Male Authority in Context

Featuring

Examining the Twelve Biblical Pillars of Male Hierarchy
by Philip B. Payne

The Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity
by Kevin Giles

Hermeneutics in Pink and Blue
by Christiane Carlson-Thies

...and more

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On the Cover • Peter and Saint Pudentiana, daughter of Saint Pudens. Photograph comes from the Church of Saint Praxedis, Rome, Italy. Photograph courtesy of Dale Halladay.

Editor's Reflections

Biblical authority is of primary importance for evangelicals in determining the will of God in the world today. It serves as a final arbiter in making decisions in the church and in the home. Thus, there needs to be an emphasis on the interpretation of the text, a process that begins with God and prayer. However, where does one move from there? Part of interpretation is an understanding of the historical and literary contexts of the passage or passages being studied. Errant interpretations can emerge without such understanding. As I often share with my classes, "A text, without a context, is a pretext."

Even with historical and literary analysis of a passage, interpretation can be limited by human language itself. This is true even when working in one's own language. How much more difficult it is to determine the meaning when one is translating from one language to another, separated by time and culture! Words can be parsed and traced to their origins, and their historical and literary contexts can be determined, but meaning can remain tenuous at times, as centuries of scholarship attest. Humility is an additional component that is a necessary part of interpretation, but is often forgotten. James A. Sanders has correctly commented that when it comes to biblical interpretation, we need to learn to take "God a little more seriously each time we read Scripture and ourselves a little less so."[1]

Words can be parsed and traced to their origins, and their historical and literary contexts can be determined, but meaning can remain tenuous at times, as centuries of scholarship attest.

The following articles are offered to further the discussion of a biblical understanding of authority as it pertains to women and men in the church, home, and society. Two articles are written by Philip B. Payne. The first, "Examining the Twelve Biblical Pillars of Male Hierarchy," represents thirty-nine years of research on male/female relationships in Scripture. Payne argues that when we take context into account, every text used to support hierarchy in fact affirms mutual submission between the genders.

In his second article, "Galatians 3:28's Application of Paul's New Creation Teaching to the Status of Women in Christ," Payne applies the concept of new creation to women not only as it pertains to salvation, but also as it should be understood in the church and the home. He uses Galatians 3:28 as the paradigm passage, viewing the concept of the new creation as removing all division between people. Providing forty-two factors based on cultural, historical, and literary contexts, Payne emphasizes that Galatians 3:28 and parallel passages cannot be separated from the life of the church or home.

Kevin Giles supplies context to the discussion of the Trinity in his article, "The Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity." Giles traces the development of the doctrine of the Trinity from the early church to modern times. He questions the complementarian application of the Trinity to the concept of subordination of the female in the male/female relationship, which is based on one reading of 1 Corinthians 11:3-11. Giles contends that false logic, rooted in a hierarchical reading of the male-female dynamic in Scripture, leads to a supposed subordination of God the Son to God the Father. He then emphasizes that the notion of such a relationship between God the Father and God the Son has been rejected as heresy throughout history. What is more, Giles sees a danger in using the Trinity as a guide for social agendas, such defining the male-female relationship.

Scripture is the living Word of God and therefore speaks to all contexts. We must think critically about how our own contexts influence our interpretation of the text. Christiane Carlson-Thies does just that in "Hermeneutics in Pink and Blue," which notes extensive interpretive discrepancies and double-standards in the treatment of key texts relating to gender and authority.

Scripture, correctly applied, ought to sharpen the Christian community in any setting. To this end, Arbutus Sider weighs in on Gayle Haggard's book, *Why I Stayed*, which recounts the aftermath of her husband's nationally-publicized sex scandal. In doing so, Sider notes the unmentioned but damaging contribution of the church's gendered authority structure and expectations.

In order to take the interpretation of the biblical text seriously, we must closely examine and seriously dialogue about it, accounting for its background, our own context, and its implications in our own world. This volume is offered as a means to begin such a discussion as it concerns male authority in context.

Notes

1. "The Bible as Canon," *The Christian Century*, December 2, 1981, 1250-1255.

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Examining the Twelve Biblical Pillars of Male Hierarchy

Philip B. Payne

Does it really matter what the Bible says about man and woman? Jesus repeatedly affirmed the Scriptures to be God's word. Paul affirms that all Scripture is God-breathed. The Bible is God's perfectly holy word and has final authority on all matters, including man and woman.

So when some argue that the Bible opposes the equal standing of man and woman in the church and home, they are taking the issue to the final court of appeals, as they should. Twelve seemingly strong biblical pillars support their argument:

1. Male headship.
2. "Wives, submit to your husbands."
3. Women may not teach.
4. Man's priority in the creation order.
5. Woman is man's helper.
6. God decreed, "he will rule over you."
7. In the Old Testament, only males exemplify leadership.
8. Only males were priests.
9. Only males were apostles.
10. Only males were overseers, pastors, or elders.
11. Women should not speak in church.
12. Men and women have separate roles in the church.

Does this not mean that the Bible, and therefore God, is overwhelmingly in favor of male hierarchy? I first heard the claim that the Bible does not limit the ministry of women as a beginning PhD student at Cambridge University. I almost stood up in the middle of the lecture to yell, "That's not true," but instead determined to disprove it. This essay distills thirty-nine years of research about these twelve pillars and highlights some crucial evidence that the biblical passages to which they appeal do not warrant male hierarchy.[1] I discovered that the very Scriptures I thought supported hierarchy actually promote equality.

Pillar 1: The Bible teaches "male headship."

"Male headship" means that only males should be leaders in the church and in the home. It is based on statements in the Bible that "man is the head of woman" and "the husband is the head of his wife." These English translations seem to imply "head" as authority over, but their contexts explain that they mean, respectively, "the man Adam is the source of woman" and "a husband is a source of love and nourishment for his wife." In Paul's day, the Greek word for "head," *kephalē*, was not commonly associated with leadership as it is in English. The most exhaustive Greek dictionary (LSJ) lists forty-eight translations of *kephalē* as a metaphor, but none mean leader or authority or anything similar. Nearly all dictionaries covering native Greek usage up to New Testament times do not give even one example of *kephalē* that means authority.[2] "Source," however, is a standard meaning of *kephalē*. The point of Paul's head-body metaphors with Christ the head of the body, the church, is not the authority of Christ (though Christ does have authority), but that Christ is the source of life and nourishment for the church.[3] For instance, Colossians 1:18, "he is the *kephalē* [head] of the body, the church, who is the *archē* ["origin" NEB or "the source of the body's life" TEV]; Colossians 2:19, "the *kephalē* [head], from whom the whole body . . . grows;" Ephesians 4:15–16, "the Head, that is, Christ, from whom the whole body . . . grows." *Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 also conveys "source": Christ the source of man (cf. 8:6; 11:8, 12), man the source of woman (cf. 11:8, 12), and God the source of Christ.

The Greek Old Testament shows that most of its translators did not regard *kephalē* as an appropriate word to convey "leader." When referring to a physical head, they almost always chose *kephalē*, but they hardly ever chose it when the Hebrew word for "head" meant "leader." In 171 such instances, the standard Greek translation (LXX) translates "head" *kephalē* clearly meaning "leader" only six times.[4]

Paul never teaches male headship, but he clearly teaches, again and again, leadership in the church and in the home by women. He repeatedly affirms women in his lists of church leaders. Seven of the ten people Paul names as colleagues in ministry in Romans 16 are women: Phoebe, "deacon of the church of Cenchrea" (16:1) and "leader[5] of many, including myself" (16:2); Junia, "outstanding among the apostles"[6] (16:7), Prisca, "my fellow worker in Christ Jesus" (16:3), and Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis "worked hard in the Lord" (16:6, 12). Paul lists many names, but he affirms only a few as working hard in gospel ministry, and most of them are women. He names the wives of Aquila and Andronicus, two of the three men identified in ministry in this same list, highlighting their shared authority. Although Luke and Paul follow Greek custom in listing Aquila's name first when they introduce this couple, both list Prisca first in every passage about their ministry. I know of no parallel to Paul's naming so many women leaders in an open society in the entire history of ancient Greek literature. In spite of his male-centered culture, Paul repeatedly affirms women in church leadership.

Pillar 2: Ephesians 5 teaches, "Wives submit to your husbands."

Grammatically, the wife's submission is explicitly one facet of mutual submission. It refers to voluntary yielding in love (5:21–22). Paul calls both wives and husbands to defer to and nurture one another. Christ is the model for all believers (4:13, 32–5:2), even as "head" (4:15), which 4:16 explains as the source of the body's growth. Paul defines what he means by "head" in 5:23 similarly by equating it with "savior" through emphatic apposition: "Christ head of the church, he savior of the body." What does Christ do as "savior"? Paul explains: "Christ *gives himself*" for the church (5:25, emphasis added) and "nourishes and cherishes" it (5:29). Paul also treats husbands and wives equally in relation to their children (6:1–2; Col 3:20) and tells wives to "rule their homes," literally "be house despots" (1 Tim 5:14). If this is not leadership in the home, what is?

Paul's most detailed treatment of marriage, 1 Corinthians 7, specifies exactly the same conditions, opportunities, rights, and obligations for wives and husbands regarding twelve distinct issues about marriage, both physical and spiritual (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 10–11, 12–13, 14, 15, 16, 28, 32 and 34b, and 33–34a and 34c). In each, he addresses men and women as equals. His wording is symmetrically balanced to reinforce this equality. Paul affirms that husband and wife mutually possess each another (v. 2). They have mutual conjugal rights (3), authority over the other's body (4), and sexual obligations (5). He tells both not to divorce (10–13). Both set apart the other and their children with the spiritual privilege of experiencing the gospel lived out (14). Both have freedom to remarry if deserted (15). Both have a potentially saving influence on the other (16). Paul even writes (7:4), "the husband does not have authority over his own body, but his wife does." Richard Hays correctly observes how revolutionary this was: "Paul offers a paradigm-shattering vision of marriage as a relationship in which the partners are bonded together in submission to one another."[7]

Pillar 3: 1 Timothy 2:12 prohibits women from teaching or having authority over men.

The people who came up with this translation of 1 Timothy 2:12 did not do their homework! This verse simply prohibits women in the church in Ephesus from seizing authority to teach men. It does not prohibit women from teaching men as long as they have recognized teaching authority, like Priscilla did. The old NIV misleadingly reads, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." This translation is doubtful for four reasons.

First, the key Greek verb here, *authentein*, is best translated "to assume authority." The first documented occurrence of *authentein* clearly meaning "exercise authority" is three centuries after Paul wrote 1 Timothy.[8] Every other reference to "authority" in the New Testament is based on a different word, *exousia*. In Paul's day *authentein* could mean either "to dominate" or, more commonly, "to assume authority." Every time it means "assume authority," the authority is seized, not rightfully held. The King James translation, "to usurp authority," reflects this understanding. The standard New Testament Greek Dictionary, BDAG, defines it "to assume a stance of independent authority." The NIV 2011 correctly translates it, "to assume authority."

Second, Paul typically uses the conjunction in this verse, *oude*, to join two elements to convey a single idea.[9] In this case, *oude* joins "to teach" and "to assume authority." Consequently, Paul does not prohibit two things: teaching and seizing authority over men. He prohibits one thing: women seizing authority to teach men. Similarly, Paul prohibited false teachers from unauthorized teaching (1:3).

Third, the translation "I do not permit" is doubtful because the verb Paul chose normally refers to something limited in time, not permanent. Furthermore, its grammatical form is rarely used for a permanent prohibition, but usually focuses on a presently ongoing permission or prohibition, so is best translated, "I am not permitting."

Fourth, if this verse is a permanent prohibition of women teaching or having authority over a man, it contradicts the Bible's affirmations of women teaching. Paul encouraged women to teach in church. 1 Corinthians 14:26 states, "whenever you come together, each one"—which includes men and women—"has a . . . teaching (*didakē*). . . ." Likewise, Colossians 3:16 encourages all believers (cf. v. 11), "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom." Paul commands older women in Titus 2:3 to "be teachers of what is excellent."[10]

Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) was the first Christian exposition of Scripture. Both Phoebe and Priscilla taught adult men. Since Phoebe delivered Romans as Paul's emissary (16:1), she naturally answered the Romans' questions about it. Priscilla and Aquila explained to Apollos "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). She did this in the very city this prohibition addresses, and she was probably there when Paul wrote 1 Timothy (2 Tim 4:19).

God revealed through women even key portions of inspired Scripture, such as Exodus 15:21; Judges 5:2–31; 1 Samuel 2:1–10; 25:24–31; and Luke 1:25, 42–45, 46–55. Each teaches divine truth.

These and many other passages that approve women teaching (see note 10) demonstrate the error of interpreting 1 Timothy 2:12 as a permanent prohibition against women teaching.

Pillar 4: The "Creation Order" establishes man's priority over woman.

Nothing in Genesis teaches that creation order establishes man's priority over woman. God created the plants and animals before man, yet to whom did God give dominion? Was it not the one created later? In fact, the leadership of the one born later is a major Old Testament theme: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Judah over his older brothers, Moses over Aaron, David over his brothers, and so on.

The Genesis account of creation teaches not hierarchy, but that both man and woman together have dominion over the earth. God created man and woman equally in his image. This

equality is not limited to spiritual standing before God, but includes shared authority over the earth. Contrary to the male-oriented custom in Moses' day, 2:24 calls the man, not his wife, to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.

The creation account does not grant man priority in status or authority over woman, but throughout emphasizes their equality.[11]

Pillar 5: God calls woman man's "helper" in Genesis 2:18, so women must be subordinate to men.

The narrative structure of Genesis 2 climaxes in the creation of woman, highlighting man's need for a partner corresponding to him. God says, "I will make a strength corresponding to him" in Genesis 2:18. The first word of this expression, sometimes translated "helper" (NIV 2011), means "strength, help, savior, or rescuer." It uses a word that in Scripture nowhere else refers to an inferior, but always to a superior or equal. Sixteen times it describes God as the helper, the rescuer of people in need, their strength or power; the remaining three times (Isa 30:5; Dan 11:34; Hos 13:9) it describes a military protector. It never implies subordination or submission to the one rescued. It means literally, "a strength as in front of him," namely, "a strength corresponding to him."

New creatures freed by Christ should not foster any of the tragic consequences the fall introduced, including man's rule over woman.

Pillar 6: Man ought to rule over woman since God decreed, "He will rule over you," in Genesis 3:16.

This is God's statement of what will result from the fall, not God's decree of what should be. Like every other result of the fall, this is something new, not in the original creation. It is a distortion of God's design. Even leading advocates of male hierarchy agree that this "is not a prescription of what should be."[12] They fail to acknowledge, however, that the word for "rule" here does not imply bad rule. Both major Hebrew Lexicons (*HALOT* 2:647–48 and BDB 605) analyze every Old Testament instance of this word and list no negative meaning for it. This word is even used for God's rule.

Since man's ruling over woman—even good rule—is a result of the fall, man must not have ruled over woman before the fall. Furthermore, Christ, the promised seed of the woman, has overcome the fall (Gen 3:15; 1 Cor 15:45). New creatures freed by Christ should not foster any of the tragic consequences the fall introduced, including man's rule over woman.

Pillar 7: The Old Testament pattern of male leadership shows that God approves only male leaders.

To claim that God approves only male leaders in the Old Testament is simply false. Even after the fall, the Old Testament describes many women in leadership with God's blessing. It never states that being female should disqualify them. God sent the prophetess Miriam "to lead" Israel (Mic 6:4). Deborah is one of the judges whom "the Lord raised up" and who "saved Israel from the hands of their enemies" (Jdg 2:16, 18; 4:10, 14, 24; 5:1–31). She was a prophetess and the highest leader in all Israel in her day (4:4–5). She, a wife and mother (5:7), had authority to command Israel's military commander, Barak, "Go!" (4:6, 14) and he went. They worked together well with shared authority, he as military commander, she as commander in chief.

Queen Esther had sufficient influence to save her people from imminent genocide and to bring about the destruction of the house of Haman along with 75,000 enemies of the Jews. She, along with Mordecai, "wrote with full authority," and "Esther's decree confirmed these regulations" (Est 9:29–32). The Bible praises the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1–13; 2 Chron 9:1–12) and the Queen of Chaldea (Dan 5:10–12). Although queens Jezebel and Athaliah were wicked (1 Kings 18:4), as were most of Israel's kings, the Bible does not criticize them or any other woman on the grounds that women should not have authority over men.

Priests consulted the prophetess Huldah on finding the lost book of the Law. Men in spiritual leadership over Israel sought instruction from her. The king, the elders, the prophets, and the people accepted her word as divinely revealed (2 Kings 22:14–23:3; 2 Chron 34:22–32). Their obedience to her sparked what is probably the greatest revival in the history of Israel (2 Kings 22:14–23:25; 2 Chron 34:29–35:19).

More generally, the Old Testament expresses hope that all people, women and men, should take spiritual leadership as prophets. Moses said, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" (Num 11:29). Joel predicted a greater prophetic role for women: "I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28–29; fulfilled at Pentecost, Acts 2:14–21).

Never does the Bible state that women leaders are exceptions to a scriptural principle. Quite the opposite of excluding women from leadership over men, the Old Testament describes God appointing women to both secular and sacred leadership.

Pillar 8: In the Old Testament, God approves only male priests.

The only significant social or religious position the Old Testament does not record women holding is that of priest. The most obvious reason for this is the association of priestesses in pagan religions with prostitution, which Deuteronomy 23:17 prohibits. God repeatedly forbade Israel from giving an appearance of following the immoral practices of the surrounding nations. Yet God commanded Moses to call all the children of Israel to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Isaiah 61:6 predicts a future when all God's people "will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God."

Pillar 9: There were no women apostles, so there should be no women in church leadership.

The assumption that a lack of women apostles excludes women from church leadership is a non sequitur. It is equally true that Jesus didn't appoint any Gentile or slave as a member of the twelve. Does that mean Gentiles and slaves should be excluded from church leadership? Jesus' appointment of twelve Jewish men paralleled the twelve sons of Israel and reinforced the symbolism of the church as the "new Israel." It was not aimed against women in church leadership.

Jesus must not have wanted only male disciples because he encouraged women as disciples.[13] When Mary "sat at the Lord's feet listening," the posture and position of a disciple, Jesus affirms her, "Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38–42). Furthermore, Jesus did not limit the proclamation of the gospel to men. Mary Magdalene was the first person the resurrected Christ sought out and commissioned to announce the gospel of his resurrection and coming ascension to God the Father (John 20:14–18). Christ appointed her an apostle to the apostles:

> Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."
>
> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her" (NIV 2011).

Furthermore, Paul identifies Junia as "outstanding among the apostles" (Rom 16:7). This group included James (Gal 1:19) and Paul, who were both more influential than any of the twelve. Jesus' choice of the twelve in no way excludes women from leadership in the church.

Pillar 10: Women must not be elders, overseers, or pastors of local churches, because the Bible only identifies men, never women, in these offices.

This entire assertion is logically vacuous. Apart from Christ (Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4), the New Testament does not name anyone, man or woman, as an overseer (*episkopos*) or pastor (*poimēn*). The Bible does give John (2 John 1 and 3 John 1) and Peter (2 Pet 5:1) special titles containing the word "elder," but they refer to their special status as apostolic eyewitnesses. They do not identify them as having a local church office.

