



Man Woman and the Triune God

A special edition journal of
Christians for Biblical Equality
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Featuring

The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18–6:9: Is There a Divinely Ordained Hierarchy in the Church and Home that Is Based on Gender Alone? *by Gordon D. Fee*

Women in the New Testament: A Middle Eastern Cultural View
by Kenneth E. Bailey

An Evangelical Statement on the Trinity *by William David Spencer*

...and more

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ON THE COVER ♦ Photographs by Dale Halladay. The top photograph comes from the Church of Saint Praxedis, Rome, Italy. The other two photographs come from the Catacombs of San Gennaro, Naples, Italy. Gospels opened above or around an individual's head indicates they are a member of the *ekklesia*.

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Editor's Reflections

When I was teaching literacy in Kentucky to adults, some of them from Appalachia and others from the deep South, my students used to refer to the severest form of correction as being “slapped upside the head.” It’s not every day that behavior is so bad that someone deserves such reproof—and from no one less than St. Nicholas himself!—and, yet, this is what church tradition tells us happened

at the Council of Nicaea. The perpetrator in the case was Archbishop Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, the man whose legendary generosity would eventually come to symbolize God’s Great Gifting at Christmas. Being “unable to put a stop by argument to the senseless blasphemy of Arius

against the Son of God and His most pure Mother, St. Nicholas struck Arius in the face.” As now, “the holy fathers at the Council strongly disapproved of such behavior, and they banned Nicholas from the Council and stripped him of all marks of his Episcopal rank.” One cannot simply assault other pastors or theologians who disagree with one—it wasn’t done then and it isn’t done now. The account goes on to record that, that night, in a similar dream-vision, several leaders saw Jesus giving Nicholas back his marks of office, so the archbishop was immediately forgiven and restored and “they began from that time to respect him as a great man, and to interpret his action against Arius not as some senseless rage but as the expression of great zeal for God’s truth.”¹

Down through the ages, we Christians have had an uneasy relationship with violence. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, was very clear about condemning it as a mode for Christian response to opposition (e.g., Matt 5:21–24, 38–48; 7:1–5, 12), and I recall some decades ago the world sneering at the dual message of Christian love contrasting with our political rhetoric with bumper-stickers proclaiming, “Kill a Commie for Christ.” What we say and do, we say and do before a watching world. Today, through the work of Catherine Kroeger, Nancy Nason-Clark, and Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH), and such books as *Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home* and *Responding to Abuse in the Christian Home*, the ministry of Steven and Celestia Tracy in their organization and widely distributed book *Mending the Soul*, and so many other Christians, we have had our consciousnesses raised that violence in and by the church is surely not proper behavior for “instruments of God’s peace.” Therefore, the task before evangelicals today is to preserve the zeal that burned within the early

champions of Nicaea but to deliver that zeal in an irenic manner. Still, while we are gently trying by word and deed to deplete the violence of our all-too-violent world, we must never compromise our central message, which is that Jesus Christ is not simply a human who perceived God in a manner more perceptive than the rest of us, or not some lower emanation of a great Monad, but Jesus

Christ is no one less than a full Person of the Triune Godhead, who is One God in three coeternal, coequal Persons. And this Jesus, who is God-Among-Us, is the sole means to salvation for everyone in our world and across the universe. Both the Evangelical Theological Society and

Christians for Biblical Equality are founded on this conviction.

In that spirit, we present several informative articles, starting with Gordon Fee’s analysis of the cultural context of an important passage in Ephesians. Kenneth Bailey sheds light by way of a Middle Eastern cultural view on women during New Testament times. Three articles then focus on the Trinity: a statement I drafted in conjunction with a diverse group of scholars, a statement by Stanley Gundry, and an article by Phillip Cary on the new evangelical subordinationism. We conclude with first-person perspectives from a worship leader, a nursing professional, and a counselor.

Despite popular images of the dry and dusty, absentminded professor caught up in an ethereal fantasy of theoretical ideas, scholars are passionate people, and among the most passionate and down-to-earth are we Christian scholars. Our minds are alive to the depths of God’s grace, the fascinations of the great revelation of Scripture, and the task of reaching a biblically ignorant and wandering world.

The Evangelical Theological Society is focused on championing the highest view of Scripture. Christians for Biblical Equality shares that conviction, and its central task is to empower one hundred percent of the church, gifted men and women, to serve our Lord together. Side by side, both of our organizations are passionately dedicated to bringing God’s truth to the academy table and out to the world. So, let us all emulate the zeal of the great Nicholas, but as we all correct the heterodox, and even contend with each other in scholarly debate, may we do so in a way that fulfills Jesus’ teaching to us in his great sermon and his prayer for us as recorded in John 17, that we all strive to become one in orthodox doctrine, while the love with which the Father loves the Son is evidenced among us in our love for one another.

Notes

1. St. Mark Coptic Church, Jersey City, NJ, “St. Nicholas the Wonderworker: Archbishop of Myra in Lycia,” <http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/synexarion/nicholas.html>, accessed July 30, 2010. The Coptic Church, of course, has its own issues, having dropped out of mainstream orthodoxy at the Council of Chalcedon during the monophysite controversy.



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The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18–6:9

Is There a Divinely Ordained Hierarchy in the Life of the Church and Home that Is Based on Gender Alone?

GORDON D. FEE

I begin this discourse with a disclaimer, since the title suggests far more than one can deliver in a limited amount of space. It suggests far more knowledge about this topic than I actually have—indeed, it is safe to say that there is much more that we don't know about these things than we actually do. What I hope to do is to offer a few probings into the cultural background of this passage—which has become such a crux for people on both sides of the issue of whether there is a divinely ordained hierarchy in the life of the church and home, based on gender alone.

I. Preliminary matters

There are some preliminary matters that are important for our understanding of the passage itself.

1. *Some assumptions about Ephesians itself and the role of this passage in this letter.* Contrary to what is probably the majority opinion in current New Testament scholarship, I think the Ephesian letter is by Paul. Furthermore, I think the letter has to be kept in its historical context as a companion letter with Colossians and Philemon.

The letter was probably not written specifically to the church in Ephesus—some early manuscripts lack a name in 1:1; in 1:15 Paul speaks about only having heard about their faith, and there are no personal words whatsoever. It may have been either the letter to Laodicea that ended up in Ephesus, or—more likely, in my opinion—this was a circular letter to the many churches in the province of Asia that sprang out of what he had to say to the Colossians.

What is important for our purposes is the letter's clear association with Colossians and, therefore, with Philemon. One of the unfortunate things that happened in the organizing of the Christian canon was the separation of Philemon from Colossians, for both letters would have been read together in Philemon's house church, with both Philemon and Onesimus present. The point, of course, is that the so-called house rules that occur only in Colossians and Ephesians almost certainly spring from the circumstances that brought Onesimus back to Philemon's household and thus back to his house church.

All of this is to say that, in the Colossian expression of our text (3:18–4:1), you could substitute personal names for the generic terms there. Thus: "Apphia, submit to Philemon, as is fitting in the Lord. Philemon, love Apphia and do not be harsh with her. Onesimus, obey your earthly master, Philemon, in everything; and do it, not only when his eye is on you. . . . Philemon, provide your slaves [including Onesimus] with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven."

I press this point because these house rules grow directly out of the situation that caused Paul to write these letters in the first place: the return of Onesimus to Philemon, and the strange doctrines that are being spread among the Colossian Christians as reported to him by Epaphras.

2. *Some observations.* Before turning our attention to some words about culture, I want to make a few further observations that are important for understanding this passage in the larger context of Ephesians.

Note first that verse 18 is the swing verse in a passage that begins in 5:1–2—key not only for walking as children of light (vv. 2–17), but also especially for everything that follows. This is made certain by the fact that when Paul addresses husbands in verse 25, he deliberately echoes the language of verse 2:

"Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (v. 2).

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it" (v. 25).

Moreover, you have probably heard at some point that Ephesians is full of long sentences. Indeed it is, and here is an especially long one: the sentence that begins in verse 18 does not end until verse 23. Now all English translations try

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to help the reader out of the morass by breaking this into smaller sentences; however, in so doing the modern reader can miss a lot.

a. In Greek the sentence has a single subject and verb, which comes in the form of an imperative: “You [the readers] be filled with the Spirit”; this is then followed by a string of modifying participles:

- speaking to each other in psalms, hymns, and so on;
- singing and hymning the Lord (Christ) from the heart;
- thanking our God and Father always for all things through Jesus Christ;
- submitting to one another in the fear of Christ, followed by words to the wives with respect to their husbands.

b. The significance of this is twofold:

First, the words to wives and husbands are to be understood as totally dependent on their being filled with the Spirit. That is, all the words in 5:22–6:9 presuppose a household of believers who are continually being filled with the Spirit of God.

Second, and especially important for us: In Paul’s mind there is the closest kind of link between Christian worship and the Christian household. This is almost certainly because the former (worship) took place primarily in the latter (the household). The point is that most of the earliest churches met in households, and the various households themselves, therefore, served as the primary nuclei of the body of Christ (or God’s household) in any given location.

3. A final, significant observation about the passage as a whole. Notice that three relationships are assumed:

wives and husbands,
children and parents,
slaves and masters.

But notice also that in each case the second party in the relationship is usually the same person: husband = father = master. This would not always be the case, of course, since the assumption of the passage is very decidedly that of the Roman villa; that is, the household of the elite, or privileged.

• The model thus has little to do with villas where women served as heads of households, in which case the first relationship does not pertain at all, and the second probably less so (although widows may well have had children in the household).

• So also in the case of “married” slaves within the household (a true marriage, even though not recognized by Roman law); the “head” of the wife in this case was not her husband but the householder.

• Among the larger masses of people, moreover, very few of these relationships pertain at all or, as in the case of artisans like Priscilla and Aquila, there is a very clear sense of partnership in the marriage as in the business itself.

Here are two final observations about the passage in general that begin to move us toward some cultural matters themselves. Notice, first, that in terms of words used, Paul’s obvious greater concern in the first relationship is with

Ephesians 5:18–6:9

5¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. ¹⁹Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²¹Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, people have never hated their own bodies, but feed and care for them, just as Christ does the church—³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

6¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. ⁵Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

⁷Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸because you know that the Lord will reward each one of you for whatever good you do, whether you are slave or free.

⁹And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

—New International Version, Inclusive Language Edition, published in Great Britain by Hodder & Stoughton (1996 edition)

the husband/householder. There are four times as many words to him as there are to the wife. In the other two relationships, however, the number of words goes in the opposite direction—two to one. This in itself suggests that the crucial matter for Paul is with what Christ has done to the first relationship.

Second, it is important to note that in each case the first person addressed is the vulnerable and powerless one in the relationship. In the case of wives and slaves, they are to rethink their status in terms of their serving Christ, as they relate to the male head of the household. And note, finally, that the male householder is not told to take his proper role as leader of the household—that was in fact the assumed cultural reality that could so easily be abused. Rather, he is told to model the character of Christ in his relationships to his wife and slaves.

What kind of a world is this into which Paul is speaking, as he leaves the structures intact, but radically alters the relationships in terms of living cruciform?

II. Altered relationships

1. *Culture in general: some assumptions.* This word *culture* is sometimes used in a way that suggests that there is an “oughtness” to culture. But that is an illusion. Culture simply is; it is not a matter of “should be.” Culture is what defines us; we do not define it, we simply try our best to *describe* it. Indeed, until recent times it was not even a subject of discussion, because it was simply assumed. But this is also our difficulty, because with regard to the first-century household, we must ferret out from a variety of legal and literary remains how people viewed the *familia*—which included the entire household, including slaves.

2. *The Greco-Roman world.* What we do know—and this has now been put into wonderfully convenient form by David deSilva in his recent book *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity* (InterVarsity, 2000)—is that three basic assumptions defined the cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman world: Honor/shame; patronage; and kinship. The concept of honor and shame ruled everything; honor, or its opposite, disgrace, was regularly the basis for most moral appeals. A common sense as to what was honorable or shameful was the fabric that held Greco-Roman culture together.

Patronage refers to the mutual relationship that existed between unequals, in which each was understood to benefit the other. This is the cultural reality that most Americans in particular find utterly distasteful. We get ahead on the strength of our own ingenuities. We get what we want or need by buying and selling, and those who get ahead by buying favors are scorned. But such a worldview was simply nonexistent in the time of Paul.

