prophesying Daughters" in 1896. Relying on a whole-Bible approach, "Prophesying Daughters" is striking for its cohesive, original, and concise survey of Scripture. From Genesis through the epistles, Franson celebrates Scripture's consistent support for women's spiritual leadership. Fundamental to "Prophesying Daughters" is the goal of confronting gender prejudice in order to free women for evangelism. He "labeled as heretics those who grounded a doctrine on one or two passages in the Bible, without reading the references in their context."[31] "Prophesying Daughters" opposes a selective reading of Scripture, showing that the main biblical themes that include, rather than exclude, women's leadership. Franson also offers an assessment of the gender teachings not only of the the early church fathers but also reformation leaders like Martin Luther. Ultimately Franson perceives no ministry in which women may not lead. He is no gradual emancipationist, but a full-fledged egalitarian, and his biblical scholarship has one focus and goal—to give the God-given gifts of women expansive opportunities on any mission field.[31] Hence, in the introduction to "Prophesying Daughters," he writes:

> What the Bible says about the woman's place in evangelistic work and prophesying is a very important question, especially in our day, when . . . so many doors are open for missionary work. Many of China's 400 million inhabitants thirst for the Gospel . . . In Japan reception of the Gospel is so great that it has been said that [those] who would see [unbelief] in Japan must hurry out there. Thousands of witnesses are needed . . . In India there are 250 million and in Africa about as many who have the right to receive from us the glad tidings of Jesus Christ which we know. . . . The field is thus very large, and when we consider that nearly two thirds of all converted persons in the world are women . . . the question of woman's work in evangelization is of highest importance . . . If there is no prohibition in the Bible of public service by women, either in political franchise . . . then we stand face to face with the fact that the devil has succeeded in excluding nearly two thirds of the total number of believers—damage to God's work so great that it can scarcely be described.[32]

According to Franson, the whole of Scripture endorses women's preaching and teaching, beginning with Genesis. Here Franson notes that the "help" or *ezer* woman offers man is primarily spiritual "influence." He then asks, if woman was persuasive in leading Adam to sin, how much more might her influence be used to "remove sin from the world,"[33] in leading men to the gospel?

Similarly, the prophets Deborah and Huldah influenced Israel's decision-makers—the kings, priests, and other prophets.[34] In this way, prophets like Deborah and Huldah led the entire nation of Israel. For Franson, the whole of Scripture reveals women as part of a great company (predicted in Psalm 68:22), who declare the glad tidings of God's victory over sin and death. For this reason, women were prominent at Pentecost as Joel prophesied (Joel 2:28). And a woman—Anna—was also the first to announce the birth of the Christ and was the only prophet active at the time of Christ's presentation at the Temple. (Luke 2:36).[35]

The Samaritan woman was also part of that great company of women. After meeting Christ (John 4:28), that same day she "persuaded the whole town to seek the Savior."[36] Like the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene carried the glad tidings of the risen Lord to the disciples. News that "was preached to the farthest boundary of the earth, was first proclaimed by a woman, and not only to the eleven,"[37] but to those who were also with them, the other women (Mark 16:10).

If Jesus was not ashamed to include a woman in his work, why should we be ashamed to do so? Neither was Paul afraid to work beside women like the teacher Priscilla, Phoebe the deacon, and Junia, whom both Chrysostom and Theophilus understood to be a female apostle.

If all of Scripture points to Christ, can we afford to overlook the women of Scripture who declared the good news of Jesus? Yet, their voices have been stopped by those who rely upon two passages (1 Timothy 2:11–15, 1 Corinthians 14:34) "without reading them in context."[38] While Franson fails to offer a thorough explanation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 or 1 Corinthians 14:34, he argues that all of Scripture stands against any exclusion of women's teaching and prophetic leadership, particularly the teachings and service of Christ and Paul. If female teaching itself was forbidden, then Franson notes:

> . . . the instruction which Prisca gave to Apollos would also be against God's command, and Paul's order to women to be "good teachers" (Titus 2:3) would be abrogated, and then women's work in Sunday schools, in public schools, and in the teaching they convey through books and articles in religious papers would all be forbidden.[39]

"The danger of founding a doctrine on a single text, without comparing it with hundreds of other texts that speak of the same

theme, cannot be emphasized enough,"[40] said Franson. "If a sister can more easily bring souls to the Savior . . . then she sins if she does not use those gifts God that has given her."[41] And, the results of this are disastrous in light of eternity. There is a sense of urgency that comes with the fact that there are so many "people in the water about to drown."[42] Franson writes:

> A few men are trying to save [the drowning], and that is considered well and good. But look, over there a few women have untied a boat also to be of help in the rescue, and immediately a few men cry out . . . 'No, no, women must not help, rather let the people drown.' What stupidity! And yet this picture is very fitting. Men have, during all these centuries, shown that they do not have the power alone to carry out the work for the salvation of the world: therefore, they ought to be thankful to get some help.[43]

Like today's egalitarians, Franson's commitment to evangelism and scriptural authority was fundamental to his egalitarian views and advocacy. What is more, his biblical defense of women's leadership employs the same methods of interpretation used by egalitarians today, even though today's egalitarians are accused of succumbing to liberalism. Perhaps our neglect of historic individuals like Franson, Maxwell, Dearing, and others contributes to this problem. It was only in 2009 that "Prophesying Daughters" was made available on the web. Prior to this, it had been sequestered in the archives of an Evangelical Covenant publication, *The Covenant Quarterly*.

. . . one wonders if the early evangelicals might view our generation as liberal for placing the priorities of evangelism behind our obsession with gender roles . . .

Conclusion

Prior to the 1950s, biblicism and conversionism compelled the early evangelicals to welcome women as Bible teachers, preachers, board members, and as innovators of mission organizations and Bible institutes. A high view of Scripture and a commitment to evangelism also propelled the Golden Era of Missions, in which women outnumbered men two to one. This posed no challenge to biblical authority; it threatened only human bias that circumvented Scripture's support for women's equal service and leadership in Christian mission.

An openness to the gifts of women among evangelicals changed dramatically during the Fundamentalist—Modernist Controversy, with its concern over higher critical methods and a disregard for the authority of Scripture. Bible institutes sought to distance themselves from an intellectualism that smacked of higher critical methods. The Northwestern Bible Training School (today's University of Northwestern–Saint Paul), for example, responded to the threat of modernism by eliminating courses on "archaeology, history, and the ancient languages."[44] Instead, some evangelicals relied on a literal or "plain reading of the text" as their principal interpretive method. By abandoning a rigorous intellectual engagement, not only theologically but in other fields, fundamentalists and no small number of evangelicals lost their capacity to impact culture through the academy, an observation made by Dr. Charles Malik in his opening address at the dedication of Wheaton's Billy Graham Center in 1980.[45] According to Malik, it will take decades to recover the intellectual ground and social engagement surrendered by fundamentalists and evangelicals after 1950, a fact Mark Noll expands on in his insightful book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.

A plain reading of Scripture, accompanied by a neglect of history, culture, and the ancient languages also had devastating consequences on women's leadership. Some passages pertaining to women's leadership pose interpretive challenges that require a thorough knowledge of ancient history, culture, and language. One such passage is 1 Timothy 2:11–15, with its unusual Greek verb, *authentein*, and its suggestion that women are saved through childbearing, to say nothing of its apparent conflict with Paul's established practice of advancing the gospel beside female leaders like Junia, Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia, Chloe, Priscilla, Lydia, and so on. The impact of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy led to a literal and often a shallow reading of Scripture for many fundamentalists and evangelicals, divorced from the academic rigor and social engagement that had characterized an earlier generation of evangelicals, thus diminishing their influence intellectually, spiritually, and socially.

One needs only to browse the archives of an evangelical college or university founded prior to 1950 to read journals and correspondence from female graduates serving on global mission fields. Their writings are filled with an explicit commitment to biblical authority and evangelism—ideals that exemplify an evangelical faith. In reflecting on their legacy, one wonders if the early evangelicals might view our generation as liberal for placing the priorities of evangelism behind our obsession with gender roles that truncate the leadership of women, thereby diminishing the good news of Christ.