The only New Testament person named with an explicit title of local church leadership is not a man at all, but a woman: "Phoebe deacon of the church in Cenchrea" (Rom 16:1). The same title was used for a pagan religious office and could apply to women, e.g. *CIG* II: 3037. This is not the Greek word for deaconess, *diakonissa*, and in context definitely does not mean "maid."[14] Cranfield argues it is "virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as 'a (or possibly "the") deacon' of the church."[15] Calvin says she had "a public office in the Church."[16]

It makes no sense to exclude women from local church offices like pastor just because a woman was not given that title in the New Testament. After all, the only named person in the New Testament to be given any explicit local church title was Phoebe, a woman.

Paul encourages all believers to desire the office of overseer by stating in 1 Timothy 3:1, "Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task" (NIV 2011). The subject of both Paul's lists of qualifications for overseers and elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is "anyone." There is not a single masculine pronoun or any other limitation to men in either list, contrary to most English translations. Both the Common English Bible and the Contemporary English Version translate these passages faithfully, without introducing any masculine pronouns.

Some think that "one woman man" in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 excludes women, but even prominent complementarians Doug Moo and Thomas Schreiner acknowledge this phrase does not exclude women.[17] It is a requirement that overseers be "monogamous," whether men or women. As Hugenberger has shown,[18] and Jesus' interpretation of Deuteronomy 24 in Mark 10:12 confirms, it is common throughout the Bible for prohibitions addressing men also to apply to women. For example, "Do not covet your neighbor's wife" implicitly also prohibits coveting your neighbor's husband.

Paul's point is not that all overseers must be married. Paul, after all, encourages single believers not to marry but to be devoted to the Lord in 1 Corinthians 7:27–28, 32–35. Furthermore, to demand that overseers be married would exclude Jesus, Paul (1 Cor 7:7), and virtually all Catholic priests as well as monastics, both male and female.

Since "one woman man" is an idiomatic phrase for a monogamous relationship, any claim that a single word of it ("man") also functions separately as a universal requirement must posit a double meaning. The context does not warrant this. It is bad hermeneutics to isolate a single word ("man") from an idiomatic phrase ("one woman man") and elevate that single word to the status of a separate universal requirement. It is like taking "household" out of "ruling children and their own households well" and insisting that only slave owners can be overseers.

Furthermore, since Phoebe was a deacon (Rom 16:2) and the qualifications for women are included under deacons (1 Tim 3:11), "one woman man" in the very next verse of this section must not exclude women. Consequently, this idiomatic phrase must not exclude women in 1 Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:6, either.

Pillar 11: 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 commands three times, "Let women be silent in the churches."

It is true these verses three times explicitly prohibit women from speaking in church. They even prohibit a respected woman, a wife, from asking questions in church out of a desire to learn. These verses have puzzled virtually everyone who has studied them, including early church fathers, because their plain meaning contradicts statements throughout this chapter that "all" may teach and prophesy (5, 24, 26, 31, 39) and the affirmation of women prophesying in 11:5–6. In addition, everywhere else Paul cites "the law" he quotes Scripture, but "the law" (14:34) never commands

women to be in submission or to be silent in religious gatherings. In fact, Psalm 68:11 (12 MT) states, "The Lord announced the word; the women proclaiming it are a great company." Isaiah 40:9 states, "O woman, . . . say, 'Here is your God!'"

Scholars who assume Paul is expressing a command in these verses have proposed an enormous number of interpretations to limit its demand for silence, such as restricting only the judging of prophecies or only disruptive chatter, each contrary to its plain meaning in Greek and most English translations. These interpretations *permit* the type of speech specifically *prohibited* in verse 35!

The key to understanding these verses is evident in the earliest manuscripts of them. The fundamental question in determining the original text of Scripture is known as Bengel's first principle. It states, "The text that best explains the emergence of all other texts is most likely original." These verses follow verse 40 in Western text-type manuscripts, but in other manuscripts they follow verse 33. There are only three reasonable possibilities for their original location: after v. 33, after v. 40, or in the margin. Did New Testament scribes in copying manuscripts move large blocks of text this far without an obvious reason? No, they did not. In fact, there is not a single manuscript of any passage of comparable length in any of Paul's letters that has been moved this far without an obvious reason. It would have been totally out of character and convention for a scribe to move these verses from after verse 33 to after verse 40 or vice versa.

It was scribal custom, however, to write omitted text in the margin and for scribes to copy text they found in the margin into the body text where they thought it fit best. Similarly, any secretary retyping an edited letter will move marginal notes into the body of the letter. Transcriptional probability, therefore, argues that someone first wrote, "Let women be silent in the churches. . . ." in the margin of a manuscript, and later copyists inserted it either after v. 33 or after v. 40. After all, common sense demands that something customary is more likely to occur than something so extraordinary that no other instance is known.

As marginal text, its meaning is not constrained by its context. Consequently, its purpose is harder to determine. Specifically, one cannot know if this text in the margin is something Paul affirms or denies. Perhaps it identifies the false prophecy Paul had in mind in his adjacent reference to "one who thinks he is a prophet." It is doubtful Paul himself penned 14:34–35, since a typical margin would not have room for this much text in his large handwriting (Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17). One can only conjecture who wrote it in the margin, why, and when. Therefore, this command that women be silent in church should not be used to establish theology or church practice.

Some may become alarmed at this prospect of "taking verses out of the Bible," thinking this may undermine faith in the inerrancy of the original autographs. However, this concern is unfounded. This is a unique case, the only passage in Paul's letters where such a large block of text occurs in locations so far away with no adequate explanation if it was originally in the body text. Its origin as marginal text is the only natural explanation of the manuscript evidence. Consequently, this key reason to regard it as marginal text does not support the marginal status, much less exclusion, of any other passage of Scripture.

Most Bible-believing scholars, including Don Carson and Dan Wallace,[19] believe the narrative of the woman taken in adultery was not originally in the text. Carson writes, "those [manuscripts] that do include it [John 7:53–8:11] display a rather high frequency of textual variants. . . . The diversity of placement confirms the inauthenticity of the verses."[20] The command that women be silent in church, in addition to sharing these features is also like the narrative of the adulteress since it contains word usage atypical of the book's author, disrupts the narrative or topic of the passage, and has marginal symbols or notes indicating scribal awareness of a textual problem. In both cases, the most important New Testament manuscript, *Codex Vaticanus*, has a symbol of a textual variant at the exact point both these passages begin.

Furthermore, the passage silencing women has many more evidences that it was added later than even the narrative of the adulteress:

- It makes alien use of vocabulary from this chapter.
- It conflicts with the goal of instruction in church.
- "Just as the law says" does not fit Paul's theology or style, nor is there any such law in the Old Testament.
- It subordinates a weak social group that Paul champions.
- Its vocabulary mimics that of the later 1 Timothy 2:11–15.
- In 1 Corinthians only these verses are directed to people "in the churches."
- And it fits an obvious motive for this addition, to silence women.

The conflicts between the content of these verses and Paul's teachings indicate that if Paul had them put in the margin, he probably did so to identify what false prophecy he had in mind in his adjacent rebuke of "one who thinks he is a prophet" (v. 37).

Most scholars who have published an analysis of the manuscript data, however, like Gordon Fee, have concluded that these verses were not in Paul's original letter or its margin. *Man and Woman, One in Christ* identifies seven evidences from actual manuscripts plus nine internal features of the text that support understanding this passage as a later addition.[21] If 14:34–35 is a later addition, not in the original text, it does not have apostolic authority. If it quotes a false prophecy, that false prophecy does not have authority. Overwhelming evidence that it was first written in the margin means this command that women be silent in church should not be used to establish theology or church practice.

Pillar 12: Men and women have separate roles in the church.

Not only are roles taught nowhere in Scripture, Paul explicitly expresses the equal standing of male and female in Christ. First Corinthians 11:11 states, "However, neither is woman separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord." Standard

Greek dictionaries do not support the translation "independent." Paul states that woman and man are "not separate" in the context of affirming that women, like men, may pray and prophesy, leading worship in church. Therefore, Paul's denial that women are separate from men "in the Lord" must apply to women in church leadership. Paul introduces 11:11 with the word "however," which, in Greek, highlights his point of central concern.[22] Paul is stating a fundamental principle of public worship: there is no gender-based separation in church leadership.

Galatians 2–3 also explicitly affirms this fundamental principle. When Peter withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles in Galatia, Paul "opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned . . . [of] hypocrisy . . . [and] not acting in line with the truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:11–14 NIV). In defending his denunciation of Peter's unequal treatment, Paul asserts the principle of the equal standing of Jew and Gentile in Christ and expands it to include slave and free and male and female in Galatians 3:28. Therefore, this verse in context teaches that any exclusion of Gentiles, slaves, or women as a class from full participation in church is contrary to the gospel. Galatians 3:28 is not limited to who can be saved. As the forty-two theological, historical, cultural, contextual, and exegetical reasons identified in the following article demand, it is a call to radically new social interaction based on equality in the body of Christ, the church. In Christ there is no male-female division. Excluding women from leadership roles in church is precisely such a male-female division that Galatians 3:28 denounces.

Peter clearly repented of his hypocrisy and action contrary to the gospel, because he praises "all Paul's letters," which always include Galatians, as Scripture (2 Pet 3:15–16). Those who say they affirm the equality of men and women yet restrict the roles of women in church leadership should follow Peter's example and repent. They should acknowledge with Paul that making such a male-female division in the church is contrary to the gospel.

Conclusion

Concerning the twelve pillars examined above, the Bible teaches the following:

1. Men and women should share leadership. Leadership is not exclusively male.
2. Men and women should "submit to one another" in the church and in marriage.
3. Women may teach in church.
4. Men and women share dominion in creation.
5. Woman is a "strength corresponding to" man, not his subordinate.
6. Male rule is a result of the fall.
7. The Old Testament approves women in leadership.
8. The biblical ideal is that all believers should be priests and should prophesy.
9. There were women leaders in the apostolic church.
10. The Bible does not exclude women from local church offices. In fact, the only person the Bible explicitly names with the title of a local church office is Phoebe.
11. The Bible encourages women to speak, even prophesy, in church.
12. The Bible teaches that the exclusion of women from leadership roles is contrary to the gospel.

A close examination of these twelve alleged biblical pillars for male hierarchy reveals that the Bible teaches quite the contrary: the equal standing of man and woman in creation and in the new creation in Christ.

The problem with these twelve biblical pillars of male hierarchy is not just that none of the texts to which they appeal actually affirm male hierarchy. The crucial problem of male hierarchy is that so many foundational principles of the Bible directly oppose it, including each the following theological axioms from Paul that man and woman are equally:

- Created in God's image
- Given dominion over the earth
- Given the creation blessing
- Given the creation mandate
- In Christ

Each of the following theological axioms from Paul also entails the equality of man and woman:

- Mutual submission in the church.
- Mutual submission in marriage.
- The oneness of Christ's body.
- The priesthood of all believers.
- Liberty in Christ.
- The new creation.
- Inaugurated eschatology.
- The Spirit gifts all for ministry.
- The nature of church leadership as service applies equally to man and woman.
- There is no male-female division in Christ.
- Male and female are not separate in the Lord.

Sadly, many still say the Bible excludes all women, even women God has called and gifted for ministry, from teaching or having authority over men in the church. This causes untold loss to the church and pain to those excluded. Similarly, many husbands use the Bible to assert authority over or even abuse their wives, rather than treat them as co-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 3:7). Such dubious interpretations lead many to despise God's Word as an oppressor of women. Most attribute their restrictions on women to Paul, the best-documented defender of the equality of men and women of all antiquity.

The Bible records many women as well as men leading the church. It teaches their shared authority and calls men and women to mutual submission in the church and marriage. The texts teaching these things are numerous and unambiguous. The weight of the biblical evidence topples each of these twelve pillars. There is no solid biblical foundation for male hierarchy. Scripture affirms instead, the equal standing of man and woman in the church and in the home.

Notes

1. Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009) provides detailed supporting exegesis and documents evidence for each assertion in this article.

2. Moulton and Milligan, Friedrich Preisigke, Pierre Chantraine, S. C. Woodhouse and the thirteen additional lexicons cited by Richard S. Cervin, "Does *Kephalē* mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal," *Trinity Journal* 10 NS (1989): 85–112, 86–87. This also applies to the LSJ supplement by R. Renehan, *Greek Lexicographical Notes: A Critical Supplement to the Greek-English Lexicon of Liddell-Scott-Jones* (Hypomnemata 45; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 120.

3. Marcus Barth, *Ephesians* (2 vols.; AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 1:184; Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Meaning and Metaphor in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 147, argues that "head" in 4:15 is a live metaphor for "source of the body's life and growth."

4. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 119, lists them and explains why other alleged instances do not meet this standard.

5. Every meaning of every related New Testament word that could apply here refers to leadership; cf. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 62–63.

6. See especially Eldon J. Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 110–21, and Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 165–186.

7. Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1997), 131.

8. Circa AD 370 Saint Basil, *The Letters* 69, line 45: "he [the bishop of Rome] may himself exercise full authority [αὐθεντῆσαι] in this matter, selecting men capable of enduring the hardships of a journey." Roy J. Deferrari, trans., *Saint Basil* 2:40–43 (LCL).

9. Philip B. Payne, "1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of οὐδέ to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea," *NTS* 54 (2008): 235–53 examines every use of οὐδέ in Paul's letters.

10. Cf. other affirmations of women teaching in Acts 18:26; 21:8–9; 1 Corinthians 11:5; 14:5, 24, 31, 39; 1 Timothy 3:1–2 (subject "whoever"); 2 Timothy 1:5 with 3:14–16; 2:2; Hebrews 3:1, 12; 5:12.

11. E.g. Genesis 1:26–29; 2:23–24; 3:6–13.

12. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "Charity, Clarity, and Hope: The Controversy and the Cause of Christ," pages 403–22 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 409.

13. E.g. John 4:14–26; 11:25–26.

14. 384–322 BC Demosthenes, 24 (*Against Timocrates*), 197; 5th to 4th century BC Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 1116.

15. C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:781.

16. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Romans* (Wilmington, Del.: Associated Publishers & Authors, n.d.), 1522.

17. Douglas J. Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15: A Rejoinder," *Trinity Journal* 2 NS (1981): 211; Thomas R. Schreiner, "Philip Payne on Familiar Ground: A Review of Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters*" Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Spring 2010): 33–46, 35.

18. G. H. Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Timothy 2:8-15" *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 341–60, 360 note 78.

19. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 333; D. B. Wallace, "Reconsidering 'The Story of Jesus and the Adulteress Reconsidered'," *NTS* 39 (1993): 290-296.

20. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 333. Carson, however, inconsistently calls Fee's application of these same principles to 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, "weak and speculative" in "'Silent in the Churches': On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36," pages 140–53 in *Manhood and Womanhood*, 142.

21. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 227–53, 253–65.

22. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 1187.

The Greek font in this work is available from linguistsoftware.com.

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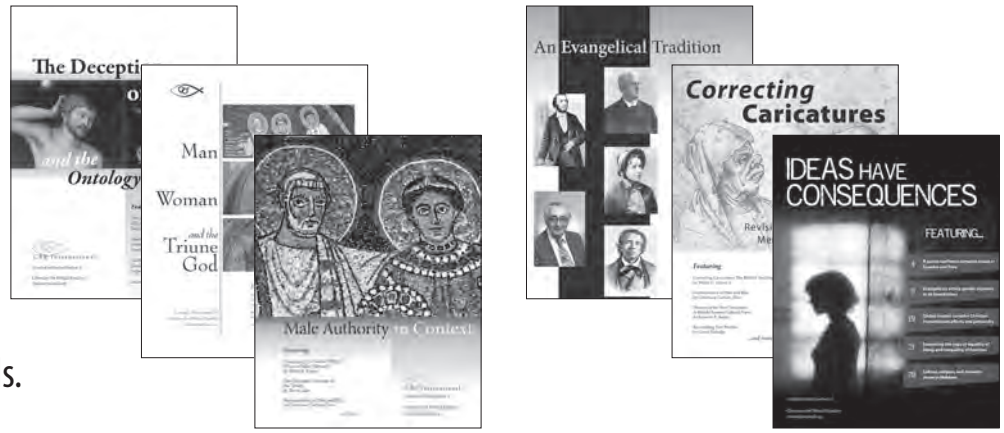

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Galatians 3:28's Application of Paul's New Creation Teaching to the Status of Women in Christ

Philip B. Payne

Paul teaches that the new creation entails the equal standing of man and woman in Christ. The wording and context of Galatians 3:28 show that this is not limited to women's spiritual standing before God but also has practical implications. It reads literally:

> There is no Jew/Greek division; there is no slave/free division; there is 'male and female' division, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

"Creation and New Creation" is one of the most comprehensive themes of Scripture. It gives a big picture of God's purposes and their fulfillment. It takes us from, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" through God's crucial work in Christ to inaugurate the new creation, to the culmination of that new creation in the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1; "the new Jerusalem" Rev 3:12; 21:2). Creation awaits the healing that is already being experienced by the children of God, just as Romans 8:21 states: "The creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God." Yet in the entire Bible only Paul uses the expression "new creation," and he uses this exact expression only two times. Nevertheless, Paul makes it clear that the new creation is of vital importance and that it is intimately related to the cross of Christ in Galatians 6:15:

> [14] May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. [15] Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation. [16] Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God (NIV 2011).

The new creation is focused on the Israel of God, a community where ethnic identity means nothing. All that matters is living by the Spirit (5:16–25; 6:8). This transforms believers' relationships to the world and to one another in Christ's new community, the church. In the new creation, ethnic, social, and gender ranking have no place. The new creation eliminates special privilege based on ethnicity, social status, and gender.

Second Corinthians 5:17 emphasizes that the essence of the new creation is being in Christ: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come." This applies to all believers, not just males. The new creation transforms relationships:

> [16] So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! [18] All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19] that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. . .[21] God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (NIV 2011).

The new creation is Christ-centered and cross-centered, for that is where Christ took the sins of the world on himself. James D. G. Dunn shows that the cross created an "apocalyptic shift," replacing the old world with the new creation.[1]

In three other passages, Paul affirms God's act of creating a new humanity or new self in Christ. Each entails practical transformation of life:

1. In Ephesians 2:15, this is accomplished through the cross and implemented by the Spirit transforming lives:

   > [10] For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, . . . [15] His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity [16] . . . through the cross, [18]. . . by one Spirit (NIV 2011).

2. In Ephesians 4:24, the new creation demands and enables a new attitude and a new life of true righteousness and holiness:

   > [22] put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; [23] to be made new in the attitude of your minds; [24] and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (NIV 2011).

3. Colossians 3:10 describes God creating the new self, in which there is no ranking in practice by ethnicity or economic status:

[9] Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. [11] Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (NIV 2011).

"Its Creator" refers specifically to the Creator of "the new self," so this refers to the new creation.

Each of these combinations of "new" and "God creating" expresses an ongoing state and entails a transformed life and attitudes. Paul uses the expression "new" to highlight various aspects of the new creation such as:

- "The new covenant" (1 Cor 11:25; Heb 8:8; 9:15; 12:24) "in the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:6).
- "The new humanity" (Eph 2:15; 4:24—"new self," literally, "new man").
- "Walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4; 9:6—"no longer enslaved to sin").
- "New life of the Spirit" (Rom 7:6: "we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code." NIV 2011).