Indeed, the Greco-Roman worldview was quite the opposite: it was predicated on the reality of a world that was bottom-heavy; where the top few percent were the elite or privileged, and where the rest of humankind was

rather totally dependent on being in good standing with a patron. Seneca, in fact, said that the giving and receiving of favors was the “practice that constitutes the chief bond of human society.” Such a worldview is especially in place when you read Philemon, where Philemon was both Paul’s patron and friend. Because he was Paul’s patron, Paul asks for the privilege of hospitality; but because he was a friend, he presumes upon the reciprocity of such friendship to intercede for the life of Onesimus (since, in another sense, Philemon owed his life to Paul).

Kinship comes out of patronage, in the sense that to survive people needed to be in some kind of relationship with others, especially within a “family.” But this is also one of the difficulties we face when we come to the “house rules” in Ephesians, because it assumes a privileged household, and by the time of Paul, especially in the larger cities (Rome, Ephesus, Corinth), the majority of people would not have been attached to a household, but they would have lived in the large *insulae* (apartments), or in their own form of slums, including street people.

That is the world, then, that is presupposed by our text. It is a world predicated on honor/shame, patronage, and kinship, a world so radically different from ours culturally that it is difficult for us even to imagine our way back into their setting. But what interests us here is how these cultural realities played out in the Greco-Roman household.

III. Greco-Roman households

Let us examine two drawings. *Figure 1* is a representation of the typical *insula*. Far more people lived this way than in the household assumed by Paul in this passage. This is a typical *insula*, based on the ruins of Ostia, the ancient seaport of Rome. Because its harbor silted up, the city was simply abandoned; and although most of its marble and other important movable materials were carted off over the centuries, the ruins are especially well preserved. This *insula* (an apartment house in this case) would also most likely be the pattern for the home of artisans like Priscilla and Aquila, where the living and gathering of the church would be upstairs while the ground floor rooms that opened onto the street were shops. Such people usually did not have slaves, but rather servants or hired workers. And even though such households would often be the location of a “church that met in someone’s household,” this is not the basic pattern assumed in Ephesians 5—which, as noted above, is probably related to the fact that Paul has just been writing to Philemon of Colossae and to the church that meets in his house.

Such a household would look more like the drawing in *figure 2*. Here is the more typical *domus*, in which the privileged few—people like Philemon of Colossae or Stephanas and Gaius of Corinth—lived. This is clearly the kind of household presupposed by Paul in this passage. So we shall begin with the household itself, which assumes this kind of dwelling and which usually had a large number of people attached to it.

1. *The basic sociological model here is clearly that of patronage*; it was a mutual relationship between unequals in which each benefited the other. There are several aspects to this:

a. By law, the man, the *paterfamilia*, was the master of his household (thus the patron). Although he did not necessarily exercise it in a hurtful way, under Roman law his rule was absolute, in the sense that none of the others in the household had legal means to redress any grievances.

b. Usually, but not always, the *paterfamilia* required the household to serve his gods, since the gods were looked upon as responsible for “order,” for causing and maintaining things the way they are.

c. Such a household, unlike our understanding of home, was not a place of consumption, but of production. It was, therefore, again in sharp contrast to our culture, not thought of as a private haven (a refuge to return to after a day “out there”); rather, the Greco-Roman household was almost always semi-public (especially *theatrum*).

d. The householder and a few higher-level slaves had the only public roles. Here, for example, is the ideal about woman’s place found in Philo of Alexandria:

It is especially difficult for *any of us* even to *imagine* our way back into that Greco-Roman culture, let alone to have any sense of feeling for it.

Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men both in war and

peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood.

2. *What it meant for a woman to enter such a household as a wife.* We know from a large number of census lists from Egypt that:

- The average age of a man when he married was 30, and a woman’s age was less than 18; she thus entered his household as a teenager, whom he had also to educate in the ways of his household.

- The reason for marriage was not “love” in our usual sense, but to bear legitimate children, to keep the family line going; failure to bear children, especially sons, was often a cause for divorce.

- Most men, although not all, were promiscuous:

Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of the body, but wives to bear us legitimate children. (Demosthenes)

- Some wives, therefore, were promiscuous as well (although they always had to be more discreet, because their act would be considered infidelity, which was a matter of shame).

3. *In this kind of household, the idea that men and women might be equal partners in marriage simply did not exist.* Evidence for this can be seen in meals, which in all cultures serve as the great equalizer. In the Greek world, a woman scarcely ever joined her husband and his friends at meals; if she did, she did not recline at table (only the courtesans did that), but she sat on a bench at the end. And she was expected to leave after eating, when the conversation took a more public turn.

4. *Slaves, of course, did all the work,* both menial and clerical, including

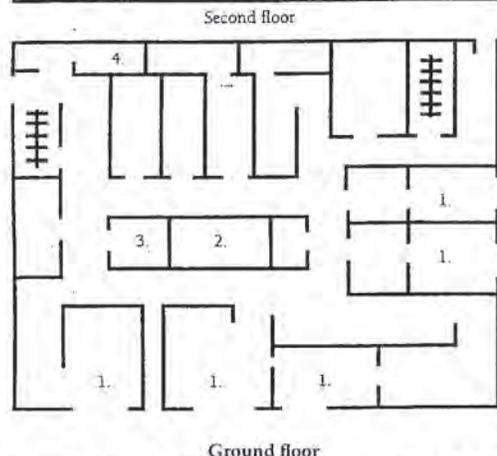
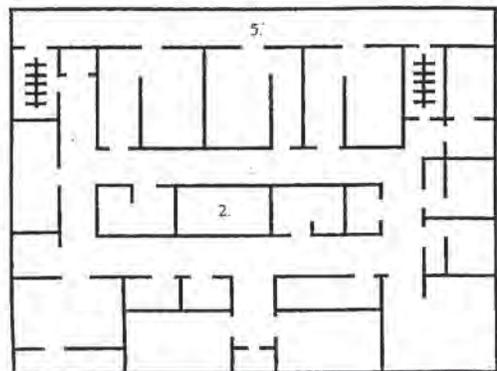


Figure 1. A typical *insula*. Key: 1. shop; 2. lightwell; 3. well; 4. latrine; 5. balcony.



Figure 2. A typical *domus*. Key: 1. fauces; 2. shop; 3. atrium; 4. impluvium; 5. cubiculum; 6. tablinum; 7. andron; 8. peristyle; 9. triclinium; 10. oecus.

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Want more information on Ephesians 5?

Check out these and other recommended resources at cbeinternational.org/eph5.

Short and Sweet:

New Man, New Woman, New Life
by Carrie A. Miles

“What is Male Headship?”
by Mimi Haddad

“Ephesians 5:18–33”
by Allison Young

Bring on the Greek:

God's Word to Women
by Katharine Bushnell

Discovering Biblical Equality
ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, see chapter 11
by I. Howard Marshall

Man and Woman, One in Christ, see chapter 15,
by Philip B. Payne

Good for Group Discussion:

Ephesians
by Lynn Cohick

Studies on Biblical Equality: 12 Lesson Outlines for Personal or Group Study
by A. Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen

“The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18–6:9”
by Gordon D. Fee

tutoring the children (they couldn't have imagined a society without slaves). Slavery was not based on race, but initially on conquest in war, and eventually on economic need. Nonetheless, slaves had absolutely no rights before the law, evidenced by the fact that they could not even marry.

5. *Finally, we return to the matter of religion.* It is precisely because religion was regularly practiced in a household that, when such a householder became a follower of Christ, his *familia* would also as a matter of course follow Christ. Thus the *familia* (a Latin term for which we have no exact equivalent), which consisted both of blood relatives and all those attached to the household, both slave and freedperson, automatically became the nucleus/locus of the earliest Christian communities. And because there was already a semi-public aspect to the “home,” it also then became a place where many from outside the household would come and join in the worship—thereby creating a new kind of kinship, where Christ was now the new *paterfamilia*.

One final important note here. When such a householder became a follower of Christ, it was also invariably for him and his household a matter of shame—because he had chosen as his household religion to be a follower of a Jewish messianic figure who had died by crucifixion, which was one of the ultimate expressions of shame in that culture. What Paul does not do—indeed, it would never have occurred to him—is to add shame to shame by dismantling the *structure* of the household. That was simply in place. What he *did* do was in some ways far more radical: he applied the gospel to this context.

What interests us, returning to our text, is how a new kinship based on the household's common relationship to Christ as “head” of his body, the new household of God, affected all of these various relationships.

IV. The household of God

As we move toward looking at the now-Christian household as God's household, I want to point out some of the difficulties we have in reading this text, beginning with one of its more common abuses: using it to tell modern husbands that they should assume their proper role as head of their wives. Since the modern household looks almost nothing like the Greco-Roman household, this issue must be given a new cultural setting. The modern application is almost always put in terms of: “When you reach an impasse in decision-making, who has the authority to make the final choice?”

I don't know whether I hear Paul laughing or crying when that utterly modern reading is superimposed on this text—as though that were actually somehow derivable from the passage itself. And in any case, what would that look like for a couple of normally strong people like my wife, Maudine, and me, who are both second children, neither of whom likes to make decisions at all! In June we celebrated our forty-fifth anniversary, and I would say that we have never had such a decision-making stalemate in all these years. To be sure, we've had our moments—but never on this issue. Of course, we don't get anything done, either!

But let me quickly add that it is especially difficult for *any of us* even to *imagine* our way back into that Greco-Roman culture, let alone to have any sense of feeling for it. Indeed, in our context I almost always have a strong sense of need here to apologize to the singles—which in itself is evidence of how different from them we really are culturally. So let's say some things about ourselves and why we have such difficulty imagining that world.

We are heirs of a culture in which two major events in the past 300 years have radically altered Western culture forever, and which turned the basically patronal culture that preceded it completely on its head—namely, the so-called Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the individual, created a culture in which individual rights came to be regarded as the highest good. So much is this so that by the late twentieth century the concept of individual rights had finally almost totally superseded that of the common good. But the Enlightenment alone did not create the structural changes in our understanding of home and family. After all, look at the British manor house, with its “enlightened” autocrat, which has taken such a beating in a whole series of movies in the past decade.

No, it took the Industrial Revolution to really turn things on its head. It did so by turning both men and women outside the home into the marketplace. Just one statistic tells us how radically American culture changed during the past century. In 1885, it is estimated that 88 percent of all consumer goods were produced in the home for the household. One generation later, in 1915, that was totally reversed—over 85 percent of all consumer goods were now produced outside the home. The eventual effects of this one reality alone brought staggering changes to our culture, including especially all the new opportunities that women began to enjoy, including:

- equal opportunities for education,
- the (nearly unheard of) right for women to vote,
- and, eventually, the right to serve in almost every way in the public domain.

But it also resulted in our homes being thought of as havens of refuge from the world out there and, until recently, as the place for the nuclear family to exist—a nearly sacred concept in Western culture that was totally foreign to Paul’s world.

The fact that our cultural assumptions are so different from theirs makes it difficult for us even to imagine how absolutely radical and earth-shattering the Christian gospel sounded in their ears. Take especially Paul’s conclusion to his argument with the Galatians over true ecclesiology, having to do with Jew and Gentile as members together in the one household of God. “In Christ,” he says, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ.”

But such a revolutionary statement was not intended to abolish the structures, which were held in place by Roman law. Rather, it was intended forever to do away with the significance attached to such structural differences, which pitted one group of human beings against another. And the most radical thing of all was that such people—Jew and Gentile, slave and free, men and women—shared a common meal together, itself a cause for cultural shame,

and thus celebrated their Lord’s death until he was to come again—which, as 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 makes clear, created considerable tension for the traditional householder. No wonder the world had such difficulty with these early Christians, and why they were considered to be “haters of humanity,” because they so willingly broke the rules—not by tearing down the structures, but by making them ultimately irrelevant! Such people are greatly to be feared as the worst of all possible anarchists.

So what in the end is it that makes our present text so radically countercultural? What Paul obviously did *not* do was to demolish the structures and create new ones. What was radical lay in his urging those who are filled with the Spirit and worship Christ as Lord to have totally transformed

relationships within the household.