Egalitarians do not comprise a new path to liberalism. Rather, egalitarians are devoted to the authority of Scripture, though they differ with complementarians in their interpretation of passages like 1 Timothy 2:11–15 or 1 Corinthians 14:34. Let us recognize that evangelicals arrive at opposing interpretative conclusions even while upholding the authority of Scripture. An accusation of theological liberalism must be balanced against actual facts, beginning with the history of evangelicals as a whole. The early evangelicals advanced women's leadership because the Scriptures called them to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 15:16) regardless of gender, class, or ethnicity.[46]

I would like to end with a troubling observation. Over the last fifteen years, I have encountered too many Christian college students who seem more concerned with "gender roles" than with discerning their God-given gifts and calling. A preoccupation with "gender differences" (what sociologists call "gender essentialism") also appears in popular evangelical literature in which passive beauties await male rescue. This preoccupation exhibits an anemic expression of Christian faith, apparently unaware of its own feebleness, as Malik predicted. How vastly different were the lives and work of evangelicals like Catherine Booth, A.J. Gordon, Katharine Bushnell, Amanda

Smith, Fredrik Franson, and L.E. Maxwell with their determination to prove God omnipotent in dire circumstances. I would rather be among that great company of women Franson celebrates and which Scripture compels us to emulate with impunity.[47]

Notes

1. Charles O. Knowles, *Let Her Be: Right Relationships and the Southern Baptist Conundrum Over Women's Role* (Columbia, MO: KnoWell Publishing, 2002), 85. See also the writings of Margaret Fell Fox at Available online at onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/search?author=fell%2C+margaret&amode=words&title=&tmode=words&c=x, accessed September 28, 2013.

2. The Nicene Creed: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

3. ETS Doctrinal Basis: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs. God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory." Available online at etsjets.org/?q=about.

4. Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 19ff.

5. Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 19.

6. Ibid.

7. Sarah Sumner, *Christianity Today*, vol. 52, no. 5, (June 2008): 41.

8. Wayne Grudem *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway books, 2006), 11.

9. Sam Hodges, "Woman's turn in pulpit at Irving Bible Church brings buzz, beefs," *Dallas Morning News*, August 2008.

10. Margaret Fell Fox's best known egalitarian treatise is entitled, *Women's Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scripture*, (London, 1666). Available online at onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/search?author=fell%2C+margaret&amode=words&title=&tmode=words&c=x, accessed September 28, 2013.

11. Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), ix.

12. Charles O. Knowles, *Let Her Be: Right Relationships and the Southern Baptist Conundrum Over Women's Role* (Columbia, Mo.: KnoWell Publishing, 2002), 85ff.

13. A.J. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," *The Missionary Review of the World* 17 (1984): 911.

14. Catherine Booth, "Female Ministry; or, Women's Right to Preach the Gospel," in *Terms of Empowerment: Salvation Army Women in Ministry* (London, 1859; reprint, New York: The Salvation Army Supplies Printing and Publishing Department, 1975), 19–20.

15. See a timeline of Katharine Bushnell's life here: http://godswordtowomen.org/gwtw_bushnell_timeline.pdf

16. Katharine Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell: A Brief Sketch of her Life and Work* (Hertford, England: Rose and Sons Salisbury Square, 1930), 14. Available online at godswordtowomen.org/bushnell_brief_sketch.pdf, accessed Oct 5, 2013.

17. Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Women's Place in the Divine Economy* (Mossville, IL: God's Word to Women Publishers, 1999), 1off.

18. Ibid., 1off.

19. Ibid., 39ff.

20. Ibid., 74ff.

21. Ibid., 68, 74ff.

22. Ibid., 169.

23. Ibid.

24. See www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/protestant/frank_gaebelein.

25. Comments sent by email from Dr. Philip Payne, on Thursday, October 16, 2008, 4:11 p.m.

26. See page 6, prairie.edu/document.doc?id=58, accessed Sept 30, 2013.

27. Prairie Bible Institute's Doctrinal Statement reads:

> The Scriptures: We believe the Old and New Testament Scriptures as originally given by God are divinely inspired, inerrant, trustworthy, and constitute the only supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and conduct.
>
> The Godhead: We believe there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are the same in essence and co-equal in power and glory.
>
> Jesus Christ: We believe in the full deity and full humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; we affirm His virgin birth, sinless life, divine miracles, vicarious and atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension, ongoing mediatorial work, and personal return in power and glory.
>
> The Holy Spirit: We believe in the Holy Spirit by whose regenerating power and ongoing ministry the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> Creation: We believe in the direct creative acts of God as recorded in Genesis.
>
> Satan: We believe in the personality of Satan, a fallen angel, who, with other angelic beings rebelled against God and was cast out of Heaven. Although he was defeated at the cross and his final destiny shall be the lake of fire, he continues to be the archenemy of God, angels and humanity.
>
> Humanity and Sin: We believe humanity was created in the image of God. In Adam all humankind fell and incurred eternal separation from God. As a consequence, all human beings are declared by God to be inherently depraved in need of salvation.
>
> Salvation: We believe the grace of God provides salvation from sin for all humanity only through personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning work.
>
> The Church: We believe the Church, the Body of Christ, constitutes of all true believers and with Christ as head, the church exists in local expression to glorify Him, edifying believers, and evangelizing lost humanity everywhere.
>
> Christ's Return: We believe in the literal, physical, imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The statement is also available online at prairie.edu/document.doc?id=312, accessed September 25, 2013.

28. Mimi Haddad interviewed Robert Rakestraw in his home in Saint Paul, Minnesota, August 2008.

29. albertasource.ca/aspenland/fr/society/footnotes.html, accessed October 2008.

30. Knowles, *Let Her Be*, 85.

31. Fredrik Franson, "Prophesying Daughters," *The Covenant Quarterly* vol. 34, no. 4 (November, 1976): 25. Available at cbeinternational.org/files/u1/free-art/prophesying-daughters.pdf, accessed July 20, 2013.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., 26.
35. Ibid., 28.
36. Ibid., 29.
37. Ibid., 30.
38. Ibid., 35.
39. Ibid., 36.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 39.
42. Ibid., 29.
43. Ibid.
44. William Vance Trollinger, Jr., *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 94. Riley was also president and founder of the World Christian Fundamentals Association. As such, he led fundamentalist momentum toward the plain reading of the Scriptures as opposed to studying about the Bible.
45. See www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/BGCdedication.htm, accessed October 1, 2013.
46. For a more thorough study of the support evangelicals gave women's leadership, see Janette Hassey, *No Time For Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1986).
47. "Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7).

"Egalitarians: A New Path to Liberalism? Or Integral to Evangelical DNA" is adapted from a lecture presented by Mimi Haddad at the 2008 ETS convention.

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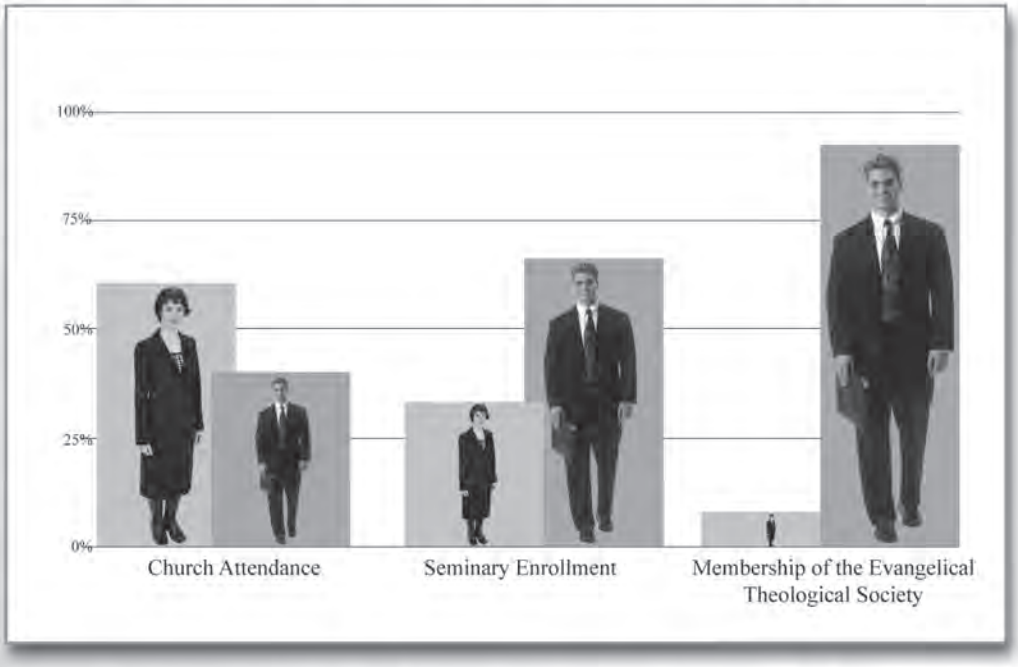

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By Allison Quient

Equating "Feminisms"

"All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy."
—Sarah Grimke[1]

Throughout history, movements have arisen to challenge the status quo of society and the institutional church. In the history of the United States and into the present, many have spoken out against the way women are perceived and treated. These voices have fought to open to women spaces and leadership positions in the church and society that have traditionally been exclusively for men. These movements, known collectively as *feminism*, have requested—sometimes demanded—a transformation in the ways evangelicals conceive of women's roles.