Paul repeatedly associates the new creation with the removal of divisions between people, all of whom are now made one. The new creation entails a new way of life characterized by good works, righteousness, and holiness. It transforms relationships not just with God, but with others.

Through the cross, Jesus ushered in a new creation that fundamentally reversed the fall. He is the predicted seed of the woman, the Christ who used sin, death, and the wiles of Satan to overcome sin, death, and Satan.

The transformed relationships of the new creation stand in sharp contrast to typical human experience of relationships in the fallen creation. In certain respects, the new creation re-establishes the original creation, where man and woman together share authority over creation with God's blessing, with woman being the perfect complement for man. The new creation in Christ eliminates the divisions of the fall and "he shall rule over you" in particular.

In many other ways, however, the new creation is completely new:

- The indwelling Holy Spirit produces a new level of inner intimacy between God and people—an intimacy unknown by Adam and Eve.
- We are redeemed and welcomed into God's family as adopted children. We can cry out, "Abba," "Daddy," and trust in God's care both in this life and the life to come.
- We have the new mission of reconciliation, offering salvation by grace to a fallen world.
- Jesus is our perfect example of loving one another and leading as a servant.

The new creation entails a new way of life characterized by good works, righteousness, and holiness. It transforms relationships not just with God, but with others.

Galatians 3:28 asserts a radically new understanding of relationships in the new creation, one that repudiates the divisions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female in Christ. Some, however, like S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., say that Galatians 3:28 is "not speaking of relationships in the family and church, but of standing before God."[2]

Forty-two factors in the cultural, historical, theological, and literary contexts of Galatians 3:28; the actual wording of the verse; and its parallel passages prove that this verse must not be divorced from life in the church.

Cultural context

Galatians 3:28 is probably a deliberate repudiation of a common Jewish prayer found repeatedly in early Jewish literature, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a heathen . . . a bondman . . . [or] a woman."[3] According to rabbinic tradition, these three groups were exempt from the study of the law, so the prayer's focus is on the privilege of studying the law—and the exclusion of heathens, slaves, and women from this privilege.

Paul's repudiation of these distinctions must entail the opposite—namely the inclusion of those groups into the full life of the church. Galatians 3:28, therefore, denies that these groups are excluded from privilege in Christ. This demands application in the life of the church.

Historical context

The specific historical situation Galatians 3:28 addresses requires its application in life. Chapter 2 tells how Peter withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles in Galatia. Paul asserts, "I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned . . . [of] hypocrisy . . . [and] not acting in line with the truth of the gospel" (2:11–14, NIV 2011). Paul fought to apply this verse's truth to life in the church. This specific historical context shows that it is contrary to the gospel to limit the participation of women in Christ's body, the church.

Theological context

Fourteen key theological themes in Paul's teaching, most integrally related to Paul's new creation theme, imply the equal standing of man and woman. Each is incompatible with divorcing Galatians 3:28 from life in the church and the home:

1. The Holy Spirit works in all believers (Rom 8:14; 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:16, 22, 25; Eph 3:16; 5:18).
2. The gifts of the Spirit are for all believers. These gifts include:
   - Teacher, exemplified by Priscilla (Acts 18:26) and Phoebe, Paul's emissary who delivered his epistle to the Romans and would have answered their questions about it (Rom 16:1–2)
   - Apostle, exemplified by Junia (Rom 16:7)

- Prophet, exemplified at Pentecost by Philip's four unmarried daughters (Acts 21:7), and throughout 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14

3. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23) is needed in church leadership and is for all believers.
4. The priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5, 9; 2 Cor 3:6, 12–4:1; Col 3:16; 1 Co 14:26).
5. The equality of the members of the body, all deserving freedom to exercise their gifts (Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:4–11, 25, 31; 14:1; Eph 4:12–16).
6. Liberty in Christ (e.g. Rom 8:21; 1 Cor 10:25–30; Gal 5:1, 13–26).
7. Mutual submission in the church (Eph 5:21).
8. The nature of church leadership as service (Matt 20:25–28; Luke 22:25–26).
9. Male and female are equally "in Christ" (e.g. Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:11; Rom 8:1; 2 Co 5:17).
10. God gave the creation mandate to care for the earth to male and female equally (Gen 1:26–30; Rom 8:19–21; 1 Cor 10:26; Col 1:16, 20; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).
11. God gave the creation blessing to male and female equally (Gen 1:26–30; 1 Cor 10:25–26; 1 Tim 6:17).
12. God gave dominion over all the earth to male and female equally (Gen 1:26–30; 1 Cor 10:25–26; 1 Tim 6:17).
13. God created male and female equally in the image of God (Gen 1:26–27; Col 3:10; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Cor 11:11–12).
14. Mutual submission in marriage (1 Cor 7, Eph 5:21-22).

The natural implication of the equality of male and female in Paul's teaching is that the gifts of women for ministry should be recognized, welcomed, and exercised in all areas of church life, including teaching, pastoring, and leading churches. Dare we exclude women from offices of leadership and teaching for which God has gifted and called them?

Literary context

The literary context of Galatians 3:28 demands that it be applied to practical life in the church and home. The following nine factors make this clear:

1. The theme of the radical newness of life in Christ lived through the Spirit permeates Galatians:
   - The opening of Galatians affirms the goal of Christ's work "to rescue us from the present evil age" (1:4).
   - In chapter 2, Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (2:19–20).
   - In chapter 3, he affirms that believers have received the Spirit, who empowers this new life (3:2, 14), and that God "works miracles among you" (3:5).
   - In chapter 4, he argues that formerly, "we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world" (4:3), but Christ came "to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. . . . So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir" (4:5–7).
   - In chapter, 5 he asserts, "For freedom Christ has set us free" (5:1). The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to avoid the deeds of the flesh (5:19–21) and instead produce the fruit of the Spirit (5:22–23). The transformation is so radical that "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (5:25–26).
   - Chapter 6 stresses the practical results in life of "the new creation" (6:15).

   To interpret 3:28 as divorced from life in Christ would undermine this key theme of the letter.
2. The entire book of Galatians is a frontal attack against favored status or privileges being granted to Jews over Gentiles. In 3:28, Paul states the core theological argument against the Judaizers and introduces his opposition to circumcision of Gentiles: "There is no Jew/Greek division in Christ Jesus." The negative form of 3:28 shows that Paul intended it to prohibit excluding Gentiles as a group from any privilege or position in the church.
3. The absence in Christ of the distinction between Jew and Gentile is the foundation on which Paul denies the need for circumcision, the central practical issue of Galatians.[5] This demands that Paul did not intend the application of Galatians 3:28 to be restricted to spiritual status. There is a sharp contrast between Judaism's focus on ancestral Israel as the people of God and Paul's insistence in Galatians 6:15–16 that the Israel of God has nothing to do with circumcision but with the new creation in Christ. Within Judaism, kinship and ethnic purity were key issues in spiritual standing. Genealogies determined not just who could be a full Israelite, but also who could be a priest or Levite.[5] In Christ, however, Gentiles, slaves, and women have no disadvantage. In Christ, these divisions are abolished and all stand as one not just spiritually, but practically in church life.
4. As far as we know, there was no dispute at that time that Gentiles, slaves, or women could become Christians. Rather, Galatians addresses treatment of Gentiles as second-class citizens.
5. The references to baptism in 3:27 and "you are all one in Christ" in 3:28 both imply life in the church.
6. "For" (γάρ) in both Galatians 3:26 and 27 shows that Paul intended to give reasons why verse 25 says believers are "no longer under" the law (vv. 23–25) but are sons of God through faith (v. 26). This has immense practical implications for life in the church.

"There is no male and female" undermines the law's purity regulations that kept women from full participation in worship. The barriers in the law separating Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, male and female, such as limiting Temple access to the court of the Gentiles or the court of the women, are done away with in Christ, freeing them all

from the bondage of the law. Galatians 3:23 states, "We were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed." This imagery of the barriers of prison contrasts directly with the negation of barriers in 3:28. This contrast implies that the removal of those barriers in Christ will result in freedom to participate fully in worship and every aspect of the life of the church.

7. Galatians 2:6, speaking about life in the church, affirms that God does not show favoritism. This confirms Paul's commitment to equality in the life of the church.
8. Verse 29 affirms that all of these are promised an inheritance as Abraham's seed, the Israel of God established by the new creation (6:15–16). This inheritance is explained as entailing freedom from the law and full rights as God's people.
9. In Galatians 3:29, "heirs of Abraham according to promise" refers to the Abrahamic blessing to all nations. All seven blessings in Genesis 12:1–3 are about relationships with people.

Wording

Eleven factors in the wording of Galatians 3:28 demand practical application.

1. The thrice repeated "there is in" is a three-letter, poetic, concise expression (ἔνι) that suggests this is a baptismal liturgical formula.[6] This implies its application to life in the church since baptism was the rite of entry into the full life of the church.
2. Paul typically uses the Greek conjunction between Jew and Greek and slave and free, οὐδέ, to join two elements to convey one idea. Paul cannot have intended two separate ideas, "there is no Jew in Christ and there is no Greek in Christ," since there are Jews in Christ and there are Greeks in Christ. Each pair makes a single point: In Christ there is no Jew/Greek division and no slave/free division. And in the same sense, in Christ there is no male/female division, for as the Colossians 3:11 parallel demonstrates, the change in conjunction entails no change in meaning.[7] These statements are absolute denials that these divisions exist in Christ. Nothing in the text limits their application to standing before God.

   Paul denies divisions, not individuality. It is not an assertion that everyone is identical or that all do the same thing. Paul emphatically rejects the Gnostic or proto-Gnostic teaching of the abolition of sexual distinctives and prohibition of marriage (1 Cor 7; 1 Tim 4:3).
3. "There is no Jew/Greek division" must apply to life in the church since their equal treatment in the church is the primary concern of Galatians.
4. There is no dispute that "there is no slave-free division" applies to life in the church.
5. The reference to "male and (καί) female" is different from the previous two pairs, highlighting it as an exact quotation from the Greek Old Testament reference to God creating mankind in his image "male and female" (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ, Gen 1:27). This set phrase, in every other Bible passage about humans, refers to the creation of male and female (Gen 1:27; 5:2; Matt 19:4; Mark 10:6). Paul's repudiation of this fundamental creation distinction in Christ clearly points to the new creation breaking barriers between man and woman. Like every other passage about the new creation cited above, it refers to transformation of life, not just spiritual status.
6. Galatians 3:28 teaches that the male/female distinction does not exist in Christ. Logically, since it does not exist in Christ, this distinction should not restrict privilege in his church. To exclude all women from church leadership or teaching in the church is precisely the sort of restriction of privilege that 3:28 repudiates. It is just as contrary to the gospel as excluding Gentiles or slaves from church leadership.

   Paul's point is not that Christ is irrelevant to the relations between male and female, but that gender, just as ethnicity and social rank, is irrelevant to status in Christ. The barriers that separate male and female in society do not exist in their new reality *in Christ*.
7. Each of these three pairings specifically deals with social standing, so to say that they have nothing to do with social standing is to deny the most obvious application of this language.
8. It is irresponsible to interpret Paul's repudiation of ethnic, economic, and gender ranking in Christ as compatible with continued ethnic, economic, or gender ranking in the church.
9. In Christ, ethnic, social, and biological divisions have been replaced with a new oneness. Consequently, discrimination and special privilege based on these external factors is contrary to the unity of Christ's body. This is one new humanity, where there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Colossians 3:10–11; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Ephesians 2:11–22).
10. "You are one in Christ Jesus" implies a social unit and so should not be limited to the spiritual state of individuals before God. In particular, "There is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," requires that gender does not divide the social community of the church. No one is a second-class citizen or excluded by ethnicity, social status, or gender from any position or privilege in the church.[8]
11. Being "in Christ Jesus" in Paul's letters is linked with life in the church, such as in Galatians 2:4, "the freedom we have in Christ Jesus" from circumcision and 5:6, what counts "in Christ Jesus . . . is faith expressing itself through love." "In Christ Jesus" confirms the practical implications of Galatians 3:28.

Parallel passages

Six parallel passages specify practical application.

1. Galatians 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is

faith expressing itself through love" (NIV 2011).

2. Galatians 6:15: "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation" (NIV 2011).
3. The Colossians 3:9–12 parallel, "there is no Greek and Jew . . . slave, free" makes it unmistakable that this principle applies to practical life in the church: "Put off the old nature with its practices" (9). Many early manuscripts, e.g. D* F G 629, the Old Latin witnesses, the Vulgate^{s}, and its citation by Hilary (d. 367) and Ambrose (d. 397) begin verse 11: "there is no male and female" (οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ). These early Western manuscripts teach that "there is no male and female" entails transformed life and was not restricted to spiritual status. The church centered in Rome clearly shared this understanding.
4. The 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 parallel "we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free" (13) states "that there should be no division in the body" (25). To exclude any of these groups from full participation and exercise of gifts in the church would create just such a division in the body.
5. The practical implications of the breach of the Jew/Gentile division are explicated in Ephesians 2:14–15, 19–22: Christ "has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law. . . . Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of his household . . . a holy temple in the Lord . . . in which God lives by his Spirit" (NIV 2011).
6. First Corinthians 11:11 closely parallels Galatians 3:28. Paul introduces it as important (BDAG πλήν, 826 [1.c]), essential (BDF §449), and indeed, his main point (Robertson, *Grammar*, 1187), when he writes: "However, woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord." Translations like "separate" (*different, distinct, separated, set apart from*) fit all but four[9] of Paul's sixteen uses of this word χωρίς.[10] The translation "independent" (e.g., CSB, ESV, NAB, NAS, NIV, NRSV, RSV, TEV, TNT, Amplified, Goodspeed, New Berkeley, Weymouth, Williams) is not even listed as a meaning of χωρίς regarding persons in this sense in standard Greek dictionaries such as LSJ[11] or BAG.[12] Furthermore, the interdependence of the sexes does not do justice to the distinctively Christian sense called for by "in the Lord," nor does it contrast with verse 10.

   Paul's key point is that, in spite of the created differences between man and woman, which should be upheld in this life, man and woman are not separate in Christ.[13] Verse 11 expresses the theological basis for Paul's judgment in verse 5 that women as well as men may pray and prophesy, leading church worship.[14] Therefore, Paul's denial that women are separate from men "in the Lord" must apply to women in church leadership. The next verse highlights the respect both women and men owe to each other since each had its source in the other. The next chapter reinforces the unity of woman and man in Christ by teaching the oneness of the body where there should be no division.

Conclusion

To summarize, these forty-two cultural, historical, theological, and literary factors in the context of Galatians 3:28, its actual wording, and its parallel passages are incompatible with divorcing Galatians 3:28 from life in the church. Such a bifurcation is contrary to Paul's understanding of spirituality (5:16–26), of faith (5:6), and of the gospel (2:14). Galatians 3:28 unambiguously teaches that in the practical life of the church there is no male/female division. This principle directly opposes any exclusion of women, simply because of their gender, from teaching, exercising authority over men, joining the priesthood, or participating in any other position of ministry.

Any attempt to separate the male-female pair so it alone avoids the implication of equal standing and privilege in the church fails for three reasons. First, the identical expression, "There is no . . ." introduces each pair. Second, each of the three statements is absolute, with no qualification.[15] Third, the "all" in the summarizing statement, "You are all one in Christ Jesus" must apply to all three of the prior pairs. This reinforces their parallel significance. As the accompanying "Twelve Pillars" essay argues, nothing in the Bible warrants male hierarchy.

In conclusion, Christ through the cross began a new creation with dramatic implications for life in the church. The new creation is closely related to many of Paul's central themes that entail the equality of man and woman. As a natural outgrowth of the new creation, Paul affirms that in Christ there is no male/female division. Paul not only affirms the equality of men and women in theory, fostering mutual respect, he treated women as equal to men in practice. He affirms women in every major ministry of the church including apostle, prophet, gospel ministry, and local church leadership. Seven of the ten church leaders Paul identifies by name with a description of their ministry in Romans 16 are women. Indeed, Paul is the best-documented defender of the equality of women and men of all antiquity, and he lived it. Let us, too, obey God's Word and the Spirit's guidance by striving to remove all barriers that exclude women from privilege in our churches and homes.

Notes

1. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 50.

2. S. Lewis Johnson, "Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28," pages 154–64 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 160; 163 cites with approval Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 176, "Paul's statement is not concerned with the role relationships of men and women within the Body of Christ but rather with their common initiation into it through (faith and) baptism."

3. George S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), 123. This prayer occurs with slight variations

in *y. Ber*. 9.1 (136b), 13b (3, 3), 57ff. (7, 2); *t. Ber*. 7.18; *b. Menah*. 43b (both with "brutish man" for "slave"). Cf. also *Gen. Rab*. 8.9; 22.2; *S. Eli. Rab*. 7, 10 and 14; Str-B, III, 559–63; Oepke, "γυνή," 1:777 n. 4.

4. Cf. the references to circumcision in Galatians 2:3, 7, 8, 9, 12; 5:2, 3, 6, 11; 6:12, 13, 15.

5. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*. (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1980), 152, "even full proselytes could not achieve the status of the full Israelite."

6. E.g., C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1961), 52, notes that "this metaphor [fits] with the actual movements of the baptized"; cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Exeter, England: Paternoster, 1982), 186–87; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 148–49; Otto Michel, "Σκύθης," *TDNT* 7:450; J. Louis Martin, Galatians (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 375–80.

7. The parallel passages use a variety of conjunctions. Colossians 3:11 uses καί to join both "Greek and Jew" and "circumcision and uncircumcision." 1 Corinthians 12:13 uses εἴτε . . . εἴτε ("whether . . . or") for these same groups. Romans 10:12 uses τε καί to join "Jew and Greek."

8. Gerhard Dautzenberg, "'Da ist nicht männlich und weiblich.' Zur Interpretation von Galatians 3,28," *Kairós* 24, 3–4 (1982): 181–206, argues that Galatians 3:28 reflects the experience in Paul's churches regarding status, collaboration, public activity, and proclamation.

9. And even these four, which are better translated "without," can be expressed meaningfully using "set apart from": Philippians 2:14: "Do all things set apart from (χωρίς) complaining or arguing"; 1 Timothy 2:8: "lift up holy hands in prayer, set apart from (χωρίς) anger or disputing"; 1 Timothy 5:21: "Keep these instructions set apart from (χωρίς) partiality"; Philemon 14: "I did not want to do anything set apart from (χωρίς) your consent."

10. The ones meaning *separate* or something similar (*different*, *distinct*, *separated*, or *set apart from*) are Romans 3:21, 28; 4:6; 7:8–9; 10:14; 1 Corinthians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 11:28; 12:3; Ephesians 2:12.

11. LSJ 2016 II.3, "independently of, without reckoning," refers to the accomplishment of something without reference to something else, not "being independent" of another person.

12. BDAG 1095 does include 2: "*independent(ly of)*," but in the sense of "pertaining to the absence or lack of something," which does not fit 11:11, and 2.b. δ: "*without relation to* or *connection with something, independent(ly) of something*," as in "without regard to the observance of the law Ro 3:28." This sense does not fit 1 Corinthians 11:11 well.

13. Judith Gundry-Volf, "Gender and Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16: A Study in Paul's Theological Method," pages 151–71 in *Evangelium, Schriftauslegung, Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher* (ed. by J. Ådna, S. J. Hafemann, and O. Hofius; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 152, also sees here women's new social equality in Christ without denying their differences.