Thus wives and slaves, respectively, are to continue to submit and obey but now to do so as those who are thereby *servicing the Lord*. And that changes things. But the more radical change is for the male householder, whose model is Christ and his love for the church. Christ is thus the “savior of the body” (a remarkable phrase indeed). In this case, however, Paul is not emphasizing salvation from sin (although that, too, of course is finally included). Rather, “savior” is the most common designation for the emperor. Used of God in the Old Testament (as God my Savior), it most often carries its more common sense of provider and protector (cf. 4:15–16).

Note then the only thing that is said to the householder in terms of his relationship to his wife. Three times—at the beginning (v. 25), in the middle (v. 28), and at the end (v. 33)—Paul says the one truly radical thing: “Love your wife.” That does not refer to either romance or sex, but to him giving his life in loving service to her. And note that there is regular emphasis on “his *own* wife.”

The model is Christ’s love for the church; look at how Paul expresses that. The imagery is that of a man taking a bride; Paul provides this with a marvelous echoing of Old Testament language from Ezekiel 16, where God betroths Israel, the naked and orphaned teenager, and washes her and dresses her in the finest of clothes.

Thus Paul now images the husband as treating his wife as just such a bride, adorned and glorious to behold. It is assumed that he will continue to provide leadership to the household, but his role will be radically transformed into one of caring for the people within the household for their own sakes, not having them around to serve his own self-interests. This is also why the Christian household, which is

The fact that our cultural assumptions are so different from theirs makes it difficult for us even to imagine how absolutely radical and earth-shattering the Christian gospel sounded in their ears.

always a kind of nucleus of the larger Christian community, should always be understood as the first place where all the other imperatives are to find their first place of existence. The household, which was also the church, was the place where Christian life had to be put into practice.

We would do well here to go back and reread chapter 5 in light of this reality. Here is the more abbreviated version in the letter that is the companion to this one, excerpted from the full text of Colossians 3:12–4:1:

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

This, I would urge, is how these texts finally apply to us and to our homes. In the end, the structures are immaterial since they are predicated altogether on cultural givens that are simply not ours. Indeed, in light of this text, the structures are ultimately irrelevant, except that some structure must be in place or the household will fall apart. But these depend largely on the people involved, their own giftings, personalities, and how they relate to each other.

But whatever the structure, at issue is that we live Christlike in our relationships with one another in our homes.

*God calls us to Peace, shalom
to be filled with the Spirit,
and thus submitting ourselves to one another
in reverence to Christ
to love with Christ's love,
by self-sacrificial giving of ourselves.*

If we do that, the matter of structures will pale into insignificance.

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Women in the New Testament: A Middle Eastern Cultural View

KENNETH E. BAILEY

The broader topic of the place of women in the family, in society and in the Church is now discussed over much of the Christian world across a wide spectrum of opinion. Few topics have held as much promise and pain, hope and despair, change and deep uneasiness about change as this topic and it is clear that the New Testament is critical to it. This essay focuses on the New Testament. Yet regarding the biblical witness there is a strong tendency to see Scripture through the eyes of traditional interpretation of it, or through the eyes of current ideologies. Here a rigorous attempt will be made to allow Scripture itself to control and correct our understanding of it.

As is known, the NT is deeply influenced by its first century Middle Eastern cultural setting. Trying to discern the fabric of cultural assumptions that underlie the NT has been my life-long focus in NT studies. As a supplement to other historical concerns, this lens will be utilized as we examine our topic.

We will first expose what appear to be two opposing attitudes in the New Testament towards women in the church. We will then see if these two 'opposites' can be reconciled. The problem is simply this: one set of NT texts appears to say 'yes' to women while a second set appears to say 'no'. We turn first to the positives.

Positive attitudes

In the NT, women occupy a remarkable range of clearly identifiable positions. These include:

Jesus had women disciples

Four texts are significant. First, although occurring only once, the word 'disciple' does appear in the NT as a feminine. In Acts 9:36 Tabitha (Dorcas) is called *mathetria* (disciple). Secondly, in St. Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' family appears and asks to speak with him. Jesus replies,

'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand *towards his disciples*, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Matt. 12:46–50).

In our Middle Eastern cultural context, a speaker who gestures to a crowd of *men* can say, 'Here are my brother, and uncle and cousin'. He *cannot* say, 'Here are my brother, and sister, and mother'. The text specifically affirms that Jesus is gesturing to 'his disciples' whom he addresses with male and female terms. This communicates to the reader that the disciples before him were composed of men *and* women.

Thirdly, is the remarkable report in Luke 8:1–3. In this text the reader is told,

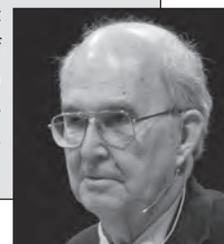
Soon afterward he went through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women . . . who provided for them out of their means.

We note that Jesus is *travelling* through cities and villages with a band of men *and* women who are naturally known to be his disciples. This implies that they were spending night after night in strange villages. Today social customs are more relaxed than they were in the first century (as evidenced from the Mishnah and the Talmudes). Yet in the contemporary Middle East, in traditional society, I know of no place where the social scene presented in the text is possible. Women can travel with a group of men, but must spend their nights with relatives. Three points of amazement appear.

First, the story itself is very surprising for the reasons noted above. Secondly, the women are paying for the movement out of resources under their control. Finally, Luke (a man) admits all of this in writing.

Fourthly, in Luke 10:38 Jesus enters the house of Martha. Luke tells us, 'And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching'. In Acts Paul describes himself as having been 'brought up at the feet of

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Gamaliel' (Acts 22:3). To 'sit at the feet' of a rabbi meant to become a disciple of a rabbi. So Mary became a disciple of Jesus. Martha, we are told is 'distracted' (not burdened) with much serving. To be distracted one must be distracted from something or by something.

Clearly Martha is distracted *from* the teachings of Jesus by her cooking. In the account, Martha then asks Jesus to send Mary to the kitchen to help her. The point is not the need for someone to peel the potatoes. In our Middle Eastern cultural context, Martha is more naturally understood to be upset over the fact that her 'little sister' is seated with the men and has become a disciple of Rabbi Jesus. It is not difficult to imagine what is going through Martha's mind. She says to herself:

This is disgraceful! What will happen to us! My sister has joined this band of men. What will the neighbours say? What will the family think? After this who will marry her? This is too much to expect!

Jesus does not reply to her words, but to their meaning. In context his answer communicates the following:

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about *many* things. I understand the *entire* list. One thing is needed. What is missing is not one more plate of food, but rather for you to understand that *I* am providing the meal and that your sister has already chosen the good portion. I will not allow you to take it from her. A good student is more important to me than a good meal.

The word 'portion' can mean a portion of food at a meal.¹ Jesus is defending Mary's right to continue her 'theological studies' with Jesus as one of his disciples.

From these four texts it is clear that in the Gospels women were among the disciples of Jesus.

There are women teachers of theology in the NT

Acts 18:24–28 tells of Apollos' visit to Ephesus. Apollos is praised for his knowledge of the Scriptures and 'the things concerning Jesus'. But 'he knew only the baptism of John'. The text affirms.

... but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him *they* took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately.

Clearly Priscilla is 'team teaching' the theology with Aquila and the student is no beginner, no fledgling catechumen; rather he is the famous, eloquent preacher of Alexandria. Furthermore, Luke's Gospel was indeed sent/dedicated to Theophilus. But there is little doubt that Luke also intended it to be read by the Church.

Thus when he identifies Mary as the author of the Magnificat he indirectly presents her as a teacher of theology, ethics, and social justice for all his readers! The critical discussion about the composition of the Magnificat is known

to me. Yet, irrespective of one's view regarding sources and authorship, Luke *presents* Mary as the singer of this song and thus as a teacher of the readers of his Gospel. These two texts witness to the fact that in the early church women could (Mary) and did (Priscilla) teach theology to men.

The NT affirms the presence of women deacons/ministers in the Early Church

For this topic, two texts must be noted. The first is Rom. 16:1–2, where Paul writes, 'I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae.'

Phoebe is called a *deacon* (*diakonos*) not a *deaconess*. The evidence for the feminine use of this masculine form is slight.² Most likely this masculine ending is used because Phoebe was ordained to a clearly defined ministry, that of deacon (*diakonos*). Thus the formal title appears. Another reason is that the Aramaic word is *shammash*, which is used to describe the High Priest officiating in the temple at the day of atonement (*M.*, Yoma 7:5; *B.T.* Yoma 47a). But the feminine *shammasha* means a prostitute.³ The need for an honorable title would dictate the use of the masculine in a church where a significant number had Aramaic as a part of their linguistic heritage.

In any case, for centuries scholars have observed the official nature of Phoebe's position. Regarding this verse, John Calvin wrote,

He begins by commending Phoebe . . . first on account of her office, because she exercised a very honorable and holy ministry in the Church.⁴

In the contemporary scene Cranfield concludes,

We regard it as virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as *a* or possibly *the* 'deacon' of the church in question, and that this occurrence of *diakonos* is to be classified with its occurrences in Philippians 1.1 and 1 Timothy 3.8 and 12.⁵

We would add to this that in 1 Tim. 4:6 *diakonos* is applied to Timothy himself where it is usually translated 'minister.' While recognizing that Romans is written when the church's ministry was in an early and more undefined stage, Dunn feels that, 'servant' is inadequate. He writes,

diakonos together with *ousa* points more to a recognized ministry . . . or position of responsibility within the congregation.⁶

Paul refers to himself and to Apollos as *diakonoi* in 1 Cor 3:5. Furthermore, Phoebe is called a *prostatis* over/to many. This word was applied to the leader of worship in Graeco-Roman temple as well as to a governor, a chieftain and the leader of a democracy.⁷ Dunn argues for patron/protector, or leader/ruler.⁸ A ninth century Arabic version translated this phrase, '*qa'ima 'ala katherin wa 'alayya*', in authority over many and

over myself as well.⁹

A second text relevant to women deacons is 1 Tim. 3:8–11. Here the qualifications for deacons and for ‘the women’ appear. The two lists exhibit striking parallels which can be seen as follows:

| 1 Timothy 3:8–11 | |
|--|---|
| Deacons likewise must be: | The women likewise must be |
| 1. Serious (semnous) | 1. Serious (semnas) |
| 2. Not double tongued (dilogous) | 2. Not slanderers (diabolous) |
| 3. Not addicted to wine | 3. Temperate |
| 4. Not greedy for gain | 4. — |
| 5. They must hold fast to the mystery of the faith (ekhontas to musterion tes pisteos) | 5. Faithful in all things (NRSV) (pistas en pasin) Better: Believing in all things with a clear conscience (NRSV) |

These two lists are obviously intended to be parallel. The critical item for our subject is number five. The deacons must hold onto *the faith*. As seen above, the parallel item for the qualifications of the women is ‘*pistas en pasin*.’ The other six occurrences of this word in 1 Timothy are translated as referring to the *act of believing* in the faith. Here alone it is consistently translated ‘faithful in all things,’ referring to a character trait. Does not the parallel nature of the two lists make clear that ‘believing in all things’ is what is intended? These women can best be seen as engaged in activities directly related to the faith in the same way as the men. Deacons in Acts 6 appear in Acts 7 and 8 as *preachers of the word* (cf. Stephen and Philip). Regarding ‘the women’ here in 1 Timothy John Chrysostom wrote,

Some have thought that this is said of women generally, but it is not so, for why should he introduce anything about women to interfere with his subject. He is speaking to those who hold the rank of Deaconesses.¹⁰

The NT has women prophets

Eph. 2:20 affirms that the household of God is built on ‘the apostles and prophets.’ Thus, whoever they were, these early Christian prophets occupied a high place in the NT church. Furthermore, some of these prophets were women. In Acts Paul stays in Caesarea with Philip the evangelist whose daughters prophesied (Acts 21:19).

In 1 Cor. 11:4–5 Paul offers advice to men and women prophets on headcovering *while prophesying*. However one interprets this puzzling text, it is clear that both men and women were praying and prophesying. Praying could refer to private devotions. Prophesying is necessarily a public act.

A woman apostle

Rom. 16:7 reads,

Greet Andronicus and Jounian, my relatives and my fellow prisoners; they are notable among the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

Two people in this text are called ‘notable among the apostles.’ Our interest focuses on the name Jounian which is the accusative singular of a first declension Greek noun. Unfortunately this particular accusative can be masculine or feminine. The question becomes: What is the nominative of this name Jounian? The first declension allows for two options. It could be Jounia, in which case the person is a woman. This option would mean that Paul was sending greetings to a man and a woman, both apostles, probably a husband and wife like Priscilla and Aquila whom he has just mentioned.