For evangelicals, the Bible is the ultimate, infallible and inerrant authority, which serves as the arbiter of acceptable views, and theological liberalism exists as a looming menace to biblical authority. Unfortunately, evangelicals are often confused over who is challenging their biblical and cultural perceptions. They generally do not understand the critiques of liberal feminists or of their own evangelical sisters and brothers, nor do they recognize that they are dealing with separate movements in important and foundational ways. For many, feminism is a recent phenomenon, a threatening force, liberal in origin, which in the end rejects the authority of Scripture in order to conform to modern culture. Evangelicals commonly known as biblical *egalitarians* are quickly tied to liberal forms of feminism because it is commonly supposed that "liberalism and the approval of women's ordination go hand in hand," and inevitably lead the church down the slippery slope into the abandonment of scriptural authority.[2]

This paper seeks to begin to correct the equation of biblical egalitarianism with liberal feminism by considering them on a foundational level—looking at where each locates its authority and how each understands the Bible's authority. Given the limited nature of this paper, I will focus on two individuals—Sarah Grimké and Elizabeth Cady Stanton—who have been widely considered seeds or prototypes of their respective movements and whose beliefs and approaches to Scripture today correspond to those of egalitarians and liberal feminists, respectively. Finally, I will consider the question

of whether the beliefs of egalitarians logically lead to the acceptance of a form of liberal feminism and the subsequent abandonment of Scripture as the ultimate authority. It is my hope that, as evangelicals, we will be engaged "in a more earnest search after truth and a more loyal devotion to it once it is found."[3]

Egalitarianism and Sarah Grimké

Evangelical *egalitarianism* is a view committed to what it understands to be the biblical principle of mutuality. "According to this principle, there can be no moral or theological justification for permanently granting or denying status, privilege, or prerogative solely on the basis of a person's race, class, or gender."[4] In the introduction to *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, the essential message of egalitarianism is:

> Gender, in and of itself, neither privileges nor curtails one's ability to be used to advance the kingdom or to glorify God in any dimension of ministry, mission, society or family. The differences between men and women do not justify granting men unique and perpetual prerogatives of leadership and authority not shared by women.[5]

While most egalitarians today affirm gender differences and the necessity of hierarchies in some situations, all deny that gender is a key deciding factor in determining gifts and leadership. It is only in this sense that men and women are no different. Egalitarians believe their convictions are taught in Scripture and are grounded in the Bible as the inerrant word of God.[6] Is egalitarianism really an effort to give scriptural validation to a recent, feminized, liberal culture?

Evangelical egalitarianism did not originate with the feminist liberation movements of the 1960s or 1970s, or even with the founding of Christians for Biblical Equality in 1987–1988. Rather, it came out of the reformations and revivals following the Second Great Awakening and continues on today. More directly, egalitarianism as a *movement* in the United States arose when many women found that the equality principle of the abolitionist movement also applied to them. In their fight against slavery, they naturally found parallels with their own condition. A seed of this egalitarian movement is Sarah Grimké, a Quaker woman who faced gendered opposition to her preaching and public speaking against the evils of slavery. In response, she wrote one of the first American scriptural defenses of the equality of women and a justification for their public speaking, titled, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*.

In *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, it is evident that Sarah Grimké believed that, like slaves, women were being denied their God-given positions as equals alongside white men and that the inferior position women occupied was the product of sinful oppression, not nature as God intended it.[7] Women were created to be equals. Equality meant that women were also made in the image of God, and were indeed moral beings with an immortal nature.[8] This notion of equality assumed functional equality (most of her opponents were not making a case for ontological equality alongside functional subordination). Men were the ones who decided that the position of a female preacher and public reformer was "unnatural" and they were the inventers of the idea that there was a "distinction between the duties of men and women as moral beings."[9] Grimké writes:

> I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks, and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God designed us to occupy. If he has not given us the rights which have, as I conceive, been wrested from us, we shall soon give evidence of our inferiority, and shrink back into obscurity, which the high souled magnimity of man has assigned us as our appropriate sphere . . . He has done all he could to debase and enslave her mind; and now he looks triumphantly on the ruin he has wrought, and says, the being he has thus deeply injured is his inferior.[10]

For Grimké, the problem was not only the mere fact of gender discrimination, but also that it violated God's design for women and thus hindered them from their service as "helpers." Only one who was truly an equal could fulfill her place as the helper of man.[11] Men usurped God's authority and molded women into the images they themselves desired, rather than what God wanted, and this had unfortunate implications for the "welfare of the world."[12] Women were meant to occupy a mutual place alongside men and when this does not happen, the benefit that naturally arises from understanding and submitting to God's intention does not follow, diminishing even the woman's service as wife and mother.[13]

On the surface, Grimké's egalitarianism could still look suspiciously like forms of theologically liberal feminism in that both deny any God-given distinction in the moral duties or "roles" of men and women, both devote significant attention to the problem of the oppression of women, and both use the rhetoric of "equality." However, Grimké does not base her authority in women's experience nor does she use female oppression as her starting point. For her, Scripture, which is inerrant in the original autographs, is the authority on which all else is judged, including the position of women. She explains, "I will depend solely on the Bible to designate the sphere of woman . . . I therefore claim the original as my standard, *believing that to have been inspired*" (emphasis mine).[14] Scripture is her final authority and it alone decides the place of women. It is upon this notion that her arguments against female oppression and for the equality of women is based. Without it, her views on the plight of slaves and women do not make sense.

Continually throughout *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, Grimké brings our attention to the fact that nowhere does the Bible teach that men are to have dominion over women or that women were created to be dependent on men. Many of Grimké's positive arguments are the same as those made by today's egalitarians. Some of these are:

1. Man and woman were both made in the image of God and given dominion over the earth (as opposed to dominion over each other).[15]
2. The woman's position as "helper" indicates that she is a companion, not merely an instrument of the man's pleasure.[16]
3. Galatians 3:28 teaches that we should in a sense forget about gender insofar as our ideas about gender have negatively influenced how we relate to one another socially and domestically and kept us from benefiting from each other the way God intended.[17] She believed that women must be allowed to "glorify God to the fullest extent that God enables them, and the prerequisite of women's liberation is an unprejudiced

translation and interpretation of the biblical passages that have traditionally been used to keep women in subjection."[18] For Sarah Grimké, the problem was not the Bible or its authority, but human corruption, a perverted *interpretation* of Scripture and incorrect translations.[19] She abhorred the evils of slavery and sexism rampant in a society claiming to be enlightened by Christianity and used Scripture to speak prophetically against such evils. She found *in Scripture* the keys to the liberation of slaves and women according to the glory and desire of God and the benefit of his people. Scripture was the standard by which she judged her place as a woman, and it was by this standard—not her own experience as a woman—that she judged the evils of slavery and sexism in her society.

Liberal Feminism and Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Feminism and liberalism are diverse concepts, so some attention will be paid to the definitions of each before identifying the basic claim of liberal feminism and taking a closer look at the thought of Elizabeth Stanton. *Feminism*, although diverse, has been defined as "a social vision, *rooted in women's experience* of sexually based discrimination and oppression, a movement seeking the liberation of women from all forms of sexism, and an academic method of analysis being used in virtually every discipline" (emphasis mine).[20] Gary Dorrien defines theological *liberalism*, specifically of a "Christian" variety, as:

> A tradition that derives from the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Protestant attempt to reconceptualize the meaning of traditional Christian teaching in the light of modern knowledge and modern ethical values . . . Fundamentally it is the idea of a genuine Christianity not based on external authority. Liberal theology seeks to reinterpret the symbols of traditional Christianity in a way that creates a progressive religious alternative to . . . theologies based off of external authority.[21]

In other words, theological liberalism seeks to accommodate Christian teaching to modernity. Wayne Grudem rightly points out that theological liberalism is 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."[22] *Liberal feminism* maintains this basic foundation, but makes the female experience its guide.

Unlike the evangelical egalitarian, who believes error is found only in the human interpreter and that the Bible conceptually affirms the mutuality of men and women in ontology and function, the theologically liberal feminist agrees with those who claim the Bible teaches the exclusive subordination of women. Liberal feminism, though, rejects these portions of Scripture because they are believed to oppose female experience and liberation. Therefore, liberal feminism and evangelical egalitarianism differ in their *interpretations* of Scripture and in their views about the *nature* of Scripture.