14. Cf. the association of prophecy and ministry in 1 Corinthians 12:5–31 and Ephesians 4:11–12.

15. James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 204, "an axiom with no qualification."

The Greek font in this work is available from linguistsoftware.com.

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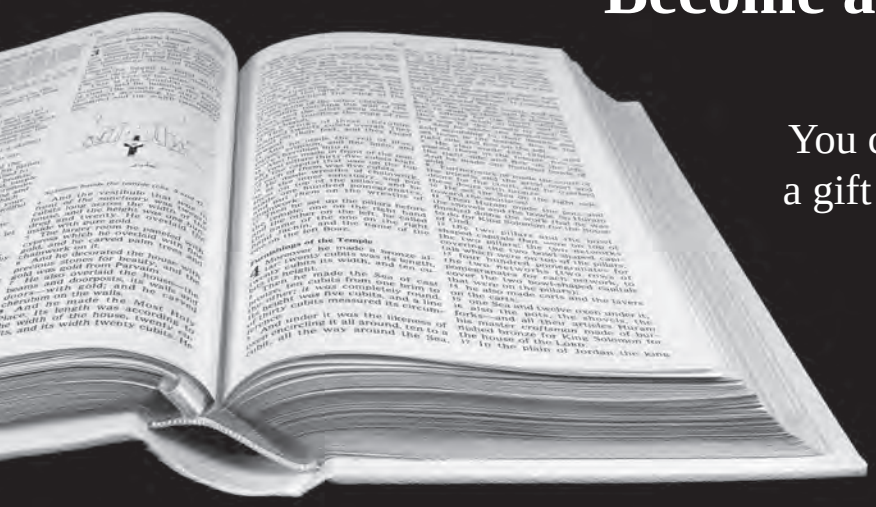

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The Orthodox Doctrine of the Trinity

Kevin Giles

Part 1: The Doctrine in Summary

The doctrine of the Trinity is the primary doctrine of the Christian faith. It expresses our distinctive Christian understanding of God. Sadly, many contemporary evangelicals are inadequately informed on this doctrine, and the evangelical community is deeply and painfully divided on this matter. In seeking to promote unity among evangelicals by establishing what is to be believed about our triune God, I outline in summary what I conclude is the historic orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and then provide a biblical and theological commentary on my summary in a second and longer section, which follows.[1]

1. God is one in being and three persons

The New Testament speaks of the one God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This revelation led to the development in history of the doctrine of the Trinity, which affirms there is one God in three persons who are each fully God.

The church fathers argued that the three persons are the one God because they share the one divine being/essence/substance/nature. God's unity is the unique *being-in-communion* of the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So profound is this unity of being that, without ceasing to be who they are, each person co-inheres (*perichoresis*) in the other. Their unity of being is not to be thought of impersonally, abstractly, or independently of the divine persons. There is no divine being apart from the persons.

The New Testament speaks unambiguously of three divine persons identified as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are eternally related and never confused. These names given in revelation, the pro-Nicene fathers concluded, indicate how the persons are eternally and immutably distinguished. The Father as Father is unbegotten God, the Son as Son is begotten God, and the Spirit is God the Spirit because he proceeds from the Father or from the Father and the Son. On this basis, orthodoxy holds that the differing origination implied by the three divine names is what primarily and eternally differentiates the three divine persons.

In Trinitarian discourse, the word *person* is not understood to imply an individual in the sense of a conscious willing subject. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not three individuals each with a distinct will and consciousness, but rather the one God in tripersonal existence and self-revelation, distinguished as Father, Son, and Spirit, but not divided or separated in any way. Other terms may be used to speak of the divine three—*hypostasis*, subsistence, mode of being, etc.—but the word "person," despite its limitations when used of God, would seem to be the most appropriate word to speak of those revealed as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

2. The three divine persons work inseparably

Because the three divine persons are the one God, the Scriptures consistently depict the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as working together in unison in all things. They create, rule, and redeem as the one God. On this basis, the pro-Nicene fathers developed their doctrine of "inseparable operations." This doctrine recognizes that each of the divine three has distinctive works that are person-defining; for example, the Father sends the Son, the Son takes on human flesh and dies on the cross, and the Spirit is poured out on the day of Pentecost. The doctrine of inseparable operations adds the recognition that, in all divine operations/works/functions, the three divine persons work as one because they are the one God. They are inseparable in what they do.

3. The three divine persons have one will

Because the three divine persons are the one God, they possess one will. To suggest that each of the three divine persons has his own will is to breach divine unity. It implies three gods, the error called tritheism. Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son, fully God and fully man, has two wills, one human one divine; nevertheless, the Son in the form of a servant gladly does the will of the Father. His human will wills to conform to the one divine will.

4. The three divine persons rule as one

Because the three divine persons are the one God, working inseparably with one will, they rule as one; they share the same sovereignty. Each is "the Lord"; each is omnipotent God, and thus there is only one divine rule. The pro-Nicene fathers thus spoke of the one *monarchia* or rule of the triune God. This is not to be confused with their teaching that the Father as the begetter of the Son is to be thought of as the *mia archē*

(one source) of the person of the Son. It was the Arians who taught that God the Father was the *monarchia,* the sole and absolute ruler whom even the Son had to obey.

For the pro-Nicene fathers, the three divine persons are one in being and power; these things are two sides of one coin. For the Arians, the three divine persons are not one in being and thus not one in power. They are hierarchically ordered in being and power; the Son and the Spirit are subordinate to the Father.

5. The divine persons' relations in eternity and operations in the world are ordered

Although the three divine persons are the one God, working inseparably with one will, their life is ordered. Both in eternity and in the world of space and time, how they relate to each other and how they operate follow a consistent pattern that is unchanging and irreversible. This order in divine life is seen in many ways. For example, there is a processional order: the Father begets the Son and breathes out the Spirit in eternity and sends them both into the world in time. There is a numerical order: the Father may be thought of as the first person of the Trinity, the Son the second, and the Spirit the third. And there is order in how God comes to us and we to him: the Father comes *to* us *through* the Son *in* the Spirit, and we come *to* the Father *through* the Son *in* the Spirit. This order in divine life and operations, it needs to be stressed, does not envisage any sub-ordering in divine life. Ranking or hierarchically ordering the three divine persons in being or power introduces the Arian error.

6. The Son, in taking human flesh, subordinated himself for our salvation

In becoming incarnate in history, the Son of God did not cease to be God in all might, majesty, and authority, but he did "empty himself," take the form of a servant, and become the second Adam to win our salvation by going to the cross.

This means that not everything that is true of Jesus Christ in his earthly life and ministry—specifically, what is creaturely in him—can be read back into the eternal or immanent Trinity. The Son continues as God and man after his resurrection, but in returning to heaven, his humanity is exalted and glorified, and he rules as the one risen and ascended Lord and as the Mediator of our salvation. We rightly, therefore, make a contrast between the Son's earthly ministry "in the form of a servant," or, as Reformed theology calls it, his "state of humiliation," and his heavenly reign as Lord and King, in all might, majesty, and authority, in "the form of God," or, as it is called in Reformed theology, in his "state of exaltation."

On this issue, the pro-Nicene fathers and the Arians parted company most sharply. The Arians read back into the eternal life of God the subordination of the Son seen in the incarnation; the pro-Nicene fathers refused to do this. For them, the Son's subordination and obedience to the Father was restricted to his earthly ministry in "the form of a servant."

7. The limitations of creaturely language to speak of the triune Creator

In speaking of God, we must use human words. We have nothing else, and God must use human words to speak to us if we are to understand him. However, the words of human language that refer to our created world are inadequate when used of God, who is not a creature: he is eternal and uncreated. All the key trinitarian terms—*father*, *son*, *person*, *relation*, *unity*, *sending/mission*, *begotten*, and *procession*—are thus not to be taken univocally (or, to use everyday, nontechnical language, literally) when used of God. The content of the title *Father* and other key trinitarian terms, when used of God, is ultimately revealed knowledge apprehended by long and prayerful reflection on God's self-revelation to us through Scripture. To give these terms content primarily on the basis of human experience results in God being depicted as a human being, which is idolatry. The Arians made this error. They took the names *Father* and *Son* and the term *begotten* literally and, on this basis, argued that the divine Son came into being in time and, like all human sons, was set under the authority of his Father.

A similar error occurs when it is assumed that, because the divine persons are spoken of in male terminology, God is male and not female. Virtually all Christian theologians agree that God is genderless; he is Spirit.

These comments on the limits of human language remind us of another fundamental truth: Human beings cannot comprehend God. All our attempts to speak of God and his triune life in eternity are frail and beggarly. We are creatures; he is the Creator, the Lord God omnipotent before whom we can only bow in worship and adoration.

8. The Trinity is not our social agenda

The way in which the three divine persons relate to one another in eternity is neither a model for nor prescriptive of human relationships in the temporal world. God's life in heaven does not set a social agenda for human life on earth. Divine relations in eternity cannot be replicated on earth by created human beings, and fallen beings at that. What the Bible asks disciples of Christ to do, both men and women, is to exhibit the love of God to others and to give ourselves in self-denying sacrificial service and self-subordination, as the Lord of glory did in becoming one with us in our humanity and dying on the cross. In other words, the incarnate Christ provides the perfect example of Godly living, not the eternal life of God.

Specifically, appealing to the doctrine of the Trinity, a threefold perfect divine communion, to support either the equality of men and women or their hierarchical ordering, is mistaken and to be opposed.

9. Orthodoxy defined

For evangelicals, the Scriptures are the final authority. They prescribe what is to be believed. The problem is that, on

many important doctrinal questions, evangelicals cannot agree on what the Scriptures teach. This is understandable because, on most profound questions, the Bible seems to give more than one answer or address the matter in more than one way. Working out what is central and primary in the varied comments in Scripture on any complex doctrinal issue is a great challenge. On questions not disputed, or not seriously debated in the past, the great theologians of former times cannot help us. However, when it comes to the doctrines of the Trinity and the person of Christ, no issues were more fiercely debated in the early church and in the Reformation age. In dispute was the question of what the Scriptures, read holistically and theologically, say about Christ and the triune nature of God. The conclusions reached by the best theologians from the past are now codified in the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and, for Protestants, in the Reformation and post-Reformation confessions. These are for us the best guides we have for rightly interpreting and understanding what Scripture says on these two doctrines and what should be believed by those who want to see themselves as orthodox Christians. The creeds and confessions do not stand over Scripture or have the same authority as inspired Scripture, but they do speak authoritatively in a secondary way and should never be ignored in the theological enterprise. They represent the collective wisdom of the past. We, or our denomination, may not be bound by these statements of faith, but no one can deny that they define orthodoxy.

Given that we have this rich theological resource on the doctrine of the Trinity and on the person of Christ, we can make one of three responses. Each one finds supporters, and this explains why there is so much division among evangelicals on the doctrine of the Trinity.

1. We can ignore this resource, saying our concern is only what the Bible teaches.
2. We can reject this resource, saying we can work things out for ourselves with Bible in hand.
3. We can greatly value this resource, saying we believe it is the fruit of the deep and prolonged reflection of the best of theologians across the ages on what the Scripture teach and as such is the best guide we have for the correct theological interpretation of Scripture.

I think the first two responses are dangerous, being far too optimistic about individual theological effort. There is the great danger that, in going alone, we will repeat old errors in new forms or invent new ones that, given time, will undermine the Christian faith. Doctrines should be understood to be communally agreed conclusions as to what the Scriptures teach. I endorse the third option, so this account of the doctrine of the Trinity should be judged first of all as to whether or not it faithfully reflects the conclusions of the best of theologians across the ages on what the Scriptures teach on God's triune being and work in the world.

Postscript

In the last thirty years, there has been widespread criticism of what sounds like philosophical, analytical, and impersonal language used in the historic formulations of the doctrine of the Trinity. This criticism can be overstated, but not rejected completely. The Bible speaks of divine unity and of the divine persons in personal, relational, and communal terms. Wherever possible, this is the language that theologians should use in their *theo-ology*. In my commentary below on this summary of the historic doctrine of the Trinity, I seek to do this and to show that, when non-biblical terms are used, they reflect the teaching of Scripture.

Part 2: Commentary

1. God is one in being and three persons

We Christians believe that God is one because the Bible teaches this. To Moses, first of all, God discloses his name to be Yahweh (Exod 3:14), and he insists that he alone is God and he alone is to be worshipped (Exod 20:2–6; cf. Isa 42:8; 44:6; Zech 14:9). The belief that God is one is underlined in the so-called *Shema*, the Jewish confession that says, "The Lord our God, Yahweh, is one: (Deut 6:5). However, it is made plain in the Old Testament that Yahweh is not "one" in any abstract, monistic sense. The word translated into English "one" in the *Shema* is the Hebrew word *echad*. It can be used to speak of the unity of husband and wife. In the New Testament, the belief that God is one continues to be affirmed (Mark 12:29; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4–6; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19).

But we Christians also believe that God is three "persons," because he reveals himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The word "person" has its limitations because the divine three are more profoundly "one" than any human union, and because this word refers primarily to creatures and only analogically or metaphorically to the divine three. Nevertheless, the divine three are rightly called "persons" because they are revealed as persons: as a Father and a Son who

love, relate, speak, and act, and as a Spirit who does likewise. Indeed, in the New Testament, the three divine persons are so clearly depicted as persons that, if it were not for the revelation that God is one, we Christians would be tritheists.

In the New Testament, it is not only the Father who is revealed as God, but also the Son and the Spirit. Jesus is also called God many times (John 1:1; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:6; Col 2:9; 1 Tim 3:15–16; 2 Thess 1:12; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet 1:1; Heb 1:8; 1 John 5:20). And, as such, he is confessed more than two hundred times as "the Lord," Yahweh's own name. He is also described as doing the things that only God can do: still a storm (Matt 8:23–27), raise the dead (Mark 5:35–43; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:1–43), heal the physically sick and maimed (Mark 1:40–45; 2:1–11; 3:1–6), forgive sins (Mark 2:1–11; Luke 7:48), and offer salvation (Matt 1:21; 18:11; Luke 19:19; John 12:47). What is more, the attributes of God are ascribed to him. He is said to be self-existent (John 5:26), eternal (John 1:1; 3:13; Phil 2:5–7; 2 Cor 8:9), immutable (Heb 13:8), holy (Luke 1:35; 4:34; John 10:36; Acts 3:14; Heb 7:26), omniscient (Matt 11:25–27; John 2:24–25; 16:30; 21:17; Col 2:3; Heb 4:13), omnipotent (Heb 1:3), and righteous (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 Cor 1:30; Jas 5:6).

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is understood to be the Spirit of God: God's invisible presence and power at work in the world. Peter says that to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God (Acts 5:3–4). On this premise, words said to be spoken by Yahweh in the Old Testament can be attributed to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (Jer 31:31–33; Heb 10:15–17; Exod 25:1; Heb 9:8; Isa 6:9–10; Acts 28:25–28; Isa 64:4; 1 Cor 2:9). The Spirit is consistently spoken of in personal terms: he teaches, leads, encourages, hears, knows, sends, etc., and can speak as "I" (Acts 13:2; 10:19–20). He is thus rightly called a "person."

For the New Testament writers, given that the Son is also God, a triune understanding of God follows. In more than sixty passages, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are closely associated in a way that indicates they are understood to be alike God (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:13; Eph 4:6; etc.). In every one of his epistles, Paul begins with a greeting or opening blessing in which God is designated as "our Father," "the Father," or "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The latter is particularly common (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; etc.). This indicates that the term "Father" is for Paul not simply an equivalent for the term God (*theos*), but the identification of one divine person. When he refers to God's Son, he uses the definite article; Christ is "*the* Son (of God)." The Son's relationship with the Father is unique. Similarly, in John's gospel, God is God the Father, distinct from God the Son (John 1:1–14; 1:18; 3:16–17, 31–36).

Paul continues to affirm monotheism, but he does not think of God's oneness in a solitary or unitary sense. His understanding of monotheism includes the Father, Son, and Spirit. Nowhere is this expanded monotheism more clearly seen than in 1 Corinthians 8:5–6, where Paul confesses both "one God the Father" and "one Lord Jesus Christ." In these words, Paul boldly adapts the wording of the foundational Jewish confession, the *Shema*, given in Deuteronomy 6:4, "The Lord our God is one," to speak of the one God who is both the Father and the Son. In this text, Paul only mentions the Father and the Son, but it is evident from his many triadic comments that the one God is in fact the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 12:4–6; 2 Cor 13:13; Eph 4:2, 18–20, etc.).

From the time of Justin Martyr, it has been believed that generative or birth language best explains how the Son can also be God, yet other than the Father. Origen added that, because the begetting of the Son was a divine act, it must be an eternal event. Human begetting is temporal; divine begetting is eternal. God is not constrained by time.

The so-called Arians of the fourth century could speak of the Son as "begotten" in the sense that he was created in time, and thus God in second degree. This was totally unacceptable to all the pro-Nicene fathers.[2] The language of "begetting" for them spoke of a Father–Son relationship where the Father and the Son were of the same being or nature, on the premise that sons are of the same nature or being as their fathers. For them, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was fundamental to the trinitarian faith.[3] It guaranteed the oneness in being (*homoousios*) of the Father and the Son and, at the same time, their self-differentiation: one is unbegotten God, the other begotten God. The great importance of the doctrine of the eternal begetting of the Son is seen in the central christological clause in the Nicene Creed, the most widely accepted summary of our trinitarian faith. This clause was added to absolutely exclude Arianism. Here the full equality of the Son is predicated on his eternal begetting by the Father, and this is mentioned twice. In this clause in the Nicene creed, Christians say,

> We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
> The only (*monogenes*) Son of God,
> *Eternally begotten of the Father,*
> God from God,
> Light from light,
> True God from true God,
> *Begotten not made*
> Of one being (*homoousios*) with the Father.

These words affirm that the Son on the basis of his eternal begetting is as much God as the Father. Derivation in divine life in no way entails diminution of any kind.

The theological conclusion that the Son is to be understood to be eternally begotten of the Father is predicated primarily on the revealed names, Father and Son. A father–son relationship implies a generative act. This conclusion was both suggested and confirmed by Scripture. The most important texts in reaching this conclusion were Psalm 2:7, which speaks of a future begetting of a royal son, and Proverbs 8:25, which speaks of the begetting of divine Wisdom before creation. These texts were taken as prophetic because, in the New Testament, they are interpreted Christologically. The Greek-speaking church fathers did not appeal to John's use of the word *monogenes*,

which they understood to mean "unique," as the basis for the eternal begetting of the Son. However, for them, what made the Son unique more than anything else was that he alone is (eternally) begotten of the Father.

The Latin-speaking Tertullian was the first to speak of the Trinity as *tres personae, una substantia* (three persons, one substance). From then on, *substantia* became the most common term in the Latin-speaking church to describe what is one in God—what is common to the thee divine persons. The Greek-speaking fathers translated the Latin *substantia* by either the word *ousia* (being) or *physis* (nature). These words refer to what makes something what it is. The so-called Arians of the fourth century, who presupposed a Greek doctrine of God as a solitary monad who could not have contact with matter, let alone flesh, were united in opposing the idea that Jesus Christ was of one *substantia* or one *ousia* with the Father. Not one of them could confess that Jesus Christ is God in the same sense as the Father, that he was of the same divine being (*substantia* or *ousia*) and power as the Father. In response, first in AD 325 at the Council of Nicaea, and then again in AD 381 at the Council of Constantinople, the bishops ruled that the Son is one in being (*homoousios*) with the Father; in other words, "true God from true God." In doing so, they believed they were exactly reflecting the teaching of Scripture.