On the other hand, if the nominative form is Jounias, a contraction of Junianus,¹¹ then the text refers to two men. Which of these options is more probable? Initially we observe that the witness of the Fathers is consistent.

Preaching on this text, Chrysostom said,

‘Greet Andronicus and Junia . . . who are outstanding among the apostles.’ To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! Indeed, how great

the wisdom of this woman must have been, that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle.¹²

Jounian was also read as a feminine by Origen of Alexandria, Jerome, Peter Abelard and others. The Catholic scholar, Bernadette Brooten, quoted above, was unable to find any Latin commentary on Romans that had this name as masculine before the late thirteenth century. The name appears as a feminine (Junia) in the Syriac Peshitta and in all the numerous MSS and published Arabic versions available to me stretching from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. The male name Junias first appeared in the Middle East in 1860! In the English language the famous Authorized Version reads ‘Salute Andronicus and Junia . . . who are of note among the apostles.’

The first noticeable shift from Junia to Junias was apparently made by Faber Stapulensis, writing in Paris in 1512. His work subsequently influenced Luther’s commentary on Romans. Luther then incorporated the masculine Junias into his German translation of the Bible which in time influenced other versions. However the theoretical masculine name Junias has never been found in any Latin or Greek text. The name Junia, however, has appeared over two hundred and fifty times.¹³ Thus to insist on this being a masculine name is

like finding a text with the name Mary in it and arguing that it refers to man! Such an argument is theoretically possible but would surely hinge on finding at least one text where Mary is clearly a male name.

It appears that during the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries a name known by the Church, East and West, to be female gradually became the name of a man in the West. In the Middle East, this shift of gender did not take place until the nineteenth century. The shift in both cases was made without reference to any evidence.

We must now ask, is the title 'apostle' significant? In the NT this title was primarily applied to the twelve. Paul, James, Barnabas and the two people in this text were also called apostles. From the shortness of the list and the prominence of the first three names, it is clear that they were a highly select group. In 1 Cor. the Apostles head the list of church orders (12:29). As noted, the Church is built on them (Eph. 2:20). The title is best understood to have maintained its original meaning, which was an eye-witness to Jesus who had received a direct communication from him.¹⁴ Thus, the title of apostle (as applied to Junia) cannot be seen as a casual reference to an insignificant early Christian witness. With Chrysostom, the Early Fathers, Arabic and Syriac, Christianity, and the Authorized Version translators, we can affirm with full confidence that Junia (feminine) was an apostle.

Women elders

There remains the question of *elders*. The central text is 1 Tim. 5:1–2. Initially, the widely-debated question of the authorship of the Pastoral Epistles can be set aside. The material is often called deutero-Pauline. I prefer the view of E. E. Ellis who argues that the Pastorals present Paul at the end of his life addressing new topics through an amanuensis.¹⁵ With a full awareness of the modern debate and the theological and linguistic issues involved, we will look at the text as Scripture handed down to us as a letter of Paul to Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Our conclusions, we trust, are valid for our topic irrespective of a composition date from the sixties or the nineties.

The text under consideration is open to two interpretations. The first is reflected in the time-honored translation of these two verses, which is as follows:

Do not rebuke an *older man* but exhort him as you would a father; younger men like brothers, *older women* like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity (RSV).

This translation is built on the assumption that chapter five opens a new subject. At the end of chapter four there is specific reference to *the council of elders* who ordained Timothy. This *council* of elders, the *presbuterion*, was composed of the *presbuteroi*, the elders. That much is clear. The problem arises in 5:1–2, where the same word appears twice, first as a masculine singular (*presbutero*) and then as

a feminine plural (*presbuteras*). These two words are usually translated as 'older man' and 'older women', as seen above. Support for this translation is found in the fact that 'young men' and 'young women' are mentioned in the text. Thus it is easy to see age references all through the verse. But this is not the only option.

It is also possible to argue as follows. (First, a word of explanation: the science of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies is more than one hundred and fifty years old.¹⁶ But it has only been given serious attention in the last two decades.) One of the frequently used devices, now found to be extensively present in both the OT and the NT, is chiasm, which we prefer to call 'inverted parallelism'. This particular rhetorical device presents a series of ideas, comes to a climax and then repeats the series backwards. The ideas/units that repeat can be individual lines but often appear as paragraphs. This form of rhetoric is common in both Greek and Hebrew literature. It is so extensive in the NT that Johanna Dewey has observed, 'The question has now become, where is it not found?'¹⁷

In regard to our text, if we observe the larger section in which 5:1–2 appears, the following outline emerges:

1. These instructions (as a minister) 4:6–11
2. Timothy and the Elders (and the young) 4:12–5:2
3. Older widows (and the young) 5:3–16
4. Timothy and the Elders 5:17–20
5. These rules (in regard to ordination) 5:21–22

Numbers 1 and 5 discuss 'instructions as a minister' and 'rules as regards ordination'. They form a pair. Paragraphs 2 and 4 form a second pair and are on the topic of 'Timothy and the Elders'. The widows form paragraph 3 in the centre. The entire passage discusses *ministry*. With this very simple outline in mind, a closer look at each paragraph is necessary. We will examine each of the 'pairs' of paragraphs. Paragraphs 1 and 5 will be examined and compared first. We will then skip briefly to the centre in paragraph 3 and finally observe the thrust of paragraphs 4 and 2 where our text is located.

1. The outside pair (1 and 5)

The first paragraph (4:6–11) opens with, 'If you put these *instructions* before the brethren you will be a good *diakonos/minister* of Jesus Christ'. This section most naturally ends with the words 'Command and teach these things' (v 11). Paragraph 5 (5:21–22) is clearly parallel to this opening section. It charges Timothy to 'keep these *rules*' (v 21) and to 'not be hasty in the laying on of hands' (v 22). So the topic of '*rules* which relate to *ministry*' is again in focus.

2. The centre (3)

The centre section (5:3–16) opens and closes with references to 'real widows' (vv 3, 5, 16) and their *enrolment* (v 9). In between Paul describes *young widows* who should *not* be

enrolled (vv 11–15).

3. *The second pair (4 and 2)*

We saw how the topic discussed in the opening paragraph reappeared in the fifth paragraph. The critical question is, are paragraphs 2 (4:12–5:2) and 4 (5:17–20) intentionally composed as a pair? I am convinced that they are.

First observe paragraph 4, which is clearly discussing elders who are officials in the ministry of the Church, *not* old men. The material breaks into two sections, vv 17–18 and vv 19–20. The first two verses discuss the ‘good elders’ who are ruling well, busy at preaching and teaching and should be paid for their efforts. In vv 19–20 Timothy is advised about dealing with ‘troublesome elders’.

We turn finally to paragraph 2 (4:12–5:2) where *presbuteroi* are also discussed. The early Greek paragraph divisions (*kefalain*) left 5:1–2 standing alone. The Fathers who made these divisions were honest enough not to relate these verses to what followed. Did they have a hidden agenda when they chose *not* to attach them to the previous paragraph?

Against the *kefalain*, Archbishop Langton’s thirteenth century chapter divisions (now in use), attach these verses to the discussion of widows which follow. But those instructions regarding widows have no mention of the *presbuteroi*. Is it not more appropriate to see 5:1–2 as a part of the previous paragraph which does mention *presbuteroi*? I am convinced that it is. Did Langton share the hidden agenda mentioned above?

We will examine 4:12–5:2 as a unit which focuses on Timothy and the *presbuteroi*.

Once again the *presbuteroi* are of two kinds. Paul first mentions the elders who have ordained Timothy (4:12–16). Granted, these verses focus on Timothy’s duties as a leader of worship; but the context is that of Timothy’s ordination by elders who are not criticized. He then discusses the *difficult* elders (5:1–2). These are obviously people whom Timothy is sorely tempted to attack. He is told, ‘Don’t do it’. Treat the *presbutero* like a father, he is advised, and the *presbuteras* (plural) like mothers. Thus the two topics of ‘helpful elders’ and ‘difficult elders’ appear in both paragraph 4 (4:17–20) and paragraph 2 (4:12–5:2). In each case the good elders are mentioned first and the difficult elders second. Thus paragraphs 2 and 4 can be seen as parallel discussions of *ministry*. If this is true, then the *presbuteras* in 5:2 are women elders ordained and engaged in ministry in Timothy’s congregation. The NRSV places ‘or an *elder*, or a *presbyter*’ as a marginal note to *presbutero* in 5:1 but curiously not to *presbuteras* in 5:2. In regard to 5:1–2, Leonard Swidler, professor of Catholic Studies at Temple University (USA), writes,

... in [1 Timothy] 5:1–2 the words *presbytero* and *presbyteras* are usually translated as ‘an older man’ and ‘older women,’

but in this context of discussion of the various ‘officers’ of the church, a perfectly proper translation—which, if not more likely, is at least possible—would be ‘male presbyter’ and ‘woman presbyters.’¹⁸

What then can be said about the references to youth in 5:1–2? Aside from 5:1–2 under discussion, twice in the larger passage we have observed references to *youth* in texts that also discuss formal ministries (4:12–16 and 5:9–16). The same phenomenon occurs in 1 Pet. 5:1–5. The two cases in 5:1 and 5:2 fit easily into this pattern.

In summary, the NT has clear cases of women disciples, teachers, prophets and deacons/ministers. We have near certitude in perceiving Junia to be a female apostle. It is possible to see female elders in 1 Tim. 5:2. Thus women appear on nearly all, if not all, levels of leadership in the NT Church.

Negative attitudes

On the negative side are two critical texts. The first of these is 1 Cor. 14:33–36 which tells the women to be silent in church. The second is 1 Tim. 2:11–15 which adds that they must not teach or ‘have authority’ over men. These two texts seem to affirm the exact opposite of all that we have thus far observed. Faced with both the positives and the negatives, at least five alternatives are available to the reader of the NT.

1. Dismiss the biblical witness as contradictory and thus irrelevant.
2. Take the texts that say ‘yes’ to women as normative and ignore the others.
3. Focus on 1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2 and overlook the women disciples, teachers, deacons/ministers, prophets, and woman apostle.
4. Conclude that the NT is at loggerheads with itself and that the Church can only choose one biblical view against the other.
5. Look once more at the negative texts to see if their historical settings allow for more unity in the outlook of NT than we have suspected.

To borrow a phrase, we will proceed to ‘have a go’ at alternative five. What can be said about 1 Cor. 14:33–36 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15?

I have argued elsewhere that 1 Cor. 11–14 is a single essay.¹⁹ In these chapters Paul’s outline is organized using the same inverted parallelism already noted in 1 Tim. The themes are as follows

1. Disorders in worship:
 - a. dress of women/men prophets(11:2–16)
 - b. disorders in the Eucharist (11:17–34)
 2. The spiritual gifts (ch. 12)
 3. Love (ch. 13)
 4. The spiritual gifts (14:1–25)
5. Disorders in worship:
 - a. prophets all talk at once (14:26–33a)

b. Women talk in church (14:33b–36)

Disorders in worship open and close this four-chapter section of the epistle. The placing of the two discussions of spiritual gifts creates a second set of parallels. The chapter on love (ch. 13) forms a powerful climax in the centre. Thus, as noted, chapters 11–14 form a single unit. Our interest focuses on the discussions regarding women in Church that open and close this four-chapter unit.

In 11:4–5 the men *and the women* are prophesying. Thus the reader knows that the prophets who interrupt one another in chapter 14 are comprised of *both* men and women. So when the women in 14:34–35 are told to be silent and listen to the prophets, it is clear that *some of these prophets are women*.

Also relevant is the fact that 14:26–36 lists three groups of people who are disturbing worship. These are as follows:

1. The *prophets* are told:
Don't all talk at once.
Be silent in the church.
2. The *speakers in tongues* are told:
If there is no interpreter
be silent in the church.
3. *Married women* with Christian husbands (who attend) are told:
Don't ask questions during the worship and don't chat.
Ask your husbands at home and *be silent* in the church.