Theologically liberal feminism has its prototype in *The Woman's Bible* of the late nineteenth-century.[23] *The Woman's Bible* was the first "book-length challenge to male interpretations of the Bible"[24] and is considered by many to be the "original" feminist attack on Scripture.[25] While it was not well received and was formally repudiated by the National Woman's Suffrage Association, Elizabeth Stanton, who is considered to be a forerunner of twentieth-century feminism, considered it "a step in progress."[26] She reasoned:

> It still requires courage to question the divine inspiration of the Hebrew Writings as to the position of woman. Why should the myths, fables, and allegories of the Hebrews be held more sacred than those of the Assyrians and Egyptians?[27]

For Stanton, the key problem was not in how the Bible was interpreted, and it did not matter a great deal whether the women working on its critique knew the original languages.[28] Rather, the *Bible itself* and its use for the oppression of women were the primary problems.

> Bible historians claim special inspiration for the Old and New Testaments containing most contradictory records of the same events, of miracles opposed to all known laws, of customs that degrade the female sex of all human and animal life, stated in most questionable language that could not be read in promiscuous assembly, and call all of this "The Word of God."[29]

Stanton also claims:

> From the inauguration of the movement for woman's emancipation the Bible has been used to hold her in the 'divinely ordained sphere,' prescribed in the Old and New Testaments . . . . The canon and civil law; church and state; priests and legislators; all political parties and religious denominations have alike taught that woman was made after man, of man, and for man, an inferior being, subject to man.[30]

Elizabeth Stanton, like many liberal feminists today, did not believe all of the Bible was wrong or should be rejected. "There are some general principles in the holy books of all religions that teach love, charity, liberty, justice and equality for all the human family" and such notable women such as Deborah, Huldah, and Vashti serve to show us that the Bible is diverse and cannot be thrown out in its entirety.[31] Within the Bible we find the means for both female oppression and female liberation.

Before proceeding, it must also be noted that not all liberal feminists share Stanton's stance on Scripture. While many deny the inerrancy of all or portions of Scripture, a good number maintain a Christian commitment to the essentials of the faith and have an ethos that is "not revolutionary but reformist in spirit and substance."[32] For many of these individuals, the Bible contains a valuable message of equality and liberation, which is contradicted only by portions of the canon. While they believe that the Bible itself is not the Word of God, at least parts of Scripture might express true words *about* God and be influenced by real events.

Throughout *The Woman's Bible*, whether a given passage adds or detracts from the status of women is the standard Stanton uses to detect what should remain and what should be thrown out, reformulated, or understood in the light of modernism. This criterion for evaluating Scripture is suspiciously similar to the feminist critical hermeneutic used by more recent feminists such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who also understands Elizabeth Stanton as some sort of precursor

to her view.[33] The liberal feminist hermeneutic "seeks to assess the function of the Bible in terms of women's liberation and wholeness" and "derives this canon, *not* from the biblical writings, but from the contemporary struggle of women . . . It places biblical texts under the authority of feminist experience."[34] These women transform their biblical heritage. Stanton believed this could be accomplished even in light of the fact that "not only biblical interpretations but the biblical texts themselves were androcentric." They could still "serve to recover a feminist biblical heritage" because female experience could draw from those portions of the Bible deemed to be liberating.[35]

Similarities and Dissimilarities between Two Movements

Throughout this study, one thing has been clear: biblical egalitarianism is not to be equated with liberal feminism when considering their most basic beliefs regarding the authority of Scripture. One believes Scripture is its ultimate authority with any fault lying exclusively in a bad interpretation or translation. The other believes it is not interpretation that is the only or primary problem, but the Bible itself, which contains errors and contradictory messages. It is the latter group that believes the female experience dictates what in Scripture is authoritative and what must be reformulated or conformed to fit modern female perceptions. Rebecca Groothuis sums up the implications well. "In liberal theology, religious symbols do not stand in a true/false relationship to objective theological realities, but serve as elements of a circular, self-enclosed system. Human imagination creates religious myths and metaphors—for the purpose of evoking the desired response in the imaginations of the religion's adherents."[36] The enormous difference between egalitarianism and liberal feminism lies in the fact that egalitarians go to the Scriptures to diagnose the problem and to find the solution whereas liberal feminists ultimately must look to themselves. Only superficially are the two movements similar, and this is in a shared recognition that exclusive male authority is a problem and that women have something to contribute at the highest levels of authority.

> Belief in inerrancy does not logically predispose one away from female ordination. Instead, *a subculture needing to define itself against liberalism does*.

The Logic Behind the Equation of Feminisms

Despite the differences enumerated herein, many evangelicals continue to equate egalitarianism with liberal feminism. Further, they fear that one "feminism" logically entails the other, even though the two differ in their historical development and have radically different views on the authority of Scripture, resulting in very different diagnoses of and solutions to the problem of female oppression. For example, in his *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?*, Wayne Grudem attempts to warn evangelicals of the dangers of those he calls "evangelical feminists," claiming that they're sliding into liberalism. He appeals to Mark Chaves's *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* in order to draw attention to a *recent pattern* where the ordination of women is supported by those who do not accept the Bible's authority and is opposed by those who do. It should be noted that he also gives examples of individuals or institutions upholding both women in ministry and the authority of Scripture. Yet, in making his case, he tends to disregard these individuals and institutions.

There are two basic problems with his approach:

1. Grudem's claim is logically invalid.
2. Dr. Chaves' work, upon which Grudem builds his argument, contradicts Grudem's argument that evangelical feminism is a path to liberalism.

How is Grudem's argument logically invalid? The clear aim of the book (as the title suggests) is to warn evangelicals that accepting what he calls "evangelical feminism" will eventually lead to liberalism and ultimately undermine the gospel. He articulates this fear: "I am concerned that evangelical feminism (also called 'egalitarianism') has become a new path by which evangelicals are being drawn *into* theological liberalism" (emphasis mine).[38] For Grudem, liberalism is a "direct consequence" of egalitarianism because the "nature" and key "principles" of egalitarianism undermine Scripture.[39]

Grudem's reasoning is internally inconsistent. First, he argues that the data shows a seven-step process. The first step is "abandoning biblical inerrancy," which is followed by "endorsing the ordination of women." Given his argument that egalitarianism leads to liberalism, we would expect these steps to be reversed, with the ordination of women preceding and leading to the abandonment of inerrancy. This inconsistency is unsurprising, however, when we consider that Grudem's data demonstrates only a correlation, not a logical consequence—even though he is trying to convince us of a logical connection. He says, "It is unquestionable that theological liberalism leads to the endorsement of women's ordination. While not all egalitarians are liberals, all liberals are egalitarians."[40] He appears to be, in a big picture sense, arguing in an "If p then q, q, therefore p" fashion. He notices that liberal denominations are also egalitarian, and then concludes that if a denomination is egalitarian it must be liberal or become liberal. This is a well-known formal fallacy called *affirming the consequent*. Instead of establishing a valid logical connection, all he has managed to show is that liberals endorse a form of egalitarianism or feminism, not the reverse.

What Grudem is trying to accomplish is an equation of other types of feminism with egalitarianism. If people can start identifying them as the same in their minds, they will wish to reject egalitarianism in order to avoid the unsubstantiated slippery slope into the liberalism that he fears. The argument assumes the equation of these two movements as well as the related assumption that if one endorses biblical inerrancy, one will be resistant to women's ordination. Of course, if Grudem wishes to label egalitarianism as "liberal" on the grounds that it functionally undermines biblical authority by advocating an incorrect biblical interpretation, then he himself is open to the charge of liberalism by all who believe his interpretations are incorrect.

Unfortunately, the problems with Grudem's argument do not end here. He uses Mark Chaves's study, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, to support his idea that liberalism follows from egalitarianism. The great irony of his appeal to Chaves's

study is that *Ordaining Women* indicates that the key to the difference in the practice of ordaining women is not whether a denomination affirms inerrancy or is sacramental. Belief in inerrancy does not logically predispose one away from female ordination. Instead, *a subculture needing to define itself against liberalism does*. Liberalism is not inherently a logical corollary from egalitarianism; instead we have made it a symbol of what we are resisting. Chaves writes:

> Within the religious world itself, biblical inerrancy and sacramentalism are the most significant *cultural boundaries* when it comes to women's ordination . . . Why are biblical inerrancy and sacramentalism so deeply and so tightly connected to resistance to female clergy? . . . *for both of these denominational subcultures, gender equality has come to symbolize the liberal modern world that they define themselves against*. (emphasis mine)[41]

And later, Chaves states:

> *These examples are meant to illustrate the basic point that a commitment to biblical inerrancy does not require, either logically or historically, opposition to women's ordination* . . . If it is not logically or intellectually difficult to combine inerrantism with full gender equality, why has it become so culturally difficult to do so? . . . *Because gender equality is such a defining core of the modern liberal agenda, resisting women's ordination became a way to symbolize antiliberalism within the religious world*. (emphasis mine)[42]

Dr. Chaves's study describes a situation where evangelicals feel threatened by liberalism, so they resist other causes or ideas that liberals affirm, even when these are not necessarily connected exclusively to liberalism. Is this a fair assessment by Chaves? Grudem gives us reason to believe it is.