The use of the Greek word *ousia* to speak of what unites and is common to the three divine persons, Athanasius believed, was sanctioned by Scripture in the words God used to reveal himself to Moses. On the basis of the wording of his Greek Old Testament of Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am," Athanasius argued, God discloses both his name (*Yahweh*) and his being (his "I am"-ness).[4] Augustine appealed to the same text to make the same point. He said that a "better word" than "substance" (Latin, s*ubstantia*) for what unites and is common to the three divine persons is "essence" (Latin, *essentia*), "what the Greeks call *ousia*."[5] The word *essentia*, he noted, comes from the Latin verb *esse*, "to be." God does not have *essentia*/being; he is *essentia*/being. Here, we could also recall Jesus' self-designation as "I am" (*egō eimi*) in John 8:24, 28; 13:19; 6:35; etc.

Once it had been agreed that the Father and the Son share perfectly the same divine being/*ousia*, it is not surprising to find the pro-Nicene fathers, beginning with Athanasius, speaking of the mutual indwelling of the three divine persons and appealing to Jesus' words, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" for support (John 14:11; 17:21–22). Later, the term *perichoresis* was used of this mutual indwelling or coinherence of the three divine persons in their communion of nature or being.

To conclude these comments on the terms used in Trinitarian orthodoxy of what is one in God (*ousia*, *physis*, *essentia*, *substantia*), it is important to add that they are not the cause, origin, or source of anything. These synonymous terms in Trinitarian discourse speak of what is common to and unites the divine persons—what makes them the one God.

2. The three divine persons work inseparably

The Scriptures associate distinctive works with each divine person; for example, the Father, creation; the Son, salvation; and the Spirit, sanctification. Yet Scripture also makes clear that the divine persons always work as one, or, as orthodoxy says, "inseparably," because they are the one God. In the Bible, no divine act, work, or operation is ever depicted as the work of one divine person in isolation from the other two. The three persons baptize as one (Matt 28:19), bless as one (2 Cor 13:13), and minister through believers as one (1 Cor 12:4–6). Creation is a work of God involving the Father, Son, and Spirit (Gen 1:1; Ps 36:6; 104:30; John 1:2–3; Col. 1:16; Heb 1:10). So too are election (Matt 11:27; John 3:3–9; 6:70; 13:18; Acts 1:2, Rom. 8:29, Eph.1:4, 1 Peter 1:2) and salvation (John 3:1–6; Rom 8:1–30; 2 Cor 2:6; Eph 1:3–14). When it comes to divine rule, both the Father and the Son are named "Lord," the supreme ruler, and, it would seem, the Holy Spirit as well (2 Cor 3:17). In the Book of Revelation, the Father and the Son rule from the one throne (Rev 5:13; 7:10). And on the last day, judgment is exercised by God the Father and God the Son (Ps 7:8; 9:7–8; Rom 2:16; Rev 16:7; Matt 25:31–32; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; Phil 2:10).

> In the Bible, no divine act, work, or operation is ever depicted as the work of one divine person in isolation from the other two.

As far as the Father and the Son are concerned, Jesus himself affirms the doctrine of inseparable operations. He says, "For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (John 5:19).

3. The three divine persons have one will

In John's gospel, the Son does the Father's will (4:34; 5:30; 6:38–39; etc.), but the evangelist never suggests that Jesus is under compulsion to do as the Father commands. Rather, John thinks of Jesus as the "instrument or expression of the Father's will."[6] The word *obedience* is never actually used in connection with the Father–Son relationship in John's gospel.

At first glance, the report of Jesus' struggle in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42; Matt 26:36–46; Luke 22:40–46; cf. John 12:27; Heb 5:7–8) could be taken to indicate that the Father and the Son each will independently. To understand this account rightly, a distinction has to be made between the incarnate life of the Son in time and his life with the Father and the Spirit in eternity. As fully God and fully man, the incarnate Son has his own human will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, we see the human will of the Son struggling with doing the will of God. And so he prays, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 12:36). He asks for the human strength to do God's will as a free human agent, despite his fear of the suffering and separation this will entail.

John's more theological account of this event makes it clear that there is no clash of divine wills between the Son as the eternal Son and the Father. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus prays just before his arrest: "Now my soul is troubled. And should I say—'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour" (John 12:27). This prayer is a declaration by the incarnate Son that his will is to do the Father's will. We no longer see the struggle in these words between the human and the divine will in the incarnate Son, or between the Son's will and that of his Father. What Jesus prays perfectly matches the way John the evangelist speaks of the Father–Son relationship throughout his gospel. The incarnate Son does the Father's will because he and the Father are one (John 10:30; 17:21). The Son wills, acts, and speaks in perfect unison with the Father.

On the basis of John's teaching, and on the premise that the triune God is one in being, the Greek pro-Nicene fathers came to speak of the divine persons willing as one, which Augustine and later orthodoxy took to mean they have one will.

4. The three divine persons rule as one

If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit alike are God without any qualifications, then they are alike omnipotent. Omnipotence is possibly the most self-defining of all God's attributes—what makes God God. He alone has sovereign power over all things. To confess the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as Lord is to acknowledge that they are all omnipotent. In reply to the Arian claim that the Son is eternally set under the Father's authority, the confession "Jesus is Lord" (Acts 2:21; Rom 9:10, 13; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11), basic to Christian identity, is on its own a reply. If Jesus is Lord, he is not set under anyone. The full import of this title is seen when we observe that New Testament writers take Old Testament texts that speak of Yahweh as "the Lord" and apply them directly to Jesus Christ (Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 1:31; 10:26; 2 Cor 10:17; etc.; cf. Acts 2:21). This transference of the name of God to Jesus is most clearly illustrated in eschatological texts. In the Old Testament, the day when Yahweh comes in judgment at the end is called "the day of the Lord." In the New Testament, the eschatological climax, "the day of the Lord," is when "our Lord Jesus Christ" comes in judgment (1 Thess 4:15–17; 5:23; 1 Cor 1:7–8; 4:1–5; etc.). Similarly, in Philippians 2:9–11, in speaking of the Son's post-Easter exaltation, Paul says that every knee will bow before him, "to the glory of God the Father." These words reflect Isaiah 45:23, envisaging the universal worship of Yahweh.

Unambiguous affirmations that Jesus Christ is God in all might, majesty, and authority are common in the Epistle to the Colossians. In 1:10–20 and its echo in 2:9–10, Christ is said to be "the image [*eikon*] of the invisible God" (1:15), and "the firstborn of all creation [*prototokos*]." The firstborn of the king in Israel shared the honor and rule of the king. The allusion is to Psalm 89:27, where God says of the messianic king, "I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth." Then Paul says that "in him [Christ] all things in heaven and on earth were created" (Col 1:16). The preposition *in* indicates that Christ is the agent of creation. Far from being a subordinate, Christ is the cocreator who rules over all. He has "first place in everything" (v. 18). This is so because "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (v. 20). In him the completeness of deity was present. In Colossians 2:9–10, Paul says much the same of Christ a second time. He says, "in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily," and, "he is the head of every ruler and authority." Following on in chapter 3, Paul takes up one of the most important Christological motifs in the New Testament. He speaks of the exalted Christ as "seated at the right hand of God" (3:1). These words reflect Psalm 110:1, the most often quoted Old Testament text in the New Testament. They speak of Christ's rule over all, depicting him "in a position of supreme authority."[7] In the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the Book of Revelation, the imagery changes: the Father and the Son rule from the one throne "forever and ever" (Heb 1:8; Rev 5:13; 7:10–12; 11:15).

In John's gospel, rather than the Son, or the Son and the Spirit, deferring to the Father, we find a pattern of mutual deference. The Son glorifies the Father (John 7:18; 17:4) and the Father and the Spirit glorify the Son (John 8:50, 54; 12:23; 17:1; 16:14). John also says that, before his incarnation, the Son shared the Father's glory as his only Son (John 1:14; 12:41; 17:5, 24), during his ministry he revealed the Father's glory (1:14; 8:54; 11:4; 13:32; 17:15, 10, 22), and, after his glorification on the cross, that he will again share the Father's glory, a glory he had before the world existed (John 17:5).

In the New Testament, the reign or rule (*basileia*), the power (*dynamis*), and the authority (*exousia*) of the exalted Christ speak of the one reality. Christ now *reigns* as the divine Lord in all *power* (omnipotence), having "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt 28:19). On this basis, the pro-Nicene fathers spoke of the *monarchia*, the one or united rule, of the triune God.[8] In contrast, the Arians limited the *monarchia* to the Father. The Son stands under his authority, and any authority the Son has is derived authority.[9] The one rule or *monarchia* of the triune God should not be confused with the pro-Nicene fathers teaching that the Father is the one source, or *mia archē*, of the Son, an idea that follows from speaking of the Father as the eternal begetter of the Son.

On this strong biblical basis, virtually all Reformation and post-Reformation confessions speak of the Father and the Son as one in being/essence and power/authority.[10] Following them, the Evangelical Theological Society's statement of faith makes the same affirmation.

5. The divine three persons' relations in eternity and operations in the world are ordered

In the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, the concept of order is another key element. It refers to revealed constancy in divine relations and operations. Both in eternity and in the world of space and time, how the three divine persons relate to each other and to us and how they operate follow a consistent pattern that is unchanging and irreversible. Robert Letham

says order in divine life is "not to be understood in terms of human arrangements, such as rank or hierarchy, but in terms of appropriate disposition."[11] Order in divine life and operations is multifaceted.

First and fundamentally, there is *a processional order*. In eternity within the life of God, the Father begets or generates the Son and breathes out the Spirit. And in time and space, the Father sends the Son and pours out the Spirit (the divine missions). The temporal *missions* (sendings) of the Son and the Spirit into the world do not constitute God's triunity; they reflect what is true eternally. The one God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These internal and external acts of God differentiate the divine persons without dividing or separating them in divine being or power. They tell us that, in the one God, the Father is precisely the Father because he begets the Son, God the Son is precisely the Son because he is begotten, and God the Spirit is precisely the Spirit because he "proceeds" from the Father or the Father and the Son. For this reason, the order reflected in the eternal acts of generation and procession and in the temporal missions cannot be changed or reversed because they reflect what is constitutive for the eternal triune life of God. For orthodoxy, the eternal begetting of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit and the Father's temporal sending (mission) of the Son and the Spirit into the world do not subordinate the Son or the Spirit, as the Arians and those have who followed them across the ages have argued. The pro-Nicene fathers are adamant: derivation and sending in no way diminish any of the persons. In seeking to explain *processional order*, Basil says, a distinction must be made between a "natural order," arranged for created beings, setting one before or above another, and "a deliberative order" which is simply conceptual or logical, like "the kind of order between fire and light."[12] In this kind of order, the fire is the cause of the light, but the fire and the light cannot be temporally or hierarchically ranked. By the time Augustine wrote his great work on the Trinity, *De Trinitate*, early in the fifth century, the so-called Arians had made it an "axiom that the one who sends is greater than the one who is sent."[13] Augustine spends many pages in several sections repudiating the idea that to be sent implies subordination.[14] Modern biblical studies have shown that his conclusion is correct. The sending language used of the Son's mission in the New Testament (Mark 9:37; Luke 4:43; John 3:17; 4:34; 5:36; 17:3; Gal 4:4; etc.) reflects the Jewish *shaliach* concept. In Judaism, the one sent (the *shaliach*) has the same authority as the one who sends him: he is as the sender himself. It would thus seem that Jesus is said to be "sent" to make the point that he has the same authority as the Father, or, more accurately, that he expresses the Father's authority. To obey the Son is to obey the Father, and to honor the Son is to honor the Father (John 5:23; cf. 13:20).

> This passage speaks of how the Father and the Son exercise divine rule in a historical and redemptive sequential order, not of hierarchical order in being or power.

Second, we can observe an *operational order*. In divine operations or works in the world, the three divine persons work inseparably, yet each makes a distinctive contribution to every work in accord with who each one is, whether Father, Son, or Spirit. Thus, we note, for example, that Paul speaks of God the Father creating through the Son (Col 1:16), judging through the Son (Rom 2:16), justifying sinners through the Son (Rom 5:1, 21; cf. 1 Thess 5:9), electing to salvation through the Son (Eph 1:5), reconciling through the Son (2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:20), and pouring out the Spirit through the Son (Titus 3:6). John uses different wording, but similarly speaks of an operational order in the work of the Father, Son, and Spirit. What the Son does and says reflects exactly what God the Father says and does, and what the Spirit does is to continue the work of the Son after his departure (John 4:34; 5:19; 14:10; 16:13–14; 15:26; 17:7; etc.). On this basis, Athanasius first of all enunciated the principle that, in various wordings, would be embraced by orthodoxy: "The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit."[15] Gregory of Nyssa's version of this principle is, "every operation which extends from God to the creation, and is named according to our various conceptions of it, has its origin from the Father, and proceeds through the Son, and is perfected by the Spirit."[16] And, in speaking of this operational order, the pro-Nicene fathers also noted an order or consistency in how God comes to us and we to him. The Father comes *to* us *through* the Son *in* the Spirit and we come *to* the Father *through* the Son *in* the Spirit.

Third, we may speak of a *numerical order*. How the divine persons are sequentially revealed in Scripture leads the human mind to think of the Father as the first person of the Trinity, the Son the second, and the Spirit as the third. On this basis, the Nicene Creed speaks of the divine three persons in this order. However, it is to be noted that the Cappadocian father Basil argued strongly against the threefold "subnumeration" (*hyparithmeō*) of the persons of the Trinity because he vehemently opposed anything that might suggest the ranking of the divine persons in a descending order.[17] In making this point, he noted, as many have done after him, that in the more than sixty triadic comments in the New Testament, no one person is consistently placed first. In roughly equal numbers, sometimes the Father is mentioned first (e.g., Matt 28:19), sometimes the Son (e.g., 2 Cor 13:13), and sometimes the Spirit (e.g., 1 Cor 12:4–6).[18] Thus, although we may speak of the first, second, and third persons of the Trinity, we should not infer hierarchical ordering or precedence in divine life on this basis. In English and in Greek, to speak of an order where someone is ranked under someone else, a preposition meaning "under" must be added to show that hierarchical ordering is envisaged. In Greek, this is done by adding the prefix *hypo* to create the verb *hypotassō*, and in English by adding the prefix *sub-* to get the verb *subordinate*.

More significantly than numeric order, how the divine persons are revealed and operate in space and time suggests what may be called an *historical/redemptive sequential order*. I take 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, a much-debated text, as an example of this. Here, Paul prophetically speaks of an eschatological sequence of events leading up to the time when "the Son himself will be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection to him so that God may be all in all" (v. 28). This comment has frequently been taken to speak either of the ultimate subordination of the Son to the Father or of the end of triune life (i.e., at the eschaton, the Trinity will become a monad). Neither conclusion can be accepted. What Paul says in verse 28 must be interpreted in light of both the immediate literary context and of what the Bible says elsewhere on the rule of Christ. Numerous other texts speak of Christ's rule as "forever" (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 9:7; Luke 1:33; 2 Pet 1:11; Rev 7:10–12; 11:15; cf. Eph 1:20), and, on this basis, the Nicene Creed says his rule "will have no end."

The key to understanding this passage lies in recognizing that the Son's distinctive work is to reveal and redeem. It is he, not the Father or the Spirit, who "came down from heaven," took the form of a servant, and died on the cross to win our salvation. Human history includes events before and after this: *a sequential order*. After the Son's death, he is raised to reign as the ruling Messiah/Christ (Acts 2:30–33; Rom 1:3–4). His exaltation marks the inauguration of his reign as the *Messiah,* something new, notwithstanding that God had determined for all eternity that he would exercise his rule in and through the Son. Following his exaltation, Christ occupies center stage. He is spoken of as the ruler of the universe, he is confessed as "Lord," and he is the focus of Christian worship. Nevertheless, Paul insists, his preeminence is "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11; cf. Rom 16:27; Gal 1:3–5). The Father and the Son cannot be separated, divided, or set in opposition. In 1 Corinthians 15:20–27, Paul speaks of the risen and exalted Christ's *sequentially ordered* triumphs in the post-Easter age over all of his enemies, the last of which is death. These verses are entirely Christocentric. When his triumph as the ruling Messiah/Christ is completed, Paul says, the Son will "hand over the kingdom to God the Father" (1 Cor 15:24). This is another transitional event; at the end, the rule of the Son as the exalted Messiah/Christ will end. What the Father gave him he will hand back to the Father, and the Father will take it from him, so that God "may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28), which probably means God the Father himself will assume rule, or it could mean that the triune God in unity will rule. This passage speaks of how the Father and the Son exercise divine rule in a *historical and redemptive sequential order*, not of hierarchical order in being or power. Paul is not speaking of the ontological subordination of the Son or of the Trinity becoming a monad.

6. The Son, in taking human flesh, subordinated himself for our salvation

In the Bible, we find texts that explicitly speak of the Son as God in all might, majesty, and authority, as we have noted, and yet there are other texts that speak of him as praying to the Father (Mark 14:36; 17:2; etc.), dependent on the Father (John 5:19; 8:28; 1 Cor 3:23, Mark 14:36; Heb 5:7; etc.), obedient to the Father (Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8; Heb 5:8; etc.), and even of him as "less than the Father" (John 14:28). Explaining how these texts in tension can all be affirmed and reconciled has caused more theological division in the church over the centuries than any other doctrinal dispute. I outline four competing explanations.

a. The fourth-century Arians

The Arians' solution was to focus on the texts that spoke of the Son as praying to the Father, dependent on the Father, obedient to the Father, and particularly Proverbs 8:22, "the Lord created me at the beginning of his work," which they took to mean that the Son was created in time and thus subordinate God. The texts that spoke of the Son as God and as the Lord, and of his absolute authority, were all explained in the light of such primary texts for them. They could call the Son "God," but, for them, he was subordinated God, less in divine being and power than the Father. Particularly important in their explanation was their appeal to the fact that Jesus was spoken of as "the Son." They gave content to the title *Son* by way of human analogy. They understood the title literally. If Jesus was a son, then he was begotten in time and less in authority than his father.

In this explanation, the Father and the Son are sharply differentiated and divided. We have two gods, one the true God who is supreme, the other his subordinate. Basic to this position is the thesis that the subordination of the Son seen in the incarnation should be read back into the eternal life of God.

b. The pro-Nicene fathers

Strongly and consistently opposing this Arian construal of the Trinity, the pro-Nicene fathers argued that it eclipsed half of the "double account of the Savior," as Athanasius put it. Their explanation of the texts in tension was that all the texts that speak of the Son in the loftiest terms as God in all might, majesty, and authority speak of him "in the form of God," as he is in eternity, and all texts that speak of or could imply his subordination to the Father speak of him as man in "the form of a servant" in his incarnation in history (the economy). Or, to put it in terms of later Reformed theology, the equality texts speak of him in his "state of exaltation" in eternity, and the subordination texts speak of him in his "state of humiliation" in his incarnate earthly ministry.