Each of these is told to be silent when it disturbs worship. Paul is not issuing a command for perpetual prophetic silence! In like manner, when they disrupt public worship the women are asked to be quiet. In like manner, when they disrupt public worship the women are asked to be quiet. Thus Paul is saying to the women:

'Women, please keep silent in worship and listen to the female and male prophets. Don't interrupt them with questions, and don't talk/chat in church. If you can't understand what is being said, ask your husbands at home. They understand more Greek than you do and will be able to explain things to you.'

The scene is easy to reconstruct. Corinth was a tough immoral town. Transportation workers, porters and metal workers made up a significant portion of the population. It is easy to assume that the inhabitants came from different places and spoke different languages. Their common language was Greek. The men were naturally 'out and about' more than the women and thus were more likely to be at ease in that common language. It follows that in church the women could perhaps not easily follow what was being said and so would begin to ask questions or lose interest and start 'chatting'.

A documented case of this phenomenon is recorded in a sermon of John Chrysostom, preached in the cathedral of

Antioch in the latter part of the fourth century. Stenographers recorded Chrysostom as follows:

Text: And if they (the women) will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home.

Chrysostom: Then indeed the women, from such teaching keep silence; but now there is apt to be great noise among them, much clamour and talking, and nowhere so much as in this place (the cathedral). They may all be seen here talking more than in the market, or at the bath. For, as if they came hither for recreation, they are all engaged in conversing upon unprofitable subjects. Thus all is confusion, and they seem not to understand, that unless they are quiet, they cannot learn anything that is useful. For when our discourse strains against the talking, and no one minds what is said, what good can it do to them?²⁰

If this was the scene in the cathedral of the great city of Antioch in the fourth century, what can we imagine for Corinth in the days of Paul? Corinth was, no doubt, even more disorderly. (The present writer has personally experienced Chrysostom's predicament in isolated middle-eastern village churches!) The women of Corinth were told (when they disrupted worship) to be silent. Paul assumed that the readers remembered the women prophets of 11:5 when he wrote 14:35–36. He then reinforced the unity of this four-chapter essay with a brief summary. It reads as follows:

1. If anyone thinks that he is a *prophet* (ch 11)
2. or *spiritual* (ch 12)
3. He should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a *command of the Lord* (ch 13). If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.
4. So, my brethren, Earnestly desire to *prophesy* and do not forbid *speaking in tongues* (14:1–25).
5. But all things should be done in decency and in order (26–36).

If these four verses are (as we suggest) a summary of the entire essay, then the *command of the Lord* referred to in paragraph 3 is the command to 'love one another', which is definitively explained in ch. 13. If however, 14:34–40 is only read in a linear fashion, then the 'command of the Lord' becomes the command to tell the women to be silent in church, not the love command. If then the link with ch. 11 is forgotten, the women prophets are forgotten. Together these two misunderstandings of the text can and have been shaped by some into a club with which to threaten women into silence in the name of 'the command of the Lord'. More recently they have been used by many to attack the integrity of the Apostle Paul. Paul's intent is simply to solve a problem strikingly similar to Chrysostom's difficulties with the chatting women of Antioch.

Finally then, what is to be done with the *crux interpretum* of 1 Tim. 2:11–15? As discussed above, whether 1 Tim. is history from the sixties or carefully written theological drama from the nineties, the Church was still in existence in Ephesus at the end of the first century and the temple of Artemis was also intact and functioning. I am myself convinced of the earlier date, but the following suggestions can, we trust, help clarify the text as Scripture in either case. What then can be said?

First, the author speaks to Timothy as a young man and calls him ‘my son.’ Secondly, Timothy is ill with stomach problems and other ‘frequent ailments’ (4:23). Thirdly, he is apparently under stress and wants to leave because now, for the second time, Paul urges him to stay (1:3). Finally, some form of a gnostic heresy has broken out in the Church. Chapter 4:1–3 offers details. The author warns against those who ‘forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods.’ For these heretics the body was evil. Obviously someone was pressuring the Church in these directions. Who then was teaching such things?

We can only speculate, but there are a few helpful historical hints. In the early forms of gnosticism known to us, women teachers played prominent roles. Simon Magus is accused by Justin and Eusebius of having had a consort called Helena who was a prostitute from Tyre. She was called *ennois* (divine intelligence). The gnostic document, *The Acts of Paul*, adds a consort called Thekla to Paul. Montanus had Prisca and Maximilla as his female prophetesses. In 2 Timothy 3 the author sharply criticizes men but also mentions ‘weak women who are swayed by various impulses and who will listen to anybody.’ In 1 Tim. 5:15 the author specifically mentions ‘women . . . who have already strayed after Satan.’ To this another dimension must be added.

The great temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The roof was supported by 127 columns that were 65 feet high (roughly seven storeys). The building was 221 feet wide and 425 feet long. Within the temple as an institution, women exercised power on two levels. First, the temple was controlled by a group of virgins and castrated men. The later were called *Magabizes*. Then second, under their control were thousands of female priestess-slaves called *hierodules*. There is specific evidence for priestesses, receptionists, supervisors, drummers, bearers of the sceptre, cleaners, acrobats, flute players and bankers. The economy of the town and province was profoundly linked to the temple as an institution (cf. Acts 19:23–29).

The entire town set aside one month a year for ceremonies, games and festivities connected to the cult.²¹ The focus of all of this was Artemis, a female goddess with rows of multiple breasts. Thus the Ephesians lived in a city and district where

the huge seven-storey-high temple, a wonder of the world, dominated the skyline. As an institution it was naturally a powerful force in all aspects of their lives. The focus of all this was a goddess whose worship was controlled by virgins who shared leadership with males only if they were castrated.

In such an atmosphere, what kind of female-male relations would have developed? What possibility would any male religious leadership have had or a sense of dignity and self-respect? What kind of female attitudes

would have prevailed in such a city? How easy would it have been for the values of the society to have penetrated the Church? Castration being the ultimate violence against the male, would not anti-male sexism in various forms have been inevitable?

No church is ever totally isolated from the sins of its culture. It does not take too much imagination to fill in the spaces between the lines of 1. Tim. and surmise what may have prompted Timothy’s desire to leave. It is easy to assume that a group of women had asserted enough power to gain adherents to their heretical views. As noted, avoidance of marriage (and child bearing), along with abstinence from foods, appear to have been a part of the package which was damaging the social and theological foundations of the Church. As 2:12 makes clear (see below), these same women were brutalizing the men in the process.

Timothy was young, sick, depressed and male. He could not manage. Paul, or Paul through an amanuensis, or a student of Paul in Paul’s name, was informed that things were going very badly in Ephesus. He wrote this stinging reply hoping to save the Church. With this as a possible scenario, we must examine the text itself. Each section requires scrutiny.

Paul writes, ‘Let a woman learn in quietness with all submissiveness.’ He opens with a command ‘Let a woman learn. . . .’ Judith Hauptmann, in an essay on ‘Images of Women in the Talmud’, notes Rabbi Eliezer’s view that it is better to burn the words of the Torah than to give them to women.²² By contrast other Talmudic texts make clear that some women *were* exposed to Torah and Talmud. However there is no command that they should learn. That was for the men. The general view was that the woman’s task was to keep the house and free the men to study the tradition.²³ At least from the second century AD each male worshipper offered daily thanks to God for not having made him a woman. Greeks expressed similar views.²⁴ Misogyny was also a part of Roman society. Indeed it was part of the times. Against this background Paul gives a clear directive that a Christian woman must *learn* the faith. He is obviously referring to women who need instruction. He does not say; ‘Dismiss them from the classroom’ or ‘They are not capable of understanding’. Rather

Misogyny was also a part of Roman society. Indeed it was part of the times. Against this background Paul gives a clear directive that a Christian woman must *learn* the faith.

he commands, 'Let a woman learn!'

Secondly, we have traditionally translated the full command "Let a woman learn *in silence*". The Greek can also be translated, 'Let a woman learn in quietness', which is perhaps more appropriate to the tense situation in the church in Ephesus. Angry students forced into silence learn little. But an atmosphere of 'quietness' encourages study and fosters understanding. In regard to this text Chrysostom writes 'He was speaking of quietness . . .'.²⁵ This legitimate translation option appears in a variety of Arabic versions for a thousand years. In 867 AD Bashir ibn al-Siri translated 'let a woman learn in *tranquility*' (*tata'allim fi sukun*)²⁶. *Sukun* is a rich Arabic word that means "calm, tranquility, peace."²⁷ This word brilliantly picks up on nuances of the total scene in Ephesus to which Paul was writing. As we will see below, these women had become counterproductively aggressive. The author asks them to calm down and to pursue theological instruction in tranquility.

Thirdly, they are to submit, but to what? We are not told. Yet in the context of the extended discussion of 'sound doctrine' with which the epistle opens, the natural assumption is that the author intended them to submit to the orthodox teachings of the Church. Paul has instructed Timothy in 'sound doctrine' (1 Tim. 1:10) and here a wayward part of Timothy's parish is told to accept the authoritative nature of the theological instructions Timothy has received.

Paul continues with:

I permit no woman to teach,
or to lord it over the men,
for she is to be in quietness.

It is possible to hear this text contradicting all the positives heard above. But Priscilla taught Apollos and every reader of Luke 1:46–55 was instructed by Mary. The women prophets of Corinth (1 Cor 11:5) and Caesarea (Acts 21:9) edified the Church. Each section of this verse requires comment. The first line can be understood as follows:

I permit none of these theologically ignorant women (in Ephesus) to teach, because they have brought their syncretistic religious beliefs with them into the Church.

We are obliged to ask, were all of the women in Ephesus heretics? Certainly not. However Paul *cannot* expect the young Timothy to administer theological exams in the midst of a crisis! The Gordian knot must be cut or its rope will strangle all of them. Paul cuts it with 'I permit *no* woman to teach!' *All* of them are asked to study the faith! Is this not appropriate ruling, given the tensions of such circumstances?

The second line of this sentence illuminates the precise situation in Ephesus. The key word is *authenteo* (to lord it over) which appears only here in all of the NT. The noun form of this word (*authentēs*) entered the Turkish language as

effendi, the title for the Sultan with his life and death powers over the people of his empire. It is a very strong word and can also be translated to 'commit murder' or 'assert absolute sway'.²⁸ Marcus Barth translates it with the Authorised Version as 'usurp authority'.²⁹

It is impossible to see this ruling as a general principle that everywhere governed the life of the NT Church. As a deacon/minister of the church in Cenchreae, Phoebe surely exercised *some* form of authority over men. Priscilla had theological authority over her student Apollos. The women prophets naturally carried the authority which their message gave them. Lydia is prominent in the founding of the church in Philippi. The weight which Mary the mother of Jesus carried in the Early Church is unknown, but it is impossible to imagine that she had none! Older women in Middle Eastern society are generally powerful figures. Are we to imagine that the Apostles totally disregarded her views? Did the one who 'kept all things in her heart' have no opinions on any aspect of the faith and life of the Church? So what is intended here?

I would submit that the overtones of this rare, very strong word, make clear the author's meaning. In Ephesus some women had acquired absolute authority over the men in the church and were verbally (and perhaps theologically) brutalizing them. Paul calls for a halt to this dehumanizing attack. Again our centuries-long middle-eastern exegetical tradition is instructive. The Peshitta Syriac (fourth century) translates with *mamralza*. The root of this word has to do with insolence and bullying. The early Arabic versions, translated from Greek, Syriac and Coptic, read either '*yata'amaru*' (to plot; to be domineering; to act as 'lord and master'; to be imperious³⁰) or '*yajtari*' (to be insolent). The last two centuries have preferred '*yatasallat*' (to hold absolute sway). Thus middle-eastern Christianity at least from the third century onward has always remembered that something dark and sub-Christian was involved.

As noted, the male leadership in the local temple was castrated. The author of 1 Tim. was perhaps saying to the Ephesian Christians, 'There is no place for any carry-over of these Ephesian attitudes into the fellowship of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of women and men'. An expanded and interpreted translation of the intent of this verse might be:

I do not allow these ignorant women to batter the men.
They are to stop shouting and calm down.