> Does it seem likely that all of the liberal churches who no longer believe the Bible have suddenly gotten the interpretation of the Bible regarding men's and women's roles exactly right, and that the most conservative churches who hold strongly to Biblical inerrancy have gotten it exactly wrong? And does it seem likely that as soon as a denomination begins to abandon belief in inerrancy it suddenly discovers new skill and accuracy in interpreting the Bible on the roles of men and women so that it finally arrives at the correct answer?[43]

Recall Grudem's earlier grouping of those with a high view of Scripture with those who hold to his view of women in leadership, as opposed to those with a low view who accept women in leadership (a grouping assumed in the quote above). He is appealing to our newfound sensibility that the two are inseparable. Under this paradigm we should apparently be suspicious of the likelihood of a "liberal"—who rejects the Bible's authority—correctly interpreting the Bible's teachings on gender. If liberals believe it, it is likely false and we should resist. However, liberal methodology does *not* interpret the Bible in the same way as biblical egalitarianism does (many liberals believe biblical passages are actually sexist). Moreover, this is a dangerous way to decide church polity, as it effectively gives the opposing group, rather than the Bible itself, control over church decisions. It may be that today secular or "sacred" culture tells us to "uncritically reject everything associated with any particular movement . . . but Christians need not buy into such force-choice logic."[44]

Conclusion

This paper challenges the notion that biblical egalitarianism and liberal feminism are equivalent movements. Considering the examples of Sarah Grimké and Elizabeth Stanton, who are widely considered either seeds or prototypes of their movements, revealed that the two movements have widely divergent views on the authority of Scripture. Further, not only are the two movements dissimilar in what they profess, but the argument that one logically or necessarily leads to the other is invalid.

The church is not infallible in its understanding of God's will. Only through dialogue with those who differ from us will we begin to see what we may have missed and make changes for the better. Listening carefully to their critiques should spur us on to look at the Scriptures and allow God's eternal and unchanging truths—not uncritical rejection of anything associated with particular movements—to shed light on our situation and determine church polity. If egalitarianism is true, more than half the church is being underused, and not only do we contradict God's will for men and women, but we also cripple the church and undercut the power of the gospel. When we stand on Scripture and fully use the gifts God has given his people, we will release the gospel and the body of Christ to transform the world for God's glory.

Notes

1. Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes And the Condition of Woman* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), 10.

2. Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2006), 29.

3. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub, 1923), 17.

4. Rebecca Groothuis, "Sexuality, Spirituality and Feminist Religion," Christians for Biblical Equality (1999): cbeinternational.org/?q=content/sexuality-spirituality-and-feminist-religion, accessed January, 2013.

5. Ronald Pierce and Rebecca Groothuis, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 13.

6. See Philip Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 28 and John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), xiv.

7. Sarah Grimké believes the condition of white women is comparable to that of slavery in that the subjugation of slaves and women both break from the equality taught in Scripture and render them inferior or subjugated. However, she strongly believes the plight of black women is on another level incomparable to the situation of white women due to the sheer unique evil of their treatment. Black women are sold in market places and exploited sexually and because of this "the moral purity of the white woman is deeply contaminated" especially since she benefits from the exploitation and does not speak out against it. Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes And the Condition of Woman* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), 15, 50–55.

8. Ibid., 23.

9. Ibid., 20.

10. Ibid., 10–11.

11. Ibid., 23.

12. Ibid., 3.

13. Ibid., 48–49.

14. Ibid., 4.

15. Ibid., 4, 23.

16. Ibid., 5, 23.

17. One will quickly notice that Grimké does not even try to show why ontological equality (part of being made in the image of God) is antithetical to the idea that women are ordained by God to be functionally subordinate to men. This connection is assumed. The theological complementarianism of today simply did not exist as a movement in her time. The idea that somehow women were equal in essence, but forever subordinate in function had not become prominent, so most of her opponents were not asking those questions.

18. Rebecca Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 1997), 51.

19. Ibid., 3, 16.

20. Anne Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 16–17.

21. Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion 1805–1900* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), xxiii.

22. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 15.

23. Stanton herself is considered a prototype and not a seed because her influence on feminism and liberalism was limited for her time even though feminists of a much later era saw in her their own experiences and beliefs.

24. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology,* 46.

25. This idea is conveyed in the title of *The Woman's Bible*, which is introduced by Barbara Welter.

26. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eighty Years & More: Reminiscences 1815–1897* (NY: Schocken Books, 1971), 467.

27. Ibid., 467.

28. Ibid., 467.

29. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Original Feminist Attack on the Bible: The Woman's Bible* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 12.

30. Ibid., 7.

31. Ibid., 12–13.

32. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology,* xxiii, xxv.

33. Schüssler Fiorenza falls more into the liberation camp of feminism than the liberal.

34. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 14.

35. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins: In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 27.

36. Groothuis, "Sexuality, Spirituality and Feminist Religion."

37. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism,* 23–25.

38. Ibid., 15.

39. Ibid., 17–18,20–21.

40. Ibid., 28–29. Also see note 4 on page 24 where Grudem acknowledges there are conservative denominations that were egalitarian without any liberal influence.

41. Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 10.

42. Ibid., 101–102.

43. Grudem, 29.

44. Craig Keener, *Paul Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub, 1992), 6.

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By David C. Cramer

Assessing Hierarchist Logic

Is Egalitarianism Really on a Slippery Slope?

Introduction

Most evangelicals, regardless of our views on gender issues, recognize that within evangelicalism there will always be a diversity of views on any number of issues regarding faith and practice. Since for evangelicals there is no higher authority than Scripture, the inevitable result is that—for better or worse—there will always exist within evangelicalism competing interpretations of Scripture. Under the evangelical umbrella are Arminians and Calvinists, paedobaptists and Anabaptists, premillennialists and postmillennialists, egalitarians and male hierarchists. While most evangelicals realize that many of these positions may be irreconcilable, we also recognize that those who come to a different view than ours may be just as honest, well-intentioned, and well-informed interpreters of Scripture as we try to be.[1] And while we do our best to share our views with others—even pointing out the weaknesses of competing views—we attempt to do so in an irenic fashion, knowing that one's evangelical witness is not ultimately determined by the position one comes to on any one of these complex issues.[2]

However, within the hierarchical camp, there exists a vocal and influential minority of strongly hierarchist scholars who argue that a commitment to egalitarianism does indeed undermine one's evangelical commitment. But, since many of us either are or at least know strongly committed egalitarian evangelicals, this argument seems strange. It would be easy for evangelical egalitarians simply to dismiss these hierarchists' arguments as disingenuous or to respond in kind by excluding hierarchists from their vision of evangelicalism. However, I would caution against such a reaction for a number of reasons. First, Jesus explicitly commands us to refuse recourse to such *lex talionis* or "eye for eye" reasoning in a command that is just as relevant in scholarship as it is in other social contexts. Second, such a response would probably generate more heat than light and make the divide over gender issues even greater. Third, as Christians, we should always respond to dissent with charity rather than skepticism. That means that, rather than questioning others' motives, we should try to the best of our ability to understand the perspective of those with whom we disagree and lovingly respond to their concerns. When it comes to the hierarchists' arguments, then, we must realize that they are motivated by very real concerns. They are not (necessarily) the result of a deep-seated hatred toward everything egalitarian; rather, they are motivated by a deep concern for evangelicalism. So, whether or not we agree with the hierarchists' arguments, we should nevertheless sympathize with the motivation behind them, namely, the desire to see our sisters and brothers living out the *evangel*, the gospel, faithfully in every sphere of life. Where we perceive the gospel being compromised by fellow evangelicals, we should be ready to offer a gentle rebuke. On the other hand, when we perceive a misguided rebuke, we should also be prepared to offer a gentle response. Such a response is what I intend to offer in the following.