Traditionally, the temporal subordination of the Son has been called "the economic subordination of the Son," and, in modern times by some mainline theologians, the *temporal* "functional subordination of the Son" or *temporal* "role subordination of the Son." The words *function* and *role* are modern terms not found in the Nicene tradition or the Reformation and post-Reformation confessions. When used of the work or operations of the Son, and, in particular, of his ministry in the "form of a servant" on earth, the use of these contemporary terms is not contentious. Below it will be made

clear why I mention this incidental matter. The passage in Scripture that most clearly explains how the "double account of the Savior"—one in "the form of God" and one in "the form of a servant"—is to be rightly understood is Philippians 2:4–11. Here, Paul speaks of God the Son having equality with God the Father and of the Son freely choosing to empty himself to be born in human likeness, take the form of a servant or slave, and go to the cross, and of the Father raising him from death and exalting him to rule in all might, majesty, and power "in the name above every name," that is as Yahweh.

For the pro-Nicene fathers to confess Jesus Christ as "the Son of God" indicated not his subordinate status, but his sovereign rule. They recognized that, in the New Testament, this title identified Jesus as the kingly messianic Son prophesied in Psalm 2:7. The Jews in fact understood that, in speaking of himself as the Son of God in a unique sense, Jesus was "making himself equal to God" (John 5:18).

This explanation of the texts in tension won the day and became historic orthodoxy. It did so because it reflected the teaching of the Apostle Paul given in Philippians 2 and because it made more sense of and explained better all that we find in Scripture.

c. Karl Barth

In his innovative *reformulation* of the doctrine of the Trinity, Karl Barth provides an alternative way of explaining the "double account of the Savior." Barth's doctrine of the Trinity is characterized by a very strong affirmation of divine unity and equality.[19] He says, "The name of Father, Son, and Spirit means that God is the one God in threefold repetition, and in such a way that the repetition itself is grounded in his Godhead."[20] And, "Father, Son, and Spirit are one single God."[21] And, "Only the substantial equality of Christ and the Spirit with the Father is compatible with monotheism."[22] When divine unity is stressed, tritheism and subordinationism are categorically excluded: the three persons are the one God.

However, to be true to Barth, we must note that he also speaks of the Son as subordinate, but never *simpliciter*. For him, the "double account of the Savior" is not explained temporally and successively as a contrast between the Son in the form of a servant in historical revelation and his exalted status in eternity. The Son is subordinate and supreme God simultaneously and eternally. He is "Lord and servant" at all times. He is never one or the other in isolation. In this highly dialectical construal of the Trinity, the Son is forever God in all might, majesty, and authority, and yet, at the same time, in his "mode of being" (distinct identity) as the Son, he is subordinate, submissive, and obedient to the Father.

Barth's construal of the Trinity is generally taken to be within the bounds of orthodoxy, but is not without its major problems. These include (1) his very strong emphasis on divine unity, which has led many to argue that he veers toward modalism, (2) his breach of the temporal divide between Christ in glory in eternity and as the servant in his incarnation in history, and (3) his perplexing dialectical manner of speaking of the one God that often makes it hard to know exactly what he is saying.

d. Some contemporary evangelicals

Beginning in the mid 1970s, conservative evangelicals concerned to maintain the traditional hierarchical understanding of the male–female relationship developed a fourth explanation of these texts in tension.[23] From the 1990s, this distinctive evangelical explanation has been self-designated by its proponents as the "complementarian position." Fundamental to this construct as it relates to both men and women and the Son and the Father is a distinctive and novel use of the closely related modern terms *function* and *role* that are sometimes found in contemporary mainline discussions on the Trinity in their dictionary sense as noted above.

"Complementarian" evangelicals argue that the equality texts speak of the eternal *ontological* equality of the Father and the Son, and the subordinating texts of the *eternal functional* or *role* subordination of the Son. We are told that men and women, like the divine Father and Son, are equal in *being*, yet have different *roles* that indelibly distinguish them. The Father has the role of commanding and sending, and the Son the role of obeying and going. In this literature, the word *role* is given a meaning not found in any dictionary or sociological text without ever disclosing that this is the case. As normally understood, the word *role* speaks of routine behavior or acts—and so we ask, who in the home has the role of gardening, washing clothes, doing the shopping, managing the finances, etc.? In this sense, roles are not fixed and person-defining. Roles can and do change. In this dictionary sense, it is thus perfectly acceptable to speak of the *temporal* role subordination or functional subordination of the Son in the incarnation, as has been conceded. However, in evangelical literature arguing for the subordination of women on the basis of a supposed eternal subordination of the Son, the word *role* is given another meaning. It is used only to speak of who rules and who obeys in an unchanging and unchangeable hierarchy. In this usage, what indelibly differentiates men and women, and the Father and the Son, is that the Father is *eternally* set over the Son in authority as men are *permanently* set over women in the church and the home. Their roles can never change. Thus, in this usage, despite denials, the word *role* has ontological implications. One's role defines who one is. This idiosyncratic usage of the term role is indefensible because it obfuscates what is being taught, namely, the necessary and eternal subordination of the Son in authority. This is bad theology. One of the foundational aims of theology is to clarify the issues in contention, especially by sorting out terminological confusion.

In this understanding of the Trinity, embraced by hierarchical conservative evangelicals, 1 Corinthians 11:3 is the primary text. They read Paul to be saying, God the Father is *head over* God the Son, just as men are *head over* women. It is clear that Paul

uses the word *kephalē* (head) metaphorically at this point to introduce his directive on women covering their (literal) heads and men not covering their heads when leading in church; what is disputed is the force of the word *kephalē* in this context. The meaning "head over" or "authority over" is improbable because Paul immediately goes on to speak of men and women leading the congregation in word and prayer, and, in verse 10, of women having authority on their heads. The meaning *source* is more likely. Paul is saying that, just as the Son is *from* the Father, his source, so woman (Eve) is *from* Adam, her originating source.[24] But whatever force we give to the Greek word *kephalē* in verse 3 (head over, source, top part), the relationship between the Father and the Son and that between men and women must be very different. We cannot define perfect, triadic divine relations in terms of fallen dual human relationships.

Most theologians across the centuries have not read 1 Corinthians 11:3 to be speaking of the eternal subordination of the Son. They have not done so because they have not wanted to set Scripture in conflict with Scripture. Consistently, the New Testament authors speak of the ascended Christ as ruling in all might, majesty, and authority as Lord and, in Paul's terms, "head over all things" (Eph 1:20–22; Col 2:10). The Nicene fathers concluded that Paul was here alluding to the eternal generation of the Son. The Father is the *source* of the Son in that he is eternally begotten of the Father, not created in time, and as such is "God from God, true God from true God." Basil says, "God is the *kephalē* of Christ as Father," and, as such, is one in being with him.[25] Calvin takes another path. He is of the opinion that Paul in this verse does infer the subordination of the Son, and, for this reason, the conclusion must be drawn that he is speaking of his temporal subjection in "the form of a servant." Commenting on 1 Corinthians 11:3, he says Christ "made himself subject to the Father in our flesh, apart from that, being of one essence with the Father, he is equal with him."[26]

This complementarian explanation of the texts in tension cannot be endorsed. It stands too close to Arianism. Like Arianism of old, it (1) reads back the incarnational, temporal subordination of the Son into the eternal life of God, (2) does not do justice to the texts that speak of the Son as God in all might, majesty, and authority, (3) gives content to the title *Son* by appeal to fallen family relationships rather than from what is revealed of the Son in Scripture, (4) makes the Father alone the *monarchia*, the one supreme ruler, who is set over a Son who must do as he is commanded, and (5) results in a hierarchical model of the Trinity which introduces the errors of both tritheism and subordinationism. We have two Gods, the supreme Father and the Son who obeys him.

7. The limitations of creaturely language to speak of the triune creator

From the time of Athanasius, the limitations of human language—the speech of those created by God—to speak adequately and exactly of God the creator has been recognized and discussed. Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, and Augustine all addressed this issue because they saw that foundational to the Arian error was the belief that words such as *father*, *son*, and *begotten*, when used of God, should be taken literally, in a creaturely sense. Thomas Aquinas put his able mind to work on this problem. He argued that human speech used of God could be one of three things:

1. It could be *univocal*. To say God loves me means the same as to say my parents love me or my wife loves me. If our language of God is univocal, it would mean that God is just like human beings.
2. It could be *equivocal*. To say God loves me means something altogether different from saying my parents or wife loves me. If our language used of God is equivocal, we could not say anything factual about God.
3. It could be *analogical*. To say God loves me tells me something true about God, but it only captures part of the reality. If our language used of God is analogical, as would seem to be the case, it means we can speak of and understand God in the categories of human thought, but never fully comprehend him.

The limitations of human creaturely language used of God are an acute problem for theologians seeking to enunciate the doctrine of the Trinity. All the key terms—*son*, *father*, *person*, *relation*, *unity*, *sending/mission*, and, not least, *begotten*—cannot be understood literally, or, to use the more exact technical term, univocally, when used of God. Thus, calling God "Father," for example, certainly tells us something about the Father, but only revelation can tell us what this is, because the divine Father in so many ways is not like a human father. He does not have a father himself, he is not married, he does not impregnate, he does not grow old, and both he and his Son are called "the Lord." This means the content of such terms must be based on what Scripture reveals, not on human analogies reflecting fallen creaturely existence. To reject this rule invariably leads to error. God is reduced by being described in human categories.

Because human language used of God is analogical, we cannot conclude that, simply because the divine persons are spoken of in male terms, God should be understood to be male, not female. God must include both human genders because the opening chapter of the Bible says, "God created humankind in his image . . . male and female" (Gen 1:26–27). This means both genders together in their complementary differences image and reflect their maker. Deuteronomy 4:16 expressly forbids representing God in the form of a man or a woman. And, the Apostle John excludes the thought that God is to be understood as male or female when he says, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24).

8. The Trinity is not our social agenda

In contemporary mainline Catholic and Protestant literature on the Trinity, the triune life of God in eternity is frequently

taken to be a model or pattern for the social relationships God wills on earth, or, in stronger terms, to be prescriptive of human social ordering. A coequal social model of the Trinity is presupposed, and, on this basis, social equality on earth is thought to be mandated. Many contemporary conservative evangelicals also believe divine relations in heaven are prescriptive of human relationships on earth, but they presuppose a hierarchically ordered Trinity.[27] For them, God's life in eternity is thought to endorse a social order on earth where some rule (males/husbands) and some obey (females/wives). In both cases, we have an entirely novel argument without historical precedent and which is invalid. Orthodoxy, as spelled out in the Athanasian Creed, speaks of a coequal Trinity where "none is before or after, greater or lesser," and yet no one in past times ever appealed to this teaching to question the prevailing hierarchical social ordering of their age. It was not thought that the divine life in eternity modeled or prescribed human social life on earth. In any case, to argue that perfect divine relations apart from history somehow model or prescribe human relations in a fallen world is unconvincing. What may be true of God in heaven may not be applicable to creatures, even God-imaging creatures, on earth.

The great danger in believing that the Trinity models or prescribes our social agenda is that, instead of Scripture, interpreted in the light of the theological tradition now codified in the creeds and confessions, being the basis for our doctrine of the Trinity, our concerns on earth may dictate our theology of the Trinity. All too many contemporary theologians who have made the Trinity their social agenda would seem to have first of all construed the Trinity in terms of their social agenda, whatever that may be, and then appealed to this to support what they would like to see on earth.

The impossibility of making God's triune life a model or prescription for social life on earth is illustrated by reference to the husband-wife relationship. Correlation seems impossible. Trinitarian relations are threefold, the husband–wife relationship is twofold; the Father–Son relationship is analogically described in male–male terms, the husband–wife relationship is a male–female relationship; and the divine Father–Son relationship does not allow for offspring, while the earthly male–female relationship does.

In any case, making the eternal Father–Son relationship a model or pattern for human relationships has no biblical warrant. Once Paul asks believers, men and women, "to imitate God" (Eph 5:1); all the other imitation exhortations ask believers, men and women, to follow the example set by Jesus (John 13:34; 1 Cor 11:1; Phil 2:4–11; 1 Thess 1:6; 1 Pet 2:21; 1 John 2:6).

9. Orthodoxy defined

In concluding my summary of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, I pointed out that the Nicene and Athanasian creeds and the Reformation and post-Reformation confessions prescribe what has been concluded is the teaching of Scripture on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Athanasian Creed gives the fullest account, and, to conclude, I note what it says. This creed was composed late in the fifth century AD in southern Gaul (France). It is first mentioned around 542 by the theologian Caesarius of Arles. In Latin, it is called by the words that begin this confession, *Quicumque vult*, "Whosoever will." It was not called the Athanasian Creed until the ninth century. It reflects Augustine's theology more than anyone else's. This creed consists of two parts: lines 1–28 spell out the doctrine of the Trinity; lines 29–44 the doctrine of the person of Christ.

The Athanasian Creed is binding on Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and most continental Reformed Christians.[28] This means it is taken as an authoritative definition of the doctrine of the Trinity for a large majority of Christians in the world. Onetime Oxford Professor Leonard Hodgson says that the Athanasian Creed is the only one of the ancient creeds "that explicitly and unequivocally states the full Christian doctrine of God."[29] The Athanasian Creed begins,

> We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Spirit.

After reiterating that God is one and yet three equal persons in the clauses following, this creed then declares that the human mind cannot comprehend the divine persons.

> The Father is incomprehensible, the Son is incomprehensible: and the Holy Spirit is incomprehensible.

This is a basic tenet of orthodoxy. We only know what God reveals of himself, and even what is revealed cannot be fully grasped by fallen human beings. After this, we have two clauses specifically denying that the Son is less than the Father in authority:

> So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty. And yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty.
>
> So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.

Then comes a clause that grounds divine threefold differentiation in differing origination. The Father is "not begotten," the Son is "not created but begotten," and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Finally, to sum up what is to be confessed in worshipping the Trinity, this creed says,

> In this Trinity none is before or after another: none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are coeternal together and coequal.

These words absolutely exclude hierarchical ordering of any kind in divine life. The wording could not be more explicit.

In the second and shorter section of this creed that follows, what is demanded for right belief in "the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ" is spelled out. As the incarnate Son of God, he is to be confessed as

> God and man. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world. Perfect God and perfect man. . . . Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood. Who although he be God and man: yet he is not two, but one Christ. One not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking the manhood into God.

I admit that the language of the Athanasian Creed is not the language of Scripture. It is rather the language characteristic of the theological enterprise that aims to unambiguously state what is to be believed and categorically exclude what is thought to be error. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic and most of the Reformation churches confess this creed because they believe it accurately and explicitly sums up what is taught or implied by Scripture, even if the language is not a reiteration of the exact words of Scripture. We find the same analytical and precise language in the Reformation and post-Reformation confessions. Such statements of faith express categorically and unambiguously what Christians should believe. We may dissent from what they say, but there can be very little debate as to what they say, and no denying, for most Christians past and present, that they spell out orthodoxy.[30]

Notes

1. When I had had finished in draft this two-part work, I wrote to twelve well-informed, and mostly very well-known, academic theologians representing Roman Catholic, mainline Protestant, and evangelical commitments, all of whom have published on the doctrine of the Trinity, asking them to read critically and comment on what I had put to paper. A few I knew personally; most I did not. To my very pleasant surprise, I received nine positive replies. Some asked for a few changes to the wording or the addition of a few lines in clarification, but otherwise, they agreed that what I have written is a faithful and accurate account of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity as it has been historically articulated. I do not give their names, as it would be unfair to suggest that my words exactly capture their thinking at all points, and because I dared not ask them to read my work a second time after I had edited it. I have given the list of the endorsing readers to the editor of this journal who holds it in strict confidence.

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2. I designate all those who endorsed the Nicene Creed of 325, especially the inclusion of the term *homoousios*, the *pro-Nicene fathers.* I am well aware that, between the council of Nicaea in 325 and the council of Constantinople in 381, both the so-called Arians and their opponents were never two opposing parties with settled and fixed positions. In both camps, there was development and some division of opinion.

3. I am seeking to outline the historic orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. It cannot be questioned that the correlated doctrines of the eternal generation of the Son and eternal procession of the Spirit are integral to this. These doctrines are affirmed in the Nicene and Athanasian creeds and by the Reformation and post-Reformation Protestant confessions, strongly supported by every significant theologian who has written on the Trinity until modern times, including Calvin, and by every Christian today for whom the Nicene creed is a binding summary of core Christian beliefs, which is the overwhelming majority of contemporary Christians. These doctrines gain such huge support because they explain eternal divine self-differentiation on the basis of what is inferred by Scripture, using scriptural terms, and because they exclude absolutely the errors of modalism, tritheism, and subordinationism. On the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son, see in more detail Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Trinitarian Orthodoxy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012).

4. Athanasius, *Defence of the Nicene Definition* 22 (165), *The Councils of Ariminum and Seleucia* 34 (469), and *To the Bishops in Africa* 8 (492–93), in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, 4, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (New York, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), henceforth abbreviated as *NPNF.*

5. *St. Augustine: The Trinity* 5.1.3, trans. Edmund Hill (New York, NY: New City Press, 1991), 190. See also 202, n. 4.

6. So M. Thompson, *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2000), 150, who exactly follows Basil on this matter.

7. P. O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 163.

8. Athanasius, *Defense of the Nicene Definition* 5.26 (*NPNF* 4:167), *Against the Arians* 4.1 (*NPNF* 4:433); Basil, *On the Spirit* 18.45 (*NPNF* 8:28); Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 1.36 (*NPNF* 4:84); Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 29* 2 (*NPNF* 7:301).

9. This is explicitly spelled out in Eunomius's *Confession of Faith*. On this, see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 619–21.

10. So the Augsburg confession of 1530, the Belgic confession of 1561, the 39 Articles of the Church of England, the Westminster confession of 1646, the London Baptist confession of 1689, and the Methodist articles of 1784. In this usage, the terms *power* and *authority* are virtual synonyms, as are *being*, *essence*, and *nature*.

11. Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity in Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2004), 383. See also p. 179, n. 29, and p. 400.

12. Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.20, quotations from *St. Basil of Caesarea: Against Eunomius*, trans, M. DelCogliano and A. Radde-Gallwitz (Washington, DC: Catholic University, 2011), 120–21.

13. Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.7, 101.

14. Augustine, *The Trinity* 2.2.7, 101–02; 2.2.8, 108; 2.2.9, 108–09; 4.5.25–32, 171–77.

15. Athanasius, *Letters of St. Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. C. R. B. Shapland (London: Epworth, 1951), 135.

16. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Not Three Gods, NPNF* 5:334.

17. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Holy Spirit* 17.41–45 (*NPNF* 8:26–28).

18. In more detail, see Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 109–10.

19. For what follows, see K. N. Giles, "Barth and Subordinationism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 3 (2011): 327–46.

20. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics 1.1: The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 350.

21. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 381.

22. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 353.

23. In more detail and for documentation, see Giles, *Jesus and the Father*, 17–33.

24. P. B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 117–39.

25. Basil, *Letters and Selected Works* (*NPNF* 8:xl).

26. John Calvin, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. J. W. Fraser, ed. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), 229.

27. Appeal to a supposed hierarchically ordered Trinity as the ground for the hierarchical ordering of the sexes on earth is characteristic of and intrinsic to the post 1970s evangelical "complementarian" case for the permanent subordination of women. Evangelical egalitarians as a general rule have not appealed to a coequal Trinity to support their biblical arguments for the substantial equality of the differentiated sexes.