Two wrongs do not make a right. The great standard set in Gal. 3:28 affirms that 'in Christ . . . there is no longer male and female' (NRSV). Progress towards that goal of full equality cannot be made if either gender is asserting de-humanizing power over the other. In Galatians Paul is very harsh with male heretics. Here he deals with female destroyers of the faith. It is only fair to observe that in some places in the English-speaking world today, anti-male sexism is sufficiently intense that men find themselves intimidated,

with leadership opportunities denied them because they are male, and under constant hostile monitoring for any failures in rigid linguistic conformity. Biblical theology is under attack by radical feminists and in some quarters academic freedom is on the verge of being threatened. Neither gender is completely innocent of mistreating the other and if Paul's vision in Galatians is to be followed neither gender has the right to absolute control over the other. This text can be seen as relevant to a part of this collection of problems.

Verses 11–12 are as follows: 'For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.' Difficulties continue: What is meant here? This text appears to be in direct clash with Gal. 3:28 on the one hand and Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15:21–22 on the other. Gal. 3:28 (as noted) says that in Christ there is no more 'male *and* female' (NRSV). Paul is quoting Gen. 1:27 and affirming that in Christ this order is no longer relevant.³¹ Here, apparently it is significant. This is indeed a *crux interpretum*. Yet in this text Paul is angry and is surely not attempting to write a calm dispassionate essay that can be critically compared to what he wrote decades earlier in another time and to another situation.

Furthermore, we can observe at least one other occasion of stress where Paul affirmed opposing views on a single topic. In 1 Cor. 12:4–11 he carefully states that God gives *different* gifts to different people as *he* wills! Then, returning in ch. 14 to the subject of the spiritual gifts, and fully warmed to his subject, Paul blurts out, 'Now I want you all to speak in tongues!' (14:5).

In this latter text it appears that all must have *one* gift (tongues) which all are free to choose as the right gift for themselves! In this second statement Paul appears to affirm the exact opposite of what he has just said in 12:4–11! However, in our middle-eastern culture people are expected to become emotional over the things they care about. When they do, they are permitted to make their point by exaggeration. No one presses the logic of these exaggerations. This rhetorical style may well be the key to 1 Cor. 12 and 14. It may also assist us with the text before us.

The second problem is as follows: In Romans Paul says, 'Sin came into the world through *one man*'. The same idea appears in 1 Cor. 15:21–22 which reads, 'by a man came death. . . .' But here, as in Ben Sirach (25:24), Eve is blamed for everything! If someone in the Pauline theological circle rather than Paul is the author, the problem remains. What can be said?

Chrysostom is again helpful. He makes a connection between Romans 5 and this text. He writes,

After the example of Adam's *transgression* ... so here the female sex *transgressed*, not the male. As all *men* died through one (Adam), because that one sinned, so the whole *female* race transgressed because the woman was in the transgression.³²

Building on Chrysostom's insight, the following is a possible reconstruction of the situation in Ephesus. It is generally assumed that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while resident in Ephesus. As noted, 1 Corinthians, like Romans, affirms ' . . . in Adam all die.' There can be little doubt that Paul's second-Adam theology, set forth in 1 Cor. 15:42–50, was also proclaimed by Paul in the city of Ephesus. If any first century person was so inclined, Paul's views set forth Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15 *could* have been understood as *very* bad news for men. In Rom. 5:12 the reader is told 'Sin came into the world through *one man*. . . .' In vv 13–19 which follow, there is a total of eight further references to that *one man's sin!*

On the basis of these texts it is theoretically possible to accuse Paul of harbouring bitter anti-male biases! Trespass (*parabasis*) is the key problem and one man is held responsible for *all* of it. The question is not, what did Paul mean? Rather we would ask, could anti-male women have used such ideas for their own purposes? Obviously, they could have.

Thus perhaps some theologically illiterate women in Ephesus had been exposed to Paul's views in some form and had concluded that *men* had polluted the earth with their sin. Therefore the more innocent women must push them aside. The author of 1 Tim. may be responding by taking up the story of Genesis with a bold statement, '*Eve was a transgressor!*' meaning, she *also* is to be blamed, not only Adam. Chrysostom seems to have understood our text as the other side of the coin to Paul's first-Adam/second-Adam theology. Chrysostom's views turn the text into a thoughtful response to what appears to have been a critical misunderstanding.

The last section of the text is as follows:

. . . and she will prosper (*sozo*) through bearing children if *they* continue in faith and love and holiness and good judgment.

There are two attractive ways to understand this text. The first is to take 'the childbearing' as meaning one specific occurrence of childbearing, namely the birth of Jesus. In this case the text would need to be translated, 'and she will be saved through the birth of a child.' The intent of the next would then be:

How can these heretics teach women not to bear children when God has entered history to save *through childbearing!*

However, many interpreters argue from internal evidence that here the definite article refers to childbearing in general. If this be true, there is a second possible way to understand the text.

The verb *sozo* (save?), which is at the heart of this text, has a variety of meanings. In this same chapter Paul affirms that we are *saved* (*sozo*) through Jesus Christ 'who gave himself ransom for all' (2:6). The reader is told that salvation is

through the cross of Christ. Are we then to understand him, ten verses later, to say, ‘Well, actually for women there is a second way to be saved, have a baby!’? This cannot be the intent of the author. A solution to this problem is available when we observe that *sozo can* refer to salvation, but it can also mean ‘good health’ and occasionally has a more general sense of ‘to prosper.’³³ As noted, someone in the Church in Ephesus was teaching the women that they should not get married, and thus naturally, not have children. Paul counters with:

Childbearing is not an evil act! It is an act blessed by God. A woman can *prosper* through childbearing; if *they*, (the husband and the wife) continue in faith and love and holiness with good judgment.

The text shifts from a singular ‘she’ to a plural ‘they’. This plural is best understood to refer to a husband and wife and not to women in general. Children can be a blessing to the family. But if faith, love, holiness and good judgment (*sofrosune*)³⁴ are missing, the family will not necessarily prosper by having children.

In conclusion, when history is taken seriously, 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and 1 Tim. 2:11–15 tell women to be silent when they disrupt public worship and when they teach heresy. Special problems in Corinth and Ephesus were dealt with firmly for the sake of the upbuilding of the body of Christ in those places. I submit that these admonitions can be understood to be in harmony with the clear affirmations of the presence of women as disciples, teachers, prophets, deacons, (one) apostle, along with the possibility of women elders.

In this manner all the NT texts considered can be seen as supportive of the great vision in Gal. 3:28 where ‘in Christ . . . there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.’

Notes

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12. B. Brooten, “Junia . . . Outstanding among the Apostles” (Romans 16:7)’ in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration*, eds. L. and A. Swidler, Paulist Press, New York 1977, p 141.
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20. Chrysostom, op cit., p 435.
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23. *Ibid.*, p 209.
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25. Chrysostom, op. cit., p 435.
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30. Wehr, op cit., p 26.
31. K. Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women*, Fortress, Philadelphia 1966, passim.
32. Chrysostom, op. cit., p 436 (italics mine).
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An Evangelical Statement on the Trinity

The Statement

We believe that the sole living God who created and rules over all and who is described in the Bible is one Triune God in three coeternal, coequal Persons, each Person being presented as distinct yet equal, not as three separate gods, but one Godhead, sharing equally in honor, glory, worship, power, authority, rule, and rank, such that no Person has eternal primacy over the others.

A theological commentary

Athanasius, the defender of the Nicæan Creed, correctly explained the faith once delivered to the saints.

Objecting to attempts of his day to reduce Jesus Christ (and the Holy Spirit) to secondary (and tertiary) status in being, authority, and power, Athanasius pointed out that, had his opponents understood Jesus “to be the proper offspring of the Father’s substance, as the radiance is from light, they would not every one of them have found fault with the [Nicæan] Fathers; but would have been confident that the Council wrote suitably” (3.9.39).¹ Therefore, our guidance in constructing this statement comes from the Bible and the helpful explanations of Athanasius, from whose insights we draw the list of equal attributes at the end of our statement. For Athanasius, equality of attributes is the proof for equality of substance (being). Lose the first and one loses the second. So he declares of the Christ, “This is why He has equality with the Father by titles expressive of unity, and what is said of the Father, is said in Scripture of the Son also, all but his being called Father.”²

Athanasius illustrates his position by citing Bible verses in which Jesus claims to possess all the Father possesses, for example, being named “God,” “*the Almighty*,” “Light,” making “*all things*” and doing “*whatsoever*” the Father does, “being Everlasting” with “*eternal power and godhead*.” He also notes parallel Scriptures in

which the Son and the Father are described with the same terms: “being *Lord . . . through whom [are] all things*,” being “Lord of Angels” and “worshipped by them,” “being honoured as the Father, for that they may honour the Son, He says, as they honour the Father; being equal to God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” “being Truth,” “Life,” being “*The Lord God*” and “*The God of Gods*,” who forgives sins, being “*the King of glory*,” as “David in the Psalm” states “of the Son” and “God” verifies (3.20.49), “*My glory I will not give to another*.” Athanasius concludes, “If then any think of other origin, and other Father, considering the equality of these attributes, it is a mad thought” (3.21.50).³

Therefore, maintaining an understanding of the equality of the attributes of each Person of the Trinity is, for Athanasius, necessary to maintain a proper confession of each Person’s equality of substance. Reduce one’s belief in the equal status of the attributes of any of the Persons of the Godhead and one has eliminated one’s proof of the existence of the Trinity, having reduced one’s understanding of the doctrine to an ascending relationship of three gods in tandem. Arius made such a mistake when he declared, “Thus there is a Three, not in equal glories. Not intermingling with each other are their subsistences. One more glorious than the other in their glories unto immensity” (2.2.15).

Instead, having established the equality of the Father and Son’s glory and other attributes in these quotations from the *De Synodis*, Athanasius proceeds to the question of rank in *Epistulae quattuor ad Serapionem*, explaining, “But of such rank [*taxis*] and nature the Spirit is having to the Son, so the Son has to the Father.”⁴ The *Sermo contra Latinos* confirms, “But the Father is first not according to time, and not according to rank, surely not!”⁵

God is unique.

We have no precedent in our world for understanding how God can be one and at the same time three. We mistake the nature of the Godhead by positing three Persons in tandem, one eternally exercising authority over the others as human chief executive officers exercise authority over their subordinate staff. We impose human conduct in our fallen world onto the relationships in heaven’s perfect one. But, since there is no exact point of reference for God in our contingent world, we must rely upon God’s revelation of God’s nature. Such specific divine revelation is recorded in the Bible in the form of affirmations, such as “Hear, Israel, the LORD (singular) your God (plural), the LORD (singular) is one” (Deut 6:4). The interchangeable use of the singular and plural names of God shows that God is unique.

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God is not limited to human gender.

Christians differ over their understanding of God's intention for the ecclesiastical and domestic relationship between the genders. But, this topic should be included under the doctrine of humanity and not of the Trinity, since God is neither male nor female (as we learn from Deut 4:15–16), and God is not limited to two Persons, but is one God in three Persons. Thus, no direct and specific analogical correspondence exists between one male and one female in relationship or in church service or all females and all males in relationship or in church service and the perfect love relationships within the monotheistic Godhead of the Trinity. Further, the attempt to ignore the Holy Spirit and forge some sort of corresponding relationship to human gender out of the incarnational, metaphorical designations of "father" and "son" is at best logic fault and at worst heterodox.

Athanasius warns against overly anthropomorphizing Trinitarian familial language. He counters the charge that his insistence on equality in the Trinity reduces two Persons of the Godhead to "brothers": "One is not Father and the Other Son, but they are brothers together."⁶ Athanasius answers that equality does not mean that one Person in the Godhead cannot be identified as "father," as another takes on flesh and enters our world as an infant who is the child of divine intervention (by the Holy Spirit, who is another Person of the Trinity [Luke 1:35]) and human childbirth (see Phil 2:5–11), and he cites numerous examples of human parents begetting children. Yet, he warns that this human understanding must be confined to our human realm. We must approach the eternal by "casting away human images, nay, all things sensible, and ascending to the Father, lest we rob the Father of the Son in ignorance, and rank Him among His own creatures" (3.23.51).

In summary, Athanasius insists that equality of attributes demonstrates equality of substance (being) in the One Triune God.

God exercises perfect cooperative relationships.