Assessing the logic of *Evangelical Feminism*

Instead of surveying the proliferation of hierarchical literature, my goal is much more modest. I want to focus particularly on a more pointed rebuke of evangelical egalitarianism, namely, the book entitled *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?*[3] As the title suggests, the author fears that egalitarianism undermines one's

evangelical commitments and thus could begin "relentlessly leading Christians down the path to liberalism."[4] Since such fears seem characteristic of many evangelical hierarchists, we would do well to assess the arguments. And, since many of the particular exegetical and hermeneutical arguments of the book are regularly debated among hierarchical and egalitarian scholars,[5] I focus my assessment instead on the underlying logic of the argument presented in the book. I argue that the book contains a number of logical missteps and that, once these are corrected, the hierarchists' concern proves to be chimerical. I conclude by arguing what many of us already know: despite our irreconcilable differences, there is room under the evangelical umbrella for egalitarians and male hierarchists alike.

The fallacy of hasty generalization or selective evidence

The fallacy of hasty generalization occurs when certain evidence that supports one's conclusion is emphasized, and evidence that contradicts one's conclusion is downplayed or ignored entirely. In short, a hasty generalization is drawn when a universal claim is based on only partial evidence. In its first section, *Evangelical Feminism* sets out to prove the correlation between egalitarianism and liberalism. It makes much of the supposed historical connection between the two, claiming repeatedly that "egalitarian advocacy of women's ordination goes hand in hand with theological liberalism."[6] It discusses at length a number of undisputed instances where liberal denominations support women's ordination. Indeed, it argues, "There is no theologically liberal denomination or seminary in the United States today that opposes women's ordination."[7] Such statements are relatively uncontroversial. But what are we to make of them? Does the fact that liberal denominations support women's ordination entail that there is a necessary or universal correlation between egalitarianism and liberalism? Clearly not, for it also mentions in a footnote some important counterevidence:

> Chaves lists many other denominations, such as some 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 on the autonomy of the local congregation (such as many Baptist groups) and therefore they were not adopting women's ordination because of theological liberalism. My point here is that when liberalism was the dominant theological viewpoint in a denomination, from 1956 onward it became inevitable that the denomination would endorse women's ordination.[8]

And again at the conclusion of his historical discussion, the author concedes,

> 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).[9]

It is a bit perplexing why, with such ample evidence of evangelical egalitarianism, the book nevertheless concludes that there is such a strong correlation between egalitarianism and liberalism. Perhaps it dismisses the counterevidence as insignificant. But this would surely be unfair to the many Pentecostals, Baptists, Assemblies of God churches, and associations such as Willow Creek, around the world, not to mention numerous other evangelical denominations and groups[10]—including not a small number of black churches—that "place a strong emphasis on gifting by the Holy Spirit as the primary requirement for ministry." Indeed, Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), the group that receives the harshest criticism in the book, explicitly places "a strong emphasis on gifting by the Holy Spirit as the primary requirement for ministry." As CBE's Statement of Faith reads, "We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their *God-given gifts* for the good of the home, church and society."[11] If all such denominations and groups that serve as exceptions to the supposed correlation were included as evidence, the apparent correlation would diminish significantly, if not dissipate entirely. Indeed, given the global rise of denominations focusing on the leading and gifting of the Holy Spirit,[12] the evidence of liberal churches in the United States from 1956 onward is almost negligible. Certainly, it does not constitute a wide enough sample to justify the claim that egalitarianism and liberalism "go hand in hand."

Rather, by ignoring the counterevidence of the many evangelical egalitarian denominations and groups, the argument for a correlation is reduced at best to the tautology:

(1) All egalitarian denominations that become liberal are liberal,
and all egalitarian denominations that remain evangelical are evangelical,

and at worst to an instance of the formal fallacy of affirming the consequent:

(2) If a denomination is liberal, then it is egalitarian; therefore,
if a denomination is egalitarian, it is (or will inevitably become) liberal.

Neither (1) nor (2) is reason for concern for evangelical egalitarians or their evangelical hierarchical friends who are worried about them, since neither (1) nor (2) actually establishes a correlation between egalitarianism and liberalism.

The fallacy of equating correlation with causation

If we grant, contrary to fact, the argument for the correlation between egalitarianism and liberalism discussed above, another problem with the main argument still persists. For, in order to support the main thesis that evangelical egalitarianism leads down the path to liberalism, more than evidence for mere *correlation* is required. What is required is evidence that evangelical egalitarianism *causes* liberalism. This at least seems to be the claim implicit in the book title's wording that evangelical egalitarianism is a "path to liberalism."

The fallacy of equating correlation with causation is common and thus seductive. In the philosophy of mind, for example, many materialist philosophers argue that, because neuroscience has demonstrated a *correlation* between brain activity and mental activity, the former must

be the *cause* of the latter. But a number of dualist philosophers (many of them Christian) have cried foul, pointing out that correlation and causation are two completely different things.[13] There are a number of ways to make sense of such correlation. Perhaps brain activity is indeed the cause of mental activity,[14] but perhaps mental activity is the cause of brain activity. Moreover, there is a competing materialist view which holds that brain activity is simply mental activity, and vice versa.[15] So clearly arguing that two things "go hand in hand" is quite distinct from arguing that one is the cause of the other. Rather, there are at least four ways that two things could correlate:

(3) A could be the cause of B,
(4) B could be the cause of A,
(5) A could be the same thing as B, or
(6) A and B could both be caused by another variable C.

Options (3) through (5) were already illustrated by the example from the philosophy of mind, but (6) can be illustrated by a less pedantic topic. A study once demonstrated that in New York City the consumption of ice cream directly correlates to the city's murder rate.[16] When ice cream sales go up, so does the murder rate. When ice cream sales go down, the murder rate does too. But, even given these findings, one would be hard pressed to convince anyone that ice cream consumption is a new path to homicide. Rather, there is a lurking variable—presumably, the temperature—that serves as an underlying factor for both. In hot summer months, people consume more ice cream, but more people are also out of the confines of their homes and on the city streets, where murders may take place. So, though there is no causal connection between eating ice cream and the tendency to murder, there is a strong correlation.

While the title *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism* clearly suggests the possibility of a causal relationship between egalitarianism and liberalism, the arguments only suggest a correlation. How is this correlation to be understood? Is it an instance of (3), namely, that egalitarianism causes liberalism? This certainly seems to be the book's thesis. So, for example, in the introduction, the author asserts that his argument is "of a 'slippery slope' from evangelical feminism to liberalism. . . . Once an evangelical feminist position is adopted, the development only goes in one direction, again and again."[17] Despite the fact that he has conceded that there are many exceptions to this supposed trend (see above), many of his arguments actually point instead to instances of (4), that *liberalism* causes *egalitarianism*. So, for example, he discusses the Christian Reformed Church, which left an official inerrancy position in 1972 and approved the ordination of women in 1995.[18] How evangelical egalitarianism is the path to liberalism in this instance, when inerrancy was rejected *more than twenty years before* women's ordination, is perplexing. Indeed, the author notes that the trend he finds among such denominations is *first* to abandon biblical inerrancy officially and then *second* to endorse the ordination of women officially. So, in his support for (3), the main thesis of his book, he only cites instances of (4). It may be an interesting historical fact that liberalism is one path to egalitarianism, but why this should concern evangelical egalitarians who have come through a different path (evangelicalism) is difficult to see.

It seems unlikely that the author would argue for (5), that evangelical egalitarianism is identical to liberalism, since he repeatedly identifies evangelical egalitarians "who have not moved one inch toward liberalism in the rest of their doctrinal convictions, and who still strongly believe and defend the inerrancy of the Bible."[19] Moreover, by his very definitions, evangelicalism and liberalism are mutually exclusive. Thus, if a form of egalitarianism is evangelical, then it must not be liberal.

That leaves us with (6), that evangelical egalitarianism and liberalism share a common underlying variable that gives rise to each in different ways. And, perhaps they do. After all, liberals are not wrong about everything. Perhaps evangelical egalitarians and liberals share the same convictions about justice and the plight of the oppressed, a variable that has led them each in their own way to supporting egalitarianism. Or, perhaps liberals came to this view by affirming the inherent dignity of each member of the "human family," while evangelicals came to this view from their reading of Scripture. In such a case, a correlation could exist without any causal relationship one way or the other.

In his defense, the author does suggest a common underlying variable, namely, that both groups undermine the authority of Scripture. But if this is really true, then we are back to a case of (5), the identity view, since he defines liberalism as "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."[20] The author could have then spared us from his slippery-slope argument and simply argued that evangelical egalitarianism *is simply* the new liberalism. But this argument would be much harder to credit, especially when groups such as Christians for Biblical Equality include as the first point in their Statement of Faith: "We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the *final authority for faith and practice*."[21] If evangelical egalitarians are simply liberals, then that is news to them, not to mention that it goes against the explicit statements of the author himself. So, neither (3), (5), nor (6) has been established, though some support has been given for (4). It appears, then, that we have been given no reason to worry that evangelical egalitarianism is a cause of liberalism. Indeed, in some instances, it may be the other way around. But, if liberals are becoming *evangelical* egalitarians, this should be a cause for rejoicing, not for concern.