28. It is endorsed for Lutherans by the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Formula of Concord*; for the Reformed by the *Second Helvetic Confession* and the *Belgic Confession*, and for Anglicans by the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. G. R. Bray says this creed failed to obtain endorsement in the Westminster Confession of 1646 because doubts were then circulating about its authorship by Athanasius. "Whosoever Will Be Saved: The Athanasian Creed and the Modern Church," in T. George, ed., *Evangelicals and the Nicene Faith: Reclaiming the Apostolic Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 47.

29. Leonard Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Nisbet, 1955), 102.

30. The author (kngiles@gmail.com) welcomes comments about this statement from any academic theologian who has published on the Trinity who would be willing to confidentially endorse in principle this account of the historic orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, offer constructive criticism, or suggest improvements.

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Kevin Giles (ThD) is an Australian Anglican pastor, theologian, and author. On the Trinity, he has published *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporay Gender Debate* (InterVarsity, 2002), *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Zondervan, 2006), *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (InterVarsity, 2012), and many articles in scholarly journals.

Hermeneutics in Pink and Blue

An Open Letter to a Pastor Asks: Are Two Versions of Biblical Truth Required in the Church?

Christiane Carlson-Thies

Dear Pastor Smith:

The debate within the body of Christ on the topic of women's identity and role has often been cast as a battle between traditionalists ardently defending biblical truth and their critics who would, either by design or by ignorance, loosen the church from its biblical moorings in order to promote a foreign agenda. In truth, for many of us, our unease with the traditional position has nothing to do with being swayed by modern liberation movements; rather, our unease is a response to the weaknesses within the traditional position itself.

In the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:15, I hope the critical comments I offer can become part of a conversation to examine whether, on this topic, our church has correctly handled the Word of Truth.

Female subordinationism

There are many excellent books that wrestle in detail with the specific texts that have formed the case against women's full participation in authoritative offices in the church. I won't repeat or even summarize their good work. Instead, I hope to raise the broad question of whether Scripture attaches such an absolute value to gender that femaleness, by itself, must become an automatic disqualifier from authoritative offices—either all offices or only some.

By "female subordinationism" I mean that teaching which holds that women's authority to teach and lead is necessarily limited by one thing only: women's God-ordained subordination to the authority of men.

For some believers, female subordinationism is grounded in a theology that regards all women in all times and in all places as having little or no intrinsic God-given authority. As an example of this position, in John Piper and Wayne Grudem's book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, women are cautioned that even when giving directions to a male stranger lost in their neighborhood, their demeanor must not compromise the stranger's masculinity.[1] Thus, for some, even the hint of a woman having authority over a man in any context is an offense to be fastidiously avoided. They believe that the exercise of creation-wide authority is a constitutive element of manhood alone.

For other believers, the traditional "limiting texts"[2] of Scripture lead to different conclusions. Some will not allow women to hold any leadership within the body of Christ, including in parachurch ministries, but accept that women may teach and lead whenever they are exercising a purely "secular" authority (e.g., at school).

Others believe women may provide leadership to children and other women in any venue, including the church, but not to men. For still others, the line where women lose their leadership authority is drawn exclusively around the pulpit. Another group makes distinctions based on whether the woman is married or single. There are abundant variations on the theme of exactly how limited God intended women's authority to be.[3]

Regardless of whether the area where women are allowed to lead and teach is defined widely or narrowly, the idea prevails that God has granted an authority to men *because they are males* that God has not granted to women *because they are females*. At its root, therefore, all teaching and practice of female subordination is based on the conviction that God has authorized times and places where gender must trump every other fact about a woman.

Equality of being but difference in function

Advocates of female subordinationism assert that their position cannot be characterized as biblically sanctioned discrimination against women. Functional or role differences, they argue, do not entail an inequality of "being." Just because a general in the army has authority over a private, the argument goes, before the face of God the general and private are equal in being. In the same manner, the argument continues, God in his sovereignty has assigned certain leadership roles to males that he has denied to females. Nevertheless, before the face of God, men and women still remain equal despite these functional distinctions.

But the manner in which a general and a private are distinct in function though equal in being is not at all the same as the

manner in which authority differences are claimed to be fixed between male and female.[4] There is nothing in the general's "being" that has necessarily placed him, rather than the private, in the office of general. If there has been no corruption in the process of his promotion, the general will have won his office based on his education, qualifications, years of distinguished service, and so on. By the same token, there is nothing inherent in the "being" of the private that will prevent him from possibly attaining the office of general. In short, between general and private, "being" does not determine their authority differences.

Indeed, one could imagine a scenario in which the same general and the same private belong to a local church in which the general is simply a member, whereas the private is an elder. Within the setting of the local church, the private would be the one with greater authority despite his subordinate military status. In these examples, at no time does "being" determine "authority."

The situation is completely opposite when it comes to how the church traditionally practices and defends the division of authority between male and female. For a faithful, transformed, Christlike, educated, qualified woman, the fact of her being female is, ultimately, the only thing that disqualifies her from exercising offices—all offices or only some. Being is everything. Being is the only thing. Gender triumphs over every other fact.

> Despite Genesis 3, it has apparently never occurred to traditionalists to debate whether men have a God-given right to be anything besides farmers

Hermeneutics in pink and blue

The bedrock of human identity, the source of all human authority, and the evidence of God's original intentions for human life on planet Earth are found in Genesis 1:27–28, which declares,

> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (NIV 1984).

In Genesis 1, God unambiguously blesses both the male and the female with a common identity and a common calling: to represent him as his image-bearers. However, in the course of history, Genesis 1 has come to retain very little of that image-bearing identity and task for women.

Traditionalists typically begin chipping away at a woman's Genesis 1 identity in their interpretation of Genesis 2. By their reasoning, while we may entirely understand a male's identity and calling from Genesis 1, we only begin to discover a woman's identity and calling once we have the further evidence of Genesis 2.

According to Piper and Grudem, humans uniquely find their "identity upward in God and not downward in the animals."[5] But in developing their argument that male rulership over the female is rooted in Creation they draw the following from the fact that God first brought all the animals to Adam before creating the woman in Genesis 2: "Yet in passing through 'helpful' animals to woman, God teaches us that the woman is a man's 'helper' in the sense of a loyal and suitable assistant in the life of the garden."[6]

Despite the fact that the word for helper, *ezer*, is most often used in the Bible to describe God as our helper (and never used to describe animals as our helpers), when Piper and Grudem read Genesis 2 and find the word *helper* applied to the woman, they toss out the sweeping human identity statement of Genesis 1 where woman, just like man, fully bears God's image and is fully called to fruitfulness and rulership. Instead, they banish woman from the man's side and place her alongside the animals. She loses her place among the rulers and must join the ruled. They create two distinct readings of what it means to be an image-bearer: one image-bearer, the male, has authority under God, and one image-bearer, the female, is—just like the animals—under the authority of the male image-bearer.

If Piper and Grudem and other traditionalists used a consistent hermeneutic they would be compelled to take seriously not only the new information provided in Genesis 2 about the woman, but also the new information provided about the man: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (NIV). Thus, even as they have adjusted the woman's identity, they would have to adjust the man's identity to fit this revelation of his inadequacy as the "not-good-one," indeed, as the "helpless" one.

They aren't, however, consistent. And this illustrates that a fundamental error of traditional interpretation is to transform texts that mention women into texts that define women. Or, more accurately, as texts that redefine women as creatures under authority rather than as image-bearers who have authority alongside the man.

Consider another example, this one from Genesis 3, and how the teaching of the "painful toil" that both the man and the woman would experience following their fall into sin has been worked out historically. Woman's full identity as image-bearer quickly became narrowed to that of "childbearer," and the notion prevailed that suffering in childbearing was a command to be obeyed instead of a distortion to be alleviated. As a consequence, not only did the church resist providing relief for the pains of labor, but today we are still arguing about what contributions, beyond childbearing and homemaking, women are allowed to make to the cultural mandate of Genesis 1.

In contrast, the prediction of man's painful toil in wresting his bread from the earth never led to restricting him in a parallel way. His full identity as image-bearer never became reduced to the vocation of "farmer," nor was there resistance

to alleviation of his toil in food production. Despite Genesis 3, it has apparently never occurred to traditionalists to debate whether men have a God-given right to be anything besides farmers. Nor have there been sermons on Genesis 4:22 attempting to argue that when Tubal-Cain forged tools out of bronze and iron to ease man's painful toil, he was opposing God's direct command to the male in Genesis 3.

Same Bible. Same chapter. Same language of toil and sorrow. Opposite application of its teaching to women and men: hermeneutics in pink and blue.

Consider a final example, from 1 Timothy 2. In this chapter, Paul provides various instructions, including telling "men everywhere" to lift up holy hands in prayer. It is here that Paul also says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

The text addressed to men about what to do with their hands has never been enforced in any church I have ever attended. It certainly has not been used to define a universal "male identity" as "those-whose-hands-are-always-lifted-in prayer." In contrast, the text limiting women's teaching and authority over men has become a central, defining text for the very meaning of womanhood as "those-who-may-not-teach-or-have-authority-over-men."

With our "blue hermeneutic" at work, we blithely regard these instructions to "men everywhere" as applicable to *no man anywhere*, whereas with our "pink hermeneutic" at work, we are utterly confident that 1 Timothy 2 denies leadership authority—whether in a broad or a narrow scope—to *all women everywhere*.[7]

How might this passage speak to the church today if we refused to apply the pink hermeneutic? Perhaps we would find in it nothing more than the necessity to restrict the leadership of deceived women who, like the deceived women of Ephesus, threaten to reprise the deception of Eve and lead men of the church astray with bad theology.[8]

Other texts that are used to define and limit women's identity are those that speak of women's homemaking, their care for children or the elderly in their family. These important texts show us with what serious regard God holds kingdom-building work that might otherwise be dismissed as irrelevant "women's work." Yet, instead of being understood as revealing an important part of what godly women are called to do in the household of faith, the texts are read as showing us *all* of what godly women may ever aspire to do. Again, the "pink hermeneutic" treats such texts as if they constitute the substance of a woman's identity, instead of interpreting such texts in light of Genesis 1 where the woman, just like the man, images God in the fulfillment of her creation-wide fruitfulness and rulership.

Based on these examples from Genesis and 1 Timothy, one can see how the traditional position is built on an insupportable double standard of biblical interpretation. Those texts that refer to women are deemed to apply to all women and used to limit God's calling of women in accordance with the rich cultural mandate of Genesis 1. In the case of men, by contrast, the wide scope of Genesis 1 always trumps any similar texts that might otherwise be used to limit male authority or to establish misguided, gender-wide restrictions.

Based on these examples from Genesis and 1 Timothy, one can see how the traditional position is built on an insupportable double standard of biblical interpretation.

Truths in pink and blue

How believers define God's intentions for male and female inevitably shapes how we understand the rest of biblical teaching. So the question is this: Does female subordinationism leave Scripture with a unified message, or are two versions of Truth required, one pink and one blue?[9]

As a simple experiment, I would challenge any man committed to the traditional view to read the Bible as if he were subject to the restrictions he believes God has placed upon all women. When read through the filter of gender, teachings that seem very plain when applied to men require significant editing to apply to females. Following are some examples of how truth becomes split into two versions.

Example 1: *Re-created in Jesus Christ*. What happens to the salvation message when understood from the standpoint of female subordinationism? That we are all "equal at the foot of the cross" is a statement frequently made by traditionalists. But what does that mean beyond the fact that male and female are equal in their sin and need for grace? Scripture declares that as saved persons Christ is in us and the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and guide us into all truth. It declares that our minds will be renewed and we will become new creatures, transformed into Christlikeness. It declares that, as believers, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead comes alive in us.

The promise of salvation is not simply that we escape from the wrath of God, but that we receive empowerment and transformation for the present life. We are restored to our calling as Genesis 1 image-bearers. Hence, 1 Peter 2:9 defines the renewed identity of believers as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."

The Bible speaks of all this transformation and empowerment as offered to believers without any qualification by gender. Yet, for traditionalists, while a male's renewal in Christ leads, at least potentially, to offices of authority within the church, renewal for females does not.[10] Again, the issue is not the quantity or type of restriction placed upon the leadership of the re-created woman, but the fact of its being placed upon her because she is a woman and despite her re-creation. This leads to two varieties of salvation: blue for boys, with renewal, empowerment, and authority all hanging together; and pink for girls, with renewal and empowerment severed from authority.

Example 2: *Reigning with Christ*. Scripture promises that in Christ we receive salvation from our sins and reconciliation with God; it promises empowerment for a transformed life, and a kingdom in which those who follow Jesus will eventually rule with him. What happens to this truth under the doctrine of female subordinationism? Is it safe to say that at the end of history, when Christ returns to establish his kingdom, women will be granted a place of authority with Christ on his throne as promised in Revelation 3:21? Or must we expect that, even in glory, only males may attain to that position? Are there also two heavens, one pink and one blue?[11]

Example 3: *Gifts and calling*. (1) The parable of the talents (Luke 19:11ff.). This parable teaches that God is pleased when his people employ the talents he has given to them. Under female subordinationism, the parable requires an implied footnote reminding women that under certain circumstances God would be offended by females who exercise their teaching and leadership talents. Only for a male audience can the parable stand as written.

(2) Gifts in the body of Christ (Rom 12:4ff.). This text teaches that every believer's talents are gifts of grace given for the upbuilding of the church. Included among the gifts are teaching and leadership. Under a subordinationist reading, women must either assume that teaching and leadership are not granted to their gender, or, as in the above example, that under some circumstances to exercise these gifts is an offense to God. Only for a male audience can the text stand as written.

The bottom line

In the final analysis, the same church that insists upon the equality of male and female "before the face of God" insists that "before the face of man" inequality must be enshrined. Whether female subordinationism is given its narrowest or its broadest definition, a point is eventually reached where gender triumphs and the church tells a woman *she may not lead or teach*. Gender overrides the authority inherent in the woman bearing the image of God. *She may not lead or teach*. Gender overrides the authority inherent in the cultural mandate to be fruitful and have dominion. She may not lead or teach. Gender overrides her authority as re-created in Jesus Christ. She may not lead or teach. Gender overrides the authority of the indwelling Holy Spirit. She may not lead or teach. Gender overrides her transformation into Christlikeness. She may not lead or teach.

Is this what God had in mind when the oneness of Adam became the oneness of male and female? Is this what Paul had in mind when he wrote 1 Timothy 2:12? Are we truly not a single human race in two sexes, but rather two distinct human races?

God surely intended distinctive contributions from his sons and from his daughters. But to draw that distinction, as female subordinationism does, as being between those (male) human beings whose gender grants them authority, under God, throughout God's creation and those (female) human beings whose gender limits their authority either everywhere or only in specific limited places within God's creation, cannot be sustained biblically.

To reject female subordinationism is not the equivalent of embracing contemporary feminism, nor is it a renunciation of the very idea of hierarchical authority structures of any kind. By the same token, to embrace the oneness of man and woman is not to reject our male/female differences.

The bedrock of our human identity is given to both males and females in Genesis 1. Nothing that follows in Scripture—neither specific behavioral directives such as 1 Timothy 2, nor regulations concerning existing social orders and structures such as slavery, polygamy, or patriarchy—redefines our original, God-given, human identity. What we received as God's gracious gift at Creation has been mercifully restored to us in Jesus Christ, our second Adam. Fundamental to Genesis 1 is that humanity together as male and female rule under God and over the earth, but neither rules over the other.

While the full humanity of Genesis 1 has been allowed to define maleness, tragically, it has been stripped away—systematically and relentlessly—from females. Under some theologies we are left with barely enough humanity to make a single rib.

Our generation is in special trouble on the issues of male and female and on matters of how to conduct our life together on this planet. On the one hand, we have the corruption of sexuality, marriage, and family under the influence of individualism, sexual licentiousness, the quest for human autonomy, and so many other "isms" that rule the day.

Adding to the confusion, we have a wing of the church that goes along with culture without any desire or ability to redirect it. And then, not helping, but deepening the confusion, there is the conservative church that claims to be holding to the teachings of Scripture but that is, in truth, only behaving in a reactionary way, unable to bring from its storeroom "new treasures as well as old" (Matt. 13:52) on how to live fully human lives as men and women.

To reject female subordinationism is not the equivalent of embracing contemporary feminism, nor is it a renunciation of the very idea of hierarchical authority structures of any kind. By the same token, to embrace the oneness of man and woman is not to reject our male/female differences. On the contrary, questions about how to reform social structures in church, family, and society so they reflect a truly biblical understanding of human identity, gifts, and calling, cry out for fresh answers. But within our traditionalist-oriented church, new answers can't be given if those questions are never asked. And right now, for us, the most important question remains this: Have we rightly divided the truth?

Notes

1. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 50.

2. 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2, 1 Peter 3.

3. The marriage relationship itself is not under scrutiny in this discussion.

4. A complete and original critique of this position was developed by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis in her excellent book *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997).

5. Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,* 96.

6. Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,* 87.

7. Critics of the traditionalist position have noted that another error is committed here by grounding a supposed universal principle of male leadership in the Fall, rather than in Creation. While Scripture teaches that in Christ God remembers our sins no more, this reading of the text requires that our authority structures forever memorialize Eve's deception.

8. See the superb treatment of this text in "Leading Him Up The Garden Path" by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis in *Priscilla Papers*, vol. 16, no. 2, Spring 2002, 10.

9. For a fuller treatment of how a traditionalist perspective has distorted our reading of the Bible, refer to "God's Order vs. the World's Order: Oneness vs. Hierarchy," tape of a workshop presented by Patti Ricotta at the 2001 international conference of Christians for Biblical Equality.

10. Nothing in this essay is meant to imply that males automatically receive offices of authority just because they are males. However, unlike females, males are never automatically disqualified because of their gender.

11. Some traditionalists do argue for women's eternal subordination. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 940; and Robert Letham, "The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990); 74. I am grateful to R. M. Groothuis for bringing this to my attention.

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Book Review: Why I Stayed

By Gayle Haggard with Angela Hunt (Tyndale, 2010)

Reviewed by Arbutus Lichti Sider

Gayle Haggard's *Why I Stayed* is a spellbinding book. My reflections, as I read it, revolved around three separate but related themes—marriage, mutuality, and "healing through meeting." We all see the stories others tell about their lives through the prism of our own. I am no exception. I have been married for fifty years this summer to Ron Sider. Since the late 1970s, we have used, as a guide in our marriage, a Christ-centered hermeneutic of biblical equality.[1] And, for twenty years until my retirement at the end of 2006, I learned much from others through my practice as a marriage and family therapist.

Gayle Haggard is the wife of Ted Haggard and mother of his five children. After twenty-eight years of marriage, her husband—following a meteoric rise to evangelical prominence as the pastor of a 14,000-member megachurch and as the head of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)—was accused of having sexual relations with a male prostitute and the use of illicit drugs. In the drama-packed aftermath of that revelation, Gayle found a quiet, private space with her God in which she asked this question: "Who am I going to be in this story?" That night, she writes, "I began my journey of choosing—choosing to love . . . to press through my feelings of anger . . . to demonstrate my love by fighting for the dignity and honor of everyone and everything I held dear" (69). What follows is the story of a courageous, committed Christian wife, willing also to "wrestle with the truth [rather] than live a lie" (65). Gayle is a stellar example of a wife who took her cues from the inner still, small voice rather than from the direct and indirect popular messages she received from church and secular folk alike. She even disagreed with her therapists when they labeled her a "codependent" wife. A strong woman, indeed! I, too, believe their diagnosis missed the mark, but several puzzling questions remain for me.