God models perfect love, respect, cooperation. Although Jesus in his human incarnation was limited in various ways (Phil 2:6–8), including in knowledge (e.g., Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32), at his ascension he returned to his former place of authority and glory, where he receives prayer and grants power from heaven (Acts 7:56, 59; Luke 24:49). In eternity, the Persons of the Trinity know each other intimately. As 1 Corinthians 2:10 tells us, the Spirit searches the thoughts of the others. The Persons of the Godhead indwell each other (John 17:21), expressing perfect love and mutual glorification (John 17:1; 23–24), each sharing cooperatively in humanity's creation, redemption, and sanctification.⁷ God exemplifies a unity in diversity that we should emulate between the genders and practice in the global, multicultural, mutual submission and respectful cooperation of all humans.

Voluntary deference as part of the salvific plan

Deference within the Trinity is mutual: the Father defers to the Son to carry out the plan of salvation, as does the Holy Spirit, and so the Son is honored as he in turn defers to Father and Spirit. All mutually honor and defer to one another.

Such deference did not reveal a permanent superiority of one Person of the Trinity over the Others to John Calvin, who wrote:

We ought also to understand what we read in Paul: after the judgment "Christ will deliver the Kingdom to his God and Father" (1 Cor. 15:24p.). Surely the Kingdom of the Son of God had no beginning and will have no end. But even as he lay concealed under the lowness of flesh and "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7; cf Vg.), laying aside the splendor of majesty, he showed himself obedient to his Father (cf. Phil. 2:8). Having completed this subjection, "he was at last crowned with glory and honor" (Heb. 2:9p.).

The mission of Jesus Christ was not simply to lead humanity in righteous and obedient living, as was the task of the first humans. Christ's mission was greater, having to redeem fallen humanity, after which, Calvin explains, "So then will he yield to the Father his name and crown of glory, and whatever he has received from the Father, that 'God may be all in all' (1 Cor 15:28)." To perform this mission, Christ becomes our "Mediator" and our "Lord," a title, Calvin notes, that "belongs to the person of Christ only in so far as it represents a degree midway between God and us." But once Christ has completely fulfilled the role of humanity's "Lord," Calvin explains, "Then he returns the lordship to his Father so that—far from diminishing his own majesty—it may shine all the more brightly. Then, also, God shall cease to be the Head of Christ,⁸ for Christ's own deity will shine of itself, although as yet it is covered by a veil." Calvin adds, the incarnate Second Person of the Trinity "will cease to be the ambassador of his Father, and will be satisfied with that glory which he enjoyed before the creation of the world."⁹

B. B. Warfield agreed that the term "Lord" indicates "function"¹⁰ in Christ's mission, as can be seen in his explanation of why "Paul might very well call Christ 'Lord over all' but not 'God over all.'" To him, "'Lord over all' would have meant, however, precisely what 'God over all' means."¹¹ Warfield specifically denies

that Paul in currently speaking of Christ as "Lord" placed him on a lower plane than God. Paul's intention was precisely the opposite, viz., to put him on the same plane with God; and accordingly it is as "Lord" that all divine attributes and activities are ascribed to Christ and all religious emotions and worship are directed to him. In effect, the Old Testament divine names, Elohim on the one hand, and Jehovah and Adhonai on the other, are in the New Testament distributed between God the Father and God the Son with as little implication of difference in rank here as there.¹²

Instead, for Warfield, "despite this earthly origin of His human nature, He yet is and abides (present participle) nothing less than the Supreme God, 'God over all [emphatic], blessed forever,'"¹³ "our 'great God' (Titus 2:13)."¹⁴ "Paul couples God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in his prayer on a complete equality."¹⁵ Even "the adjective 'only begotten' conveys the idea, not of derivation and subordination, but of uniqueness and consubstantiality,"¹⁶ since Jesus "places Himself in a position, not of equality merely, but of

absolute reciprocity and interpenetration of knowledge with the Father.”¹⁷ Clearly, both Calvin and Warfield affirm that a temporary (not eternal) submission of one of the Persons of the Godhead in the incarnation was a mutually agreed-upon part of God’s plan for saving humanity from eternal condemnation, wherein a Person of the Godhead became fully human, while remaining fully God (John 1:1, 14).¹⁸ Jesus Christ, God-Among-Us, “pitched the tent of a body” (*skēnōn*, John 1:14), much as the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was placed in the center of Israel’s encampment so that humans could encounter God face to face. According to the Bible, there is salvation through no other name than that of Jesus Christ and through no other means but the death of Jesus Christ for our sins (John 3:16; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5–6). Humans witnessed the spirit of servanthood that God values and displays. It was exemplified by the once-and-for-all sacrifice of God-Among-Us to restore humanity to God’s favor through God’s grace (Heb 10:14). God’s mutual deference models a virtue for both men and women to follow.

Avoiding elements of Arianism

Suggestions that superiority and inferiority of authority eternally exist among the Persons of the Godhead are problematic. All God’s attributes are essential. We should not posit distinctive, unequal attributes that divide God’s substance. If divine attributes are ranked in a hierarchy, then it necessarily follows that the lower ranked are of inferior quality. Therefore, it is contradictory to say that they share the identical substance (*ousia*), and yet the degree of each attribute can differ according to rank. Such an eternal distinction makes the Son less in authority than the Father, thereby dividing and separating the one God. Such radical social Trinitarianism ends up as tritheism. Affirming one God in three coeternal, coequal Persons is, therefore, necessary to preserve and perpetuate the one faith once given to the saints.

Notes

1. All quotations of Athanasius are from *The Epistle of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, Concerning the Councils Held at Ariminum in Italy and at Seleucia in Isauria (or De Synodis)*, in *Members of the English Church, Select Treatises of S. Athanasius, Archbishop of Alexandria, in Controversy with the Arians*, trans. J. H. Newman (Oxford: John Henry Parker, J. G. F. and J. Rivington: 1842), except where otherwise noted.

2. Punctuation is that of the translator of the *De Synodis*.

3. This concern for and attention to the relationship between equality in substance and attributes can be seen in “The Westminster Confession of Faith,” 9:1, which recognizes, “The Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, of the same substance and equal in power and glory, is, together with the Father and Son, to be believed in, loved, obeyed, and worshipped throughout all ages,” in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Part I: Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 1999), 131. “The Westminster Shorter Catechism” continues this equation in its answer to Question 6: “There are three Persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory” (*Constitution of the Presbyterian Church*, 175). “The Westminster Larger Catechism” slightly amplifies this statement in its answer to Question 9: “There be three persons in the Godhead: the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties” (*Constitution of the Presbyterian Church*, 196).

4. *Thesaurus linguae graecae: Canon of Greek Authors and Works*, vol. 26, p. 580, line 24, accessed 23 Feb. 2006, available from <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/inst/textsearch>, translation by William David Spencer.

5. Literally: “may it not happen! *mē genoito*.” *Thesaurus linguae graecae*, vol. 28, p. 829, line 47, translation by William David Spencer. One will notice that the *Sermo contra Latinos* has been paid little attention in the literature. This is doubtless because “the Benedictine editors declared dubious or spurious all of the sermons attributed to Athanasius,” as Johannes Quasten has lamented, adding, “A careful examination of the great number listed by A. Erhhard which so far has not been made, will most probably modify this judgment and prove some of them genuine” (*Patrology*, vol. 3 [Utrecht: Spectrum, 1960], 50). The question of which works of Athanasius (and how much of each) are genuine continues to be debated. In some cases, decisions made by internal evidence appear subjective, depending largely on how the wording of a particular piece seems to have struck a particular critic at a particular time. For example, Louis Ellies Du Pin in his *Bibliotheca Patrum; Or, A New History of Ecclesiastical Writers*, 2nd ed., trans. William Wotton (London: Abel Swall and Tim. Childe, 1693) decided, in regard to sermons, “The Homily upon these Words, *My Father hath given me all things*” is among the “many other Works of St. Athanasius, of which the Chronology is not known, which it concerns us to distinguish well from those that are doubtful or supposititious” (33). Such distinguishing was done sometimes by external evidence (as historical attestation of external authorship), but, in addition, by whether Du Pin judged a piece was “in the Stile of St. Athanasius” (34). So, among his pronouncements, he rules in favor of “The Homily of the Sabbath and of Circumcision,” which, he decides, “is not wholly of St. Athanasius’s Stile, but the Difference is very inconsiderable,” while he rules, with Bernardo De Montfaucon and not Eichorn, against the genuineness of *De Virginitate*. This particular book, which remains the subject of a lively internet debate, of course, is thrown into question because of the way the “three hypostases” are discussed (see, among many others, Archibald Robertson, “Prolegomena” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, A Select Library of the Christian Church, 2nd series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1892, 1999], lxxv). But, Du Pin’s decision is based as much on his opinion that this book “has nothing of the Style of St. Athanasius” (34), since “This Book is written in a low Stile and contains Precepts about the Quality of the childish Clothes of Virgins: There are in it Expressions unworthy of St. Athanasius, as when he calls a Virgin, the Dancer of Jesus Christ” (35). After having written this, Du Pin ends his discussion by agreeing with Photius’s commendation of Athanasius for his “wonderful Artifice: He observes all along an admirable fitness of Expression and always adapts his Stile to the Subject of which he treats, and to the Persons to whom he speaks” (46). Current readers will no doubt recall Archibald Robertson’s reminder that Athanasius was, after all, “a Christian pastor . . . engaged in preaching,” whose “simplicity led Philostorgius . . . to pronounce Athanasius a child as compared with Basil, Gregory, or Apollinarius” (Prolegomena, lxxvi). Against such conflicting opinions, the tenuousness of relying on a criterion of what sounds like an author’s style to a critic to determine authorship, or relying on a previous compiler who has done just that, is very unreliable. Today, linguistic study is a complex enterprise demanding numerous operations, such as analyzing syntactical and transposition sentence changes, assessing verb density, abstract versus concrete nouns, and use of adverbs and adverbial clauses, doing logical diagramming, applying Leo Spitzer’s philological circle, performing propositional reduction, and executing other such operations. Further, “according to several

linguists, 100,000 words are needed to prove authorship” (see Aída Benañon Spencer’s stylistic study *Paul’s Literary Style* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998], 21, 149). And, even then, one is wise to be cautious. Further, determination by style is difficult to make when no uniform scholarly opinion exists on the quality or breadth of Athanasius’s writing style, since judgments range from Photius’s glowing endorsement, “Read various letters of Athanasius, some containing a kind of *Apology* for his flight. The style is elegant, brilliant, and clear, full of grace and persuasiveness” (*Bibliotheca or Myriobiblon*, trans. J. H. Freese [London: SPCK, 1920], 32, accessed 1 June 2011, available from http://www.tertulian.org/fathers/photius_o2preface.htm.) to Berthold Altaner’s dimmer assessment: “On the whole Athanasius is little concerned with literary form; he certainly shows everywhere clarity and precision of thought, but his writings suffer from defective arrangement of his material as well as from frequent repetitions and diffusiveness” (*Patrology*, trans. Hilda C. Graef [Freiburg: Herder, 1960], 314). When we factor in the realization that the immensely accomplished but still largely prescientific Bernard De Montfaucon and his editors dismissed the entire corpus of sermons in their compilations of 1698 and afterward, and that the impact of that decision can be seen in the assignment of these homilies as “dubious” or “spurious” by Migne (who continues to date the *Sermo contra Latinos* in the 300s), Lampe, and others who followed, one can only pause and hope that the question of the authenticity of each sermon that was traditionally assigned to Athanasius will eventually have its own more contemporary, scientific, and accurate exploration. In the meantime, the careful approach is to bear caution in mind and regard the present document as either by Athanasius (as traditionally identified) or by one of the Athanasian party authors attempting to follow his theology and write in the spirit of Athanasius’s thought. The statement cited in our text is included in a discussion of the theory of the “eternal emergence” of the Son and Spirit, which seeks to clarify that the Spirit is “conjoined and together and not being inferior according to the emergence after the Son. . . . For just as the Son immediately and closely is out of the first, which implies the Father, so also the Spirit is immediately out of the Father, with reference to the eternal emergence. But the Father is first neither according to time, nor according to rank—surely not!” As we can see, the Son and Spirit proceeding from the Father may be understood as *order*, but without an eternally hierarchical *ordering*. In addition, we can notice this concern is also expressed in the Second Helvetic Confession: “Thus there are not three gods, but three persons, consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal; distinct with respect to hypostases, and with respect to order, the one preceding the other yet without any inequality” (ch. 3, “Of God, His Unity and Trinity,” “The Second Helvetic Confession,” in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], Part I: Book of Confessions*, 56).