The slippery-slope fallacy

If we grant, contrary to fact, the book's argument for the correlation between egalitarianism and liberalism (see above), and, if we further grant, contrary to fact, its argument that this correlation is the result of evangelical egalitarianism causing liberalism (see immediately above), then yet another problem with the argument persists. For it is one thing to demonstrate that there is a contingent, historical causal relationship between two views, but it is quite another thing to show that such a causal relationship is a necessary or inevitable one that will occur in all future cases.[22] But the book's thesis would be significantly weakened if evangelical egalitarianism is only a historical, contingent path to liberalism. After all, many positions that are inherently good can be used as paths to bad positions. So, for example, as I understand it, the author is himself a committed Calvinist. But, as any historian can tell you, six of the eight Ivy League colleges and universities were founded

by committed Calvinists.[23] Nevertheless, I doubt that he would be happy with any of these schools' theological positions today. Should we conclude, then, that Calvinism is an old path to liberalism? Each of these schools did, after all, slowly shift from Calvinism to liberalism. But, of course, noting this contingent, historical trend says nothing about the intrinsic worth of the Calvinist system itself. There are too many variables that cause large institutions to shift theologically over time. Trying to isolate one particular variable as the cause for the shift is a quixotic task. And that, of course, is the problem with slippery-slope arguments in general. They attempt to show that one position is wrong or bad because it possibly leads to another position that is wrong or bad. But, unless the causation from the first to the second position is a logically necessary one, the wrongness or badness of the second position does not reflect on the value of the first.

The author twice explicitly notes that he is offering a slippery-slope argument,[24] apparently not realizing that the slippery-slope argument is ordinarily considered the slippery-slope *fallacy* in any introductory logic text.[25] Here the author—and, indeed, all of us—would all do well to recall N. T. Wright's insightful words on the gender debate:

> Part of the problem, particularly in the United States, is that cultures become so polarized that if you tick one box many assume you must tick a dozen other boxes down the same side of the page—without realizing that the page itself is highly arbitrary and culture-bound. We have to claim the freedom, in Christ and in our various cultures, to name issues one by one with wisdom and clarity, without assuming that a decision on one point commits us to a decision on others.[26]

So, despite the author's impassioned contention that evangelical egalitarianism "inevitably leads" to a whole host of "liberal" positions—such as "the denial of anything uniquely masculine," the rejection of biblical language about God, the church's acceptance of homosexual practices, and the "denial of the authority of the Word of God"[27]—there is simply no logically necessary relationship between these positions. His contingent, historical examples might provide at best an emotional or psychological connection between these positions, but that is a far cry from establishing a logical connection.

Indeed, in his discussion of the "trajectory hermeneutic," he notes that "the process of determining a 'trajectory' is so subjective that the same argument could be used in just the other way."[28] The author might have done better to remember his own words when he began charting the trajectory in which evangelical egalitarianism is headed. His argument that egalitarianism leads to a "rejection of anything uniquely masculine" tells us more about his subjective view of masculinity than it does about the trajectory of egalitarianism. Apparently, he believes that, if males and females are not ordered hierarchically, then they cannot be truly differentiated—in the same way that he believes that, if the persons of the Trinity are not ordered hierarchically, they cannot be differentiated.[29] This is a rather peculiar argument. I can differentiate between any number of things that are not hierarchically ordered. I can tell the difference between oak trees and pine trees, owls and cardinals, white people and black people, Father and Son, and men and women, all without making a distinction of hierarchy between each pair. Only by presupposing a necessary hierarchical structure would one ever suggest that egalitarianism inevitably leads to undifferentiated androgyny. In the same way, there is no logical connection between affirming the full equality of men and women in the church and home and the rejection of biblical language about God, the church's acceptance of homosexual practices, or a rejection of biblical authority.[30] These connections are purely psychological ones in the mind of the author and likeminded hierarchists. They are supported (when at all) only by circumstantial historical evidence, which itself establishes neither a strong correlation, nor much less, that such a correlation is causal. Once the psychological connections between these views are subjected to logical scrutiny, we find that the supposed connections are nothing but that—psychological. We must therefore conclude that, rather than offering a sound argument, the book is instead engaging in emotionally based rhetoric, however intuitive and persuasive it may initially appear to some.

Conclusion

The author can, of course, argue against egalitarian interpretations of Scripture, which he does throughout the book. But, even if he were to establish cases of incorrect egalitarian interpretations of Scripture in certain instances,[31] this would be a far cry from establishing that evangelical egalitarians undermine or deny the authority of Scripture and are thus on the inevitable path to liberalism.[32] All it would show is that they have misread a particular passage of Scripture—perhaps because of their own biases. We all have biases, and, the sooner we admit it, the better interpreters we will be. Indeed, New Testament scholar Gordon Fee argues that the author's own biases are read into a particular biblical passage. And while Fee somewhat polemically states that the author's interpretation of that one particular passage is "a marvelous example of a prior hermeneutical agenda's preceding the reading of texts—so much so that the plain reading of [the passage] is subjected to, and thus rejected because of, language that is not biblical at all,"[33] this argument is not used as evidence that the author is on the path to liberalism (or fundamentalism, or any other kind of *ism*). Instead, it is a simple instance of iron sharpening iron—of one evangelical Bible scholar who is fully committed to biblical authority pointing out where another evangelical Bible scholar who is fully committed to biblical authority has allowed presuppositions to cloud the reading of the text. Such critiques should be welcomed by both sides of the gender debate, while we all continue to affirm biblical authority and strive to understand Scripture better together. But, when in addition to biblical arguments, one side begins questioning the evangelical credentials of the other, then we may truly be on a slippery slope to some real problems in the church.[34]

Notes

1. For further discussion of biblical underdetermination and the gender debate, see David C. Cramer, "Creating a Culture of Equality as Witness to the Truth: A Philosophical Response to Gender Difference," *Priscilla Papers* 24, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 18–22.

2. For a prime example of such irenic and open debate, see William and Aída Spencer and Steve and Celestia Tracy, *Marriage at the Crossroads: Couples in Conversation about Discipleship, Gender Roles, Decision Making, and Intimacy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009).

3. Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006). I believe that the logical fallacies identified in Grudem's work are shared *mutatis mutandis* by a number of hierarchist scholars, though that claim will have to remain unsubstantiated for now.

4. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 261. Though Grudem prefers the term "feminism," it is clear he has in mind what is typically considered "egalitarianism." In what follows, I use these terms interchangeably.

5. See, e.g., Kevin Giles, "Book Review: *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism*?" *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 3 (2008): 27–30; cf. Karen Fulton, Ruth Gouldbourne, and Sharon James; John Wilks, ed., "Biblical Truth and Biblical Equality: A Review Article on Two Recent Books from IVP on Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Manhood and Womanhood," *Evangelical Quarterly* 78 (2006): 65–84.

6. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 26, cf. 29. It is initially unclear how to understand this correlation, though, as will be shown later, the author intends for it to be interpreted as a causal relationship.

7. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 29.

8. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 24, n. 4.

9. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 29.

10. For example, in her study of the autobiographies of more than thirty Wesleyan-Holiness women ministers, Susie C. Stanley observes: "Many . . . have assumed, incorrectly, that women preachers were extremely rare outside Pentecostalism and recent mainline Protestantism and have no knowledge of the long tradition of Wesleyan/Holiness women preachers" (*Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self* [Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2002], xxvii). Stanley notes that "a 1976 survey reported 1,801 women clergy in [mainline Protestant] denominations while the number reported for Wesleyan/Holiness groups was 4,131" (ibid.).

11. "Statement of Faith," Christians for Biblical Equality Website, cbeinternational.org/?q=content/statement-faith, accessed 2010. Italics mine.

12. See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

13. See, e.g., John Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science: Religious Experience, Neuroscience, and the Transcendent* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

14. A view in philosophy of mind known as epiphenomenalism.

15. A view known as brain/mind identity.

16. I recall reading about this study long ago in an introductory sociology book. See, for example, "Causal Inferences," University of California at Fresno Web site, http://psych.csufresno.edu/psy144/Content/Measurement/causation.html, accessed 2013.

17. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 12 .

18. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 25.

19. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 20.