Nature of the marriage relationship

Those questions led me into my second set of reflections related to the type of marriage that Gayle and Ted had developed. A fascinating love story of two very committed Christians begins with a God-breathed evening beside a campfire when Ted shared what he believed God had called him to do and when he asked if Gayle would share that life with him. It was easy for Gayle to say yes to both that question and to the marriage proposal that followed.

Gayle soon discovered that "life with Ted would always contain a dash of fun, drama, and the unexpected" (8). She stopped short of agreeing to spend their honeymoon on a weeklong *group* camping and backpacking trip. But she did decide to put her college career on hold soon after they were married in order to help run the American office of a new missionary organization in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Ted had already spent time in Ghana with this missionary organization, and a future on the mission field was what they both anticipated.

Those early years were more trying for Gayle than for Ted. Their responsibilities also included youth-pastoring and hosting guests who visited the church they had become part of—lots of interpersonal activities Ted thoroughly enjoyed. It was clear which one of them was the extrovert and which one longed for more private couple time.

Several years and two children later, one evening, Ted told Gayle that he felt God wanted them to move to Colorado Springs and start a church there rather than go into overseas missions. On a recent trip to Colorado Springs, Ted had received from God several visions of a large church, a prayer center, a stadium filled with twenty thousand men. Gayle was dumbfounded, but trusted Ted's discernment; most of all, she trusted "God's guidance in our lives" (19). The pastor of their church in Baton Rouge, a kind of father figure to them both, did not want to see them go, but, after making a trip to Colorado Springs himself, he told them he agreed that God was leading them to Colorado. So they moved.

"What is wrong with this picture?!" I wanted to ask. Before marriage, Ted and Gayle both heard the voice of God in their lives and were committed to follow where he led. But Ted was the one who shared God's vision for his life and then asked Gayle to share in that. After marriage, it was Ted who heard God lead in a new direction, and Gayle learned to accept that as God's guidance for both of them. Even their pastor had more input in the decision of God's will for their lives than did Gayle. There is no indication that anyone asked Gayle, "What do you hear from the Lord in this matter?"

New Life Church, which began in January of 1985, "expanded at an amazing rate . . . grew by double-digit percentages every year for twenty-two years . . ." (20). Millions of dollars poured in to support missionaries and mission organizations. The World Prayer Center and Praise Mountain followed. Social services and civic engagement at home were also encouraged.

A key ingredient to the church's success, Ted believed, was empowering people in the church to serve others. It seemed that the call of God and the faithful following of that call was yielding fruit, even one-hundredfold.

Where did all this leave Gayle? The third of their five children is a special-needs child, and, under the leadership of a good friend, a new ministry brought special-needs children and adults to the church for worship each Sunday. But Gayle often felt she was parenting alone; it helped her develop compassion for single parents. Grateful as she felt to be called to her "role as Ted's wife and the mother of our wonderful children," she "carried a hidden heartache," but felt she couldn't talk about it "without feeling selfish. I wanted more of my husband" (24).

Occasionally, the dam of pent-up emotions would break, and, as she puts it, "I would tearfully unload, nearly drowning him in a tide of reproach" (24). He would be shocked and surprised, and it seemed to Gayle that her outbursts were another burden on his shoulders. She would feel embarrassed, petty and possessive, emotionally needy. That is not what she wanted. She wanted to be strong, and so she resolved to deal with her feelings privately. "Prayer became my lifeline" (25).

One thing that added to her longing for more emotional intimacy was the fact that the inner circle of senior staff members at the church—all men—became Ted's best friends and knew him better than she did: "In my mind, I had gone from being a ministry partner to being simply the woman at home—Ted's wife and the mother of his children" (27). "I wanted to be my husband's confidante and his best friend. I wanted to be the person he called first with good news, the person he ran to for comfort or to share a fleeting thought" (27).

Realizing that those dreams would not be fulfilled in their present situation, Gayle "decided to be happy with my many blessings. . . . After all, I knew my marriage was still better than most" (27). "I had married a popular and successful man; now I was paying the price" (27).

No! No! No! I wanted to shout. This solution is not what you should have to settle for. A marriage that leaves a husband totally fulfilled in his calling and leaves a wife with a deeply hidden longing she does not feel entitled to share is not a fulfilling marriage; it is not God's best for them.

Later, following the disclosure of Ted's infidelity, therapists tried, unsuccessfully, to convince Gayle that she was codependent; she must surely, at some level, have been aware of his secret. She needed her husband too much, they suggested, and so she had unconsciously covered up his secret life for fear of losing him. She was too dependent on him to allow herself to know the truth.

I think they were wrong. The woman I came to know in this book is not weak. She does not fear independence. If anything, she is too strong—and yet in an unhealthy way. She was "spiritually" so strong that she asked God to help her accept the loneliness she carried, stemming from the deep longing for a greater intimacy in her marriage. I am not in a position to comment on the possibility that Ted's secret life was part of what drove *him* to surround himself with people from whom it was easier to hide his innermost thoughts and struggles than he could from his soul-mate wife. That seems a logical conclusion, and I would assume that it was addressed during their time of intensive therapy in Phoenix.

I am more interested in pursuing the systemic issue of "selficide"—the experience of women who sacrifice their own God-given calling, usually for the sake of their husband's career, or, in church leadership positions, where they are overlooked because it is expected that males will fill the role for which they are gifted and for which they sense a Spirit-driven call. Women who grow up in a culture that sacrifices their giftedness for that of males in their churches, whether it be their husbands or other males in a hierarchical structure, are left in a one-down position. When gender rather than giftedness becomes the criterion for performing certain leadership roles, then I believe the church has strayed from the teachings of Jesus, God in the flesh, the Light of the world, through whom we understand and interpret the whole of Scripture. Whenever Paul speaks of the gifts given to the church by the Holy Spirit, he says nothing about dividing them according to gender (e.g., Rom 12; 1 Cor 12). In fact, he explicitly says, "Now to *each one* the manifestation of the Spirit is given *for the common good* (1 Cor 12:7). "So in Christ Jesus . . . all [are] children of God through faith . . . all [are] baptized into Christ. . . . There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26–28).

So, who is responsible when a devout Christian couple like Ted and Gayle grow so far apart, not only in their sense of emotional intimacy, but also in their awareness of the other's spiritual fulfillment? True, some of Gayle's fulfillment was restored when she was given leadership in the women's ministry. Even then, however, her husband's closest confidants remained the males who occupied top leadership positions with him. Was Ted responsible? Was Gayle? Was the rest of their congregation? Were the religious and educational institutions that encouraged leadership on the basis of gender rather than giftedness and calling? The answers to these questions have implications and applications far beyond this marriage and this church.

The church's handling of the crisis

I believe there is also a relationship between the gender issue and Gayle's major complaint about the "restoration" process used following the revelation of Ted's sin and his resignation from leadership at New Life Church.

I first learned about that process when Gayle was interviewed on National Public Radio. As I listened, I was impressed with Gayle's clarity of thought and straightforward manner. Her style was compelling as she spoke of her strong faith in God, her choice to fight for her marriage and her family, and her disappointment with the way the church handled an admittedly horrendously difficult situation. Gayle used a family analogy, since that is what a church is supposed to be. If the church is a family, why did the rest of the church family not surround them with loving correction?

In her more detailed written explanation about her disappointment, Gayle returned to the Scriptures: "Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself" (Gal 6:1). Instead of finding a way to extend grace, or to allow them to heal, surrounded by their church family, the four overseers and the church attorney, after brief, formal meetings, said they would need to leave permanently and move out of the state. Gayle had one brief conversation with three of the women she worked with most closely in which she asked them to take over the women's ministry. One elder couple also paid a brief visit to their home, and then, as Gayle put it, she was "torn from my friends in my darkest hour." She described the "deafening silence" they heard following the overseers' strong instructions: No one in the church was to contact them, nor were they to contact anyone in the church—and certainly not the media—without the consent of the church overseers. Although their teenagers and young adult children were allowed to remain in the church, Gayle and Ted were left alone.

They spent their first week in Florida, a blessing in disguise. This became the forum in which the two of them were able to engage in the numerous, painful, face-to-face conversations so essential to begin the restoration of trust between them that had been totally shattered. Soon after, they moved to Phoenix for some intensive counseling—painful but enlightening.

During all this time, they were to be shepherded by three "restorers," all male, who were spread out geographically and were all too busy to be available to develop a close relationship with them. In fact, they saw them very little. At the same time, the media was spreading ever-increasing allegations about Ted, based on mostly false rumors related to homosexuality and illicit drug use. Not able to respond to any of it, Ted offered to take lie detector tests while in therapy. Both tests that he took showed him to be telling the whole truth—unlike his initial instinct when news reporters first put a microphone in front of his face. Still in shock at that point, Ted reverted to his face-saving denial mode. Now, in the process of deep self-searching and struggling to understand his thoughts and behaviors with the help of trusted therapists, he was hoping that those who did have the authority to speak for him—the three overseers at New Life Church—would make public what was true and what was false on the basis of the lie detector tests. Whether out of fear or a total lack of trust, the overseers never released the results and never, publicly, spoke favorably on Ted's behalf.

The three respected church leaders who had been named as restorers did, following one lengthy meeting, advocate on behalf of Ted and Gayle, softening a number of the more painful barriers and restrictions in the overseers' written contract. With gratitude, the couple breathed a sigh of relief, only to be crushed once more when the original written stipulations were shortly reinstituted—with one notable exception.

For the sake of the family, they were allowed to move back into the house they had not yet sold. With that major change, they felt they were able to begin to repair some of the broken relationships in their lives. Around that time, they also decided to speak again on their own behalf to the media. Any legal action, which the church could have taken because the silence had been broken, never materialized.

"Healing through meeting" is a phrase central to the trust-building, direct-dialog style of family therapy espoused by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, Barbara Krasner, B. Janet Hibbs, and others under whom I studied.[2] This approach emphasizes "the between" in human relationships, that face-to-face meeting space where trust can be rebuilt and relationships restored—where healing can occur.

I was ready to applaud when Gayle began describing the "healing meetings" they began hosting as people came back into their lives, a few couples at a time. Gayle spoke of these gatherings as having "one primary purpose; to give Ted an opportunity to apologize and to listen to the people he's hurt" (316). This is what Jesus and the writers of the Epistles taught us to do, if we have wronged or been wronged, and to do it in the spirit of humility, recognizing our own vulnerabilities. What Ted and Gayle discovered in those healing meetings is a direct dialog that did indeed restore trust and lead to interpersonal healing, the ultimate goal of any restoration process.

How sad when our "church discipline" majors on *separation* as the path to *restoration* (307); on keeping both offender and spouse quiet and out of sight. Gayle summarized the process at New Life Church in this way: "They talked *about* us every week, forming conclusions and making decisions, yet we were excluded from having any input. . . . Plenty of decisions were being made 'about us without us.' Ted and I believe that people—*all people*—should be respected enough to be brought into the dialogue, particularly when it affects their lives" (271).

Where were the women's voices?

So why did I begin this book review by alluding to the male/female equality and mutuality in marriage? What is the relationship between the gender issue and the restoration process? What made it go awry at New Life Church? Many factors, undoubtedly, were involved. The one that struck me most forcefully, since I was already asking about the effect of gender discrimination in Gayle's life, was the effect of having an all-male delegation (four overseers from the church and three restorers from outside the church) responsible for the restoration process. In the church family, where were the church mothers or sisters? Outside the church, why did no one consider that Gayle might benefit from the hug of a sister in church leadership, or at least the wife of a man in leadership to whom she could pour out her heart and with whom she could process what was happening to her? Instead, their "restoration" was in the hands of three men with limited time and little authority other than to rubber-stamp what four male overseers had already decided. Had there been two women from the church among the overseers, would they have been able to face Gayle and Ted with a "restoration plan" that "consisted only of a series of steps to permanently sever us from New Life

Church" (211)? As Gayle puts it, "We knew other people hated what was happening to us, but they'd been told it wasn't godly to speak against their spiritual authorities" (211).

Spiritual authorities sometimes overstep their authority out of fear—fear of losing control, fear of being wrong, fear of admitting they are wrong and asking for help. Some spiritual authorities, on the other hand, thrive on appreciation of their giftedness and lose sight of the fact that they are being put on a pedestal. This, it seems, is what happened to Ted Haggard. And, when one is on a pedestal, the only way to go is down. Gayle discovered that even she was sharing that post with Ted. When she and Ted first began some direct reconciliation dialogue with four of their (male) best friends, one of these men told Gayle she was being treated in the same way as Ted because "it's always been you and Ted at the top, Gayle" (227). A bittersweet moment for Gayle! Bitter because she had not viewed either one of them as being on a pedestal, and sweet because, in that statement, her friend had left her, as she put it, "alone by Ted's side. I had inherited the cherished position of [being] my husband's best friend." During this whole painful process, Gayle's desire for a more intimate relationship with Ted had been restored. For Gayle, the message from God was, "*It had to happen this way*"—for both of them! "God answered both our prayers. Mine for intimacy; Ted's for freedom from his compulsive thoughts that led to his sin" (346).

Without taking away from all that God taught Gayle and Ted during these three dark and lonely years, I believe there is this additional lesson that many churches can take from it: When churches claim that they believe in the "priesthood of all believers," that "all have equal access to God" (222), and yet 50 percent of the congregation is limited in terms of the gifts they can exercise, the whole body will suffer. The hierarchy of male leadership contributed to the heartache in this marriage and in New Life Church. Even earlier in their marriage, we saw the expectation that a drastic change in Ted's life calling would be followed without input from Gayle about what God's call was for her. This is not the priesthood of all believers. Having exclusively male voices speaking into their lives with authority during the "restoration" process is not the priesthood of all believers. The fact that one man was put on such a high pedestal, I believe, is also due to the fact that the church functioned under a hierarchy of leadership that gave women a secondary position. "Gender and giftedness" rather than "giftedness and calling" as the primary qualifications for senior leadership in churches is not honoring the priesthood of all believers.

> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles . . . prophets . . . teachers . . . miracles . . . healing . . . helping . . . guidance . . . tongues. . . . Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. . . . All these are the works of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines (1 Cor 12:27ff).

I focus on the issue of gender equality because I see it as one relevant biblical issue not addressed directly in this book. Yet, to me, it was the unacknowledged elephant in the room. I write to invite more discussion on this issue.

To be clear, I affirm the enormous contribution that this book does make to the issues of sin and forgiveness, discipline and restoration, brokenness and reconciliation in the body of Christ. Regarding the issue of marital infidelity, the words Gayle uses to summarize her advice to other women "facing trials regarding their husbands" are summary enough for me. (I highlight the sentences that, in my view, protect against the critics who would say that the author is asking too much of spouses who have been betrayed as was Gayle.)

> *I don't know who you are married to, so I can't presume to know the best course for you. Ted gave me the gift of repentance, and he chose, as I did, to heal our marriage. But I know that not all men choose to do that.* Even so, I encourage you, as much as you are able, to do what Jesus instructed us to do: forgive and love. Only you can determine what that will look like in your life.
>
> You will still have to process your pain, your anger, and your sense of betrayal. This will be difficult, but set your trajectory toward forgiveness and love. Remember all the things you appreciate and respect about your husband, and know that these things are still true about him. You have no control over his choices or behaviors or the pain he has caused, but you do have the power to choose how you will respond. You have to determine what is truly valuable and worth fighting for. Decide who you are going to be in the midst of your pain. I have confidence you will choose well, because you know you are not alone (335–36).

Notes

1. That is, I became a biblical feminist, and Ron—well, he tells it best himself as one of the voices in *How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership: Compelling Stories from Prominent Evangelicals*, ed. Alan F. Johnson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

2. I. Boszormenyi-Nagy and B. Krasner, *Between Give and Take* (New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel, 1986); I. Boszormenyi-Nagy and B. Krasner, "Trust-Based Therapy: A Contextual Approach," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 137 (1980), 767–75; B. Hibbs, *Try to See It My Way: Being Fair in Love and Marriage* (New York, NY: Avery/Penguin, 2009).

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Christians for Biblical Equality

Christians for Biblical Equality is an organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of believers of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scripture as reflected in Galatians 3:28.

Mission Statement

CBE affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home, and world.

Core Values

We believe the Bible teaches:

- Believers are called to mutual submission, love, and service.
- God distributes spiritual gifts without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class.
- Believers must develop and exercise their God-given gifts in church, home, and world.
- Believers have equal authority and equal responsibility to exercise their gifts without regard to gender, ethnicity, or class and without the limits of culturally defined roles.
- Restricting believers from exercising their gifts—on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, or class—resists the work of the Spirit of God and is unjust.
- Believers must promote righteousness and oppose injustice in all its forms.

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CBE recognizes that injustice is an abuse of power, taking from others what God has given them: their dignity, their freedom, their resources, and even their very lives. CBE also recognizes that prohibiting individuals from exercising their God-given gifts to further his kingdom constitutes injustice in a form that impoverishes the body of Christ and its ministry in the world at large. CBE accepts the call to be part of God's mission in opposing injustice as required in Scriptures such as Micah 6:8.

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Christians for Biblical Equality envisions a future where all believers are freed to exercise their gifts for God's glory and purposes, with the full support of their Christian communities.

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- *We believe* the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- *We believe* in the unity and trinity of God, eternally existing as three equal persons.
- *We believe* in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- *We believe* in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.
- *We believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.
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- *We believe* in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all ethnicities, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.
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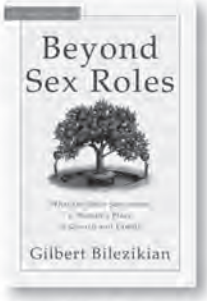

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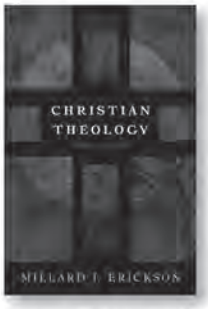

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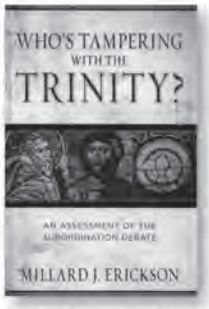

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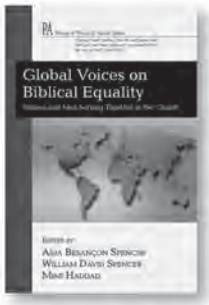

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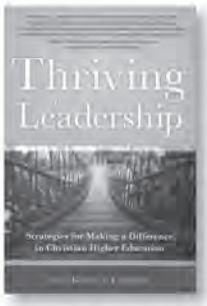

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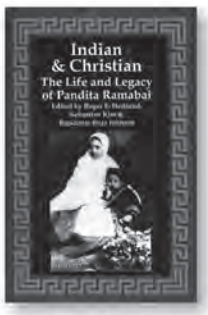

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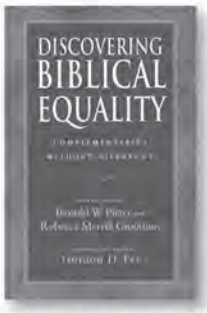

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