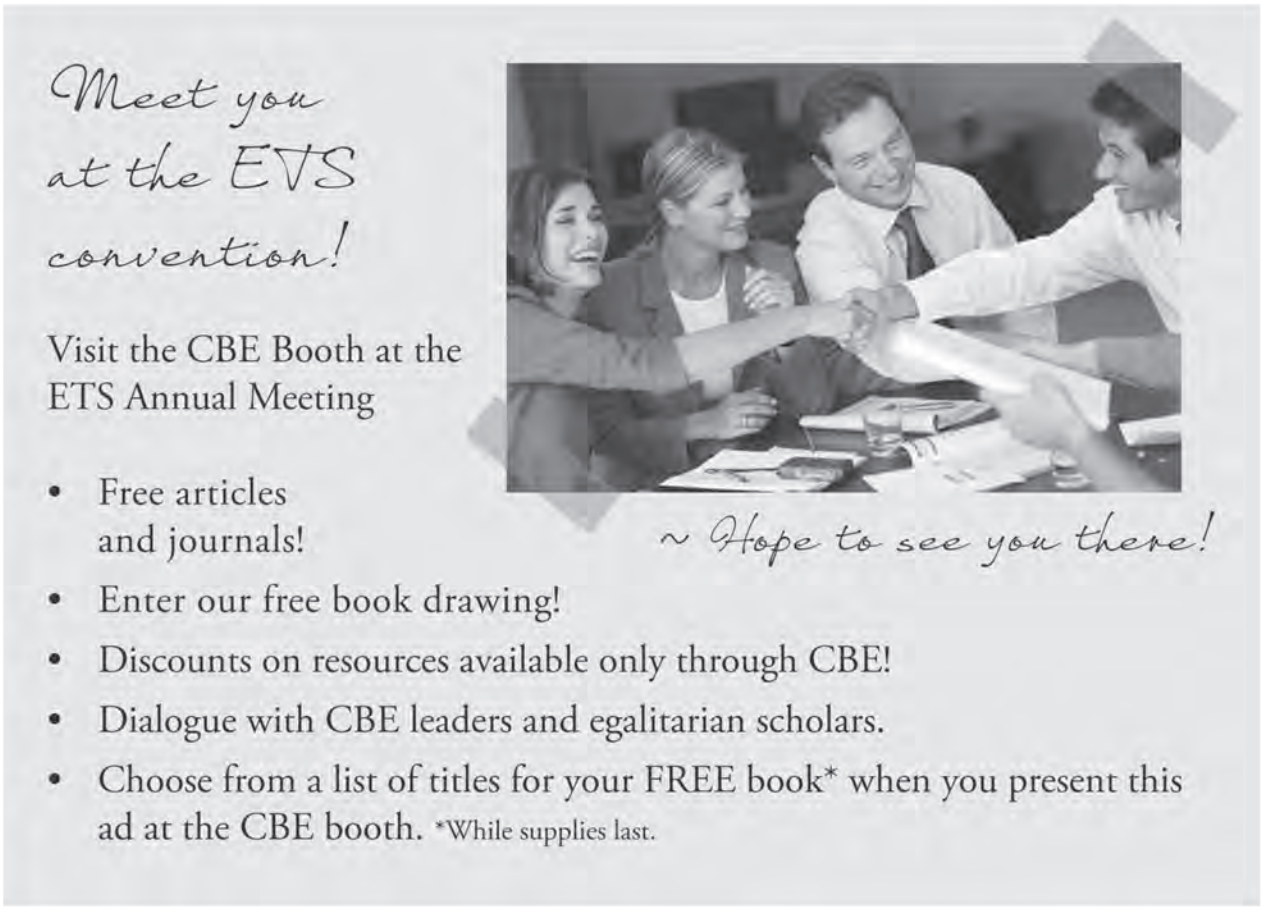
20. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 15.

21. "Statement of Faith," Christians for Biblical Equality. Italics mine.

22. Another way of stating this critique is that Grudem is attempting to offer deductive arguments, when his historical evidence at best can be used to support inductive arguments. Deductive arguments are universal and necessary, whereas inductive arguments are probabilistic and contingent. Throughout the book, there seems to be a fundamental confusion between these two types of logical arguments.

23. Specifically, as I understand it, Brown was founded by Calvinist Baptists; Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth by Puritans; Princeton by Presbyterians; and Columbia by Calvinist Anglicans. The University of Pennsylvania and Cornell are the only two exceptions, the former founded by Benjamin Franklin and the latter founded explicitly as a secular institution.

24. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 12, 240.



25. See, e.g., Norman L. Geisler and Ronald M. Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 113–14. As with the other fallacies discussed, the slippery-slope fallacy is informal, meaning that the use of such an argument is guilty until proven innocent. It is not my argument that there are no possible sound uses of such arguments, but rather that Grudem's arguments do not constitute such uses.

26. N. T. Wright, "The Biblical Basis for Women's Service in the Church," *Priscilla Papers* 20, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 5.

27. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 262, 224, 263.

28. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 61.

29. See the debate, "Do relations of authority and submission exist eternally among the Persons of the Godhead?" held on 9 October 2008 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where Bruce Ware and Wayne Grudem argue the affirmative answer and Tom McCall and Keith Yandell offer the counterargument; outline available at http://www.henrycenter.org/blog/?p=36 (accessed 2009). Audio and video of the debate are available at http://www.henrycenter.org. Cf. Thomas McCall and Keith E. Yandell, "On Trinitarian Subordinationism," *Philosophia Christi* 11 (2009): 339–58.

30. Christians for Biblical Equality sees no contradiction among the following Statements of Faith: (1) "We believe the Bible is the Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice"; (2) "We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society"; and, (3) "We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as God's design" (see www.cbeinternational.org). I, too, see no contradiction here.

31. My own assessment of Grudem's arguments is similar to that of hierarchical New Testament scholar Robert Yarbrough, who states on the endorsement page of the book that the "chapters and charges carry varying weights."

32. Moreover, as a number of evangelical scholars are beginning to realize, even the dichotomy between evangelical and liberal is too simplistic; in some instances, one may be *more* evangelical, i.e., able to interpret the Bible more faithfully, by being *less* conservative, i.e., less tied to tradition. For the sake of discussion, I will bracket this interesting hypothesis for now. See Roger E. Olson, *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007); see also my review of Olson's book in *Ethics and Medicine: An International Journal of Bioethics* 24 (2008): 189–90.

33. Gordon D. Fee, "The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 247.

34. This paper was first presented at the Evangelical Philosophical Society Midwest Regional Meeting, 19 March 2010, St. Paul, Minnesota. Thanks to those in attendance for their insightful and charitable dialogue. Special thanks to Brother Tim Erdel for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

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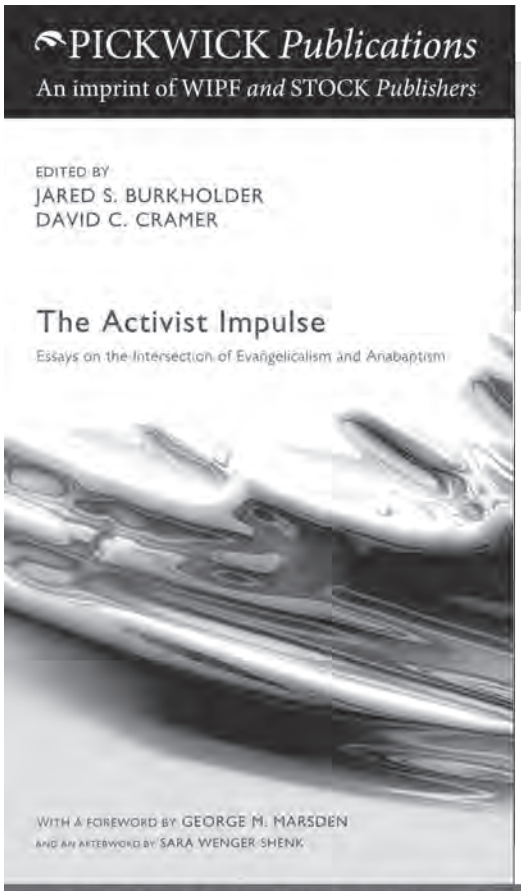

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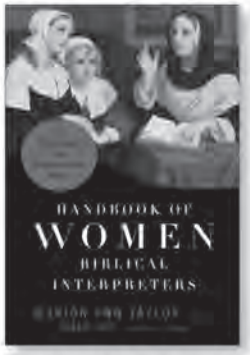

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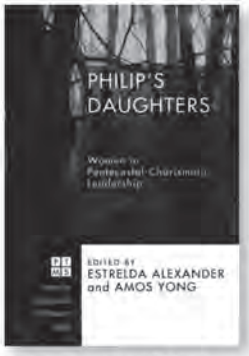

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