6. In a May 1537 letter to Simon Grynée, the rector of the Academy of Basle, John Calvin reports he was labeled a Sabellian for claiming Jesus Christ was “that Jehovah, who of Himself alone was always self-existent” (in other words *autotheos*). This is noted by Charles Hodge (see his *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952], 467 [vol. I, ch. 4, sec. 6A]). Referencing Ignatius, Athanasius makes a similar point to that of Calvin, that, strictly speaking, “the Son was ingenerate,” since the Second Person of the Trinity was not created, though the Son was generate in the incarnation (*De Synodis*, 3.17.46): “We are persuaded that the blessed Ignatius was orthodox in writing that Christ was generate on account of the flesh, (for He was made flesh,) yet ingenerate, because He is not in the number of things made and generated, but Son from Father” (*De Synodis*, 3.18.47). Charles Hodge, however, seems to disagree, seeing the “fathers who framed that [Nicene] Creed” as “denying to the Father any priority or superiority to the other persons of the Trinity,” but yet being “the Monas, as having in order of thought the whole Godhead in Himself; so that He alone was God of Himself (*autotheos*, in that sense of the

word),” being “greater than the other divine persons” (465). In regard to “the Father, Son, and Spirit,” Prof. Hodge believes in “their absolute unity as to substance or essence, and their consequent perfect equality; and the subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, as to the mode of subsistence and operation” (462), offering quotations of scholars ancient and contemporary to himself, including Prof. Waterland, who claims, “The title of *ho Theos* [the God], being understood in the same sense with *autotheos*, was, as it ought to be, generally reserved to the Father, as the distinguishing personal character of the first person of the Holy Trinity” (465). Hodge, however, cautions that “neither the Bible nor the ancient creeds explain” what is “meant” by the term “sonship,” and, in fact, “it may be something altogether inscrutable and to us incomprehensible” (468). Still, drawing on human analogy, he himself believes, “In the consubstantial identity of the human soul there is a subordination of one faculty to another, and so, however incomprehensible to us, there may be a subordination in the Trinity consistent with the identity of essence in the Godhead” (474). Likewise, Augustus Hopkins Strong also notes the charge of Sabellianism against Calvin (*Systematic Theology* [Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1907], 334 [vol. 1, pt. 4, ch. 2, sec. 4c]) and himself states, “The New Testament calls Christ *Theos*, but not *ho theos*. We frankly recognize an eternal subordination of Christ to the Father, but we maintain at the same time that this subordination is a subordination of order, office, and operation, not a subordination of essence” (342 [I.4.2.5: 3d]). Prof. Strong believes his anthropomorphic view of “the possibility of an order, which yet involves no inequality, may be illustrated by the relation between man and woman. In office man is first and woman second, but woman’s soul is worth as much as man’s” (ibid.). Such distinctions can be traced in the early church to Origen in his *Commentary on John*, book 2, section 13 (p. 98), where he suggests of John 1:1, “John has used the articles in one place and omitted them in another very precisely, and not as though he did not understand the precision of the Greek language. In the case of the Word, he adds the article ‘the,’ but in the case of the noun ‘God,’ he inserts it in one place and omits it in another.” Origen contends, “the noun ‘God’ stands for the uncreated cause of the universe, but he omits it when the Word is referred to as ‘God.’” (14). Origen’s view is that “the Word has become God because he is ‘with God’” (12), therefore, “God, with the article, is very God, wherefore also the Savior says in his prayer to the Father, ‘That they may know you the only true God.’ On the other hand, everything besides the very God, which is made God by participation in his divinity, would more properly not be said to be ‘the God,’ but ‘God.’” So, Jesus Christ has “drawn divinity into himself,” (17) “though he would not remain God if he did not continue in unceasing contemplation of the depth of the Father.” “The God, therefore, is the true God” (18) (Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1–10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989], 98–99). With this argument, Origen strangely ignores the fact that, with the verb “to be” requiring a predicate nominative rather than a direct object, and with Greek syntax depending on case endings and not word order, the structure of the final clause of John 1:1, having two nominative endings, demands that only one may take an article in order to distinguish the clause’s subject from its predicate nominative. Therefore, the presence of a lone definite article in John 1:1’s final clause (“the Word was God”) is grammatically, not theologically, determined. Still, Origen’s argument manages to preserve the divinity of Christ, as sharing the deity of the Father, while maintaining the Son’s eternal subordination and complete dependence on the Father, and further preserving to the Father the idea of self-existence. Such reasoning leads Origen to appear to draw such conclusions as subordination within human society reflects the subordination in the Trinity, since the Son and Spirit’s eternal subordination is necessary for the Father to maintain the attribute “almighty,” since “one cannot be a father apart from hav-

ing a son, nor a lord apart from holding a possession or a slave, so we cannot even call God almighty if there are none over whom he can exercise his power” (*On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth [New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1966], 23 [ch. 2, sec. 10]), and, despite the example of Stephen in Acts 7:59 and the apostle Paul in Rom 1:8, “perhaps we ought not to pray to anyone born (of woman), nor even to Christ himself, but only to the God and Father of all” (Origen, “On Prayer,” in *Alexandrian Christianity*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 2, trans. John Ernest Leonard Oulton and Henry Chadwick (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1954), 269 [15.1]). J. N. D. Kelly observes of Origen, “The impact of Platonism reveals itself in the thoroughgoing subordinationism which is integral to Origen’s Trinitarian scheme. The Father . . . is alone *autotheos*; so St. John, he points out, accurately describes the Son simply as *theos*, not *ho theos*. In relation to the God of the universe He merits a secondary degree of honour; for he is not absolute goodness and truth, but His goodness and truth are a reflection and image of the Father’s” (*Early Christian Doctrines* [New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1960], 131–32). One can see how this viewpoint contrasts with Athanasius’s painstaking identification of the Son as almighty, worthy of worship, equal in honor, goodness, truth, et al., to the Father. Still, the subordinationism found in Origen, when divorced from his theology of continuous derivation of divinity from the Father to the Son, or the completely Platonic perspective of the Son as less than the Father in being, has a history of acceptance in some circles of Christianity (as we saw reflected in the thought of Strong and Hodge), though such a perspective appears to be less than the high Christology we noted in Athanasius, Calvin, and Warfield, and which we affirm in our present “An Evangelical Statement on the Trinity.”

7. Even the order in which the Persons of the Trinity are mentioned can be changed according to emphasis in the Bible, as can be seen in 2 Cor 13:13 (verse 14 NIV), “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the partnership (*koinōnia*) of the Holy Spirit be with all of you,” so no strict protocol of mentioning the Father first as having superior precedence is rigidly maintained. Translation by William David Spencer.

8. 1 Cor 11:3.

9. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1960), 485–86 (2.14.3).

10. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950), 226.

11. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 224.

12. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 225.

13. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 46.

14. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 47.

15. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 75.

16. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 56.

17. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 65.

18. See also such passages recognized as establishing Jesus Christ as fully God, as John 1:18; 5:18; 8:58–59 (cf. Exod 3:14); 10:30; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:6; Col 1:19; 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1; and passages seen as establishing Jesus Christ as fully human, as Matt 8:27; 9:3; 13:54; John 6:52; 19:5; Acts 2:22; Rom 1:3; 5:15; 9:5; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:14–18. Jesus being completely God and completely human is also the major concern of “The Definition of Chalcedon.”

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An Evangelical Statement on the Trinity

STANLEY N. GUNDRY

We confess the one true and living God, Creator of everything and Ruler over the entire creation. He has uniquely revealed himself in the living Word, Jesus Christ, and in the written Word, the Bible, as One Triune God—three coeternal and coequal Persons. Each Person is distinct, yet there is only one essence or Being who is God, not three separate Gods. Each Person of the One Triune God shares equally in honor, glory, worship, power, authority, and rank. The Bible never suggests that any one Person of the Trinity has eternal superiority or authority over the others, or that one is in eternal subordination to another. The Son's submission and obedience to the Father were voluntary and related specifically to the time during which he humbled himself, took on human nature, and dwelled among us as a servant.

The biblical¹ testimony

Isaiah prophesied, and it was fulfilled through Mary, that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son whose name would be Immanuel, which means “God with us.” This son was also given the name Jesus, meaning “the LORD saves” (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:20–23).

Jesus, the eternal Word, already existed in the beginning. “The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” This same Word “became flesh” in the person of Jesus and “made his dwelling among us.” In the incarnate Word, humankind saw the “glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father” (John 1:1–14).

Christ Jesus, “being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. . . . He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:5–11).”

The Son did not divest himself of his deity, but the text does say that he had equality with God that he gave up by taking the very nature of a servant during the time of his Incarnation. He voluntarily humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death on the cross. A servant is one who does the bidding of another, and the very fact that the Son *took on the very nature of a servant* suggests that, before the Son came in human likeness, he was not a servant or one who subjected himself to another's will. After the Son's earthly ministry as the obedient servant, the

Father exalted him to the highest place so that all creation bows before him and acknowledges him as God. Similarly, “During the days of Jesus' life on earth,” the Son was reverently submissive, and, “Son though he was, he learned obedience,” again suggesting that obedience was something unusual or unexpected from God's Son (Heb 5:7–8). Peter and Paul also affirm that the risen Son is now at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33; Col 3:1), and Jesus told his disciples that “all authority in heaven and on earth” had been given to him (Matt 28:18). The evidence seems clear—the Son's subordination to the Father was temporary, not eternal, and related only to the time of his earthly ministry.

Some actions of God are more frequently attributed to one Person of the Trinity in particular. Nevertheless, many times within Scripture, actions that are attributed to one member of the Trinity are also attributed to another member of the Trinity.² These too are evidence that there is full and eternal equality among the Persons of the Trinity and no eternal subordination or rigid hierarchy of roles.

- *Creation.* Both the Father and the Son are the agents in the Creation (Gen 1 and 2; John 1:2–3, 10; Col 1:16; Heb 1:10).
- *Choosing.* Both the Father and the Son are involved in predestination or choosing (Rom 8:29; 1 Pet 1:2; John 6:70; 13:18; Acts 1:2, 24; 9:15; Matt 11:27).
- *Sending the Spirit.* Both the Father and the Son are associated with the sending of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).
- *Access to the Father.* The believer's access to the Father is associated with both the Son and the Spirit (John 14:6; Eph 2:16, 18).
- *Indwelling.* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all live within believers (John 14:16–20, 23; 15:5; Rom 8:9–11; 2 Cor 13:5; Col 1:27; Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).
- *Intercession.* The Son intercedes on the believer's behalf with the Father (Heb 7:25; Rom 8:34), but so also does the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:26–27).

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- *Gift giving.* The Father is the giver of good gifts to human kind (Matt 7:11; John 3:34; 6:32–33; Rom 4:17; 15:5; 1 Cor 15:57–58; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 Tim 6:13; Jas 1:5, 17; 1 Pet 5:5), but so also are the Son and the Spirit (John 5:21; 6:33, 63; 14:27; 1 Cor 12:11; 2 Cor. 3:6). In this selection of texts, it is especially noteworthy that each Person of the Trinity is said to give life.
- *Preservation.* In John 10:28–30, Jesus says that he and the Father preserve Jesus’ sheep; not only are identical terms used to describe the action of Jesus and the Father, but Jesus concludes with this telling statement, “I and the Father are one.”
- *Love.* God’s love for his own is attributed to both the Father and the Son (John 3:16; 15:9–12; Rom 8:35–39).
- *Judgment.* At the consummation of this world, the Son exercises supreme authority as judge (Matt 25:31–46; 2 Cor 5:10), but the judgment seat is also the judgment seat of God the Father (Rom 14:10).
- *Prayer.* Most often in Scripture, prayer is offered to the Father, but not exclusively so. Believers also offer prayers to the Son (Acts 7:59–60; 2 Cor 12:9–10; Rev 22:20).

When we discuss the Trinity, we must acknowledge that our words are halting attempts to describe in finite human language the mystery of the Being of the infinite and eternal God. But one thing seems crystal clear—the written Word and the living Word bear witness that there is a unity of the Persons of the Trinity such that the actions and attributes of one Person of the Trinity are not the actions or attributes of that Person exclusively, but are by their very nature the actions and attributes of God himself, and therefore in some sense the actions and attributes of each Person of the Trinity. This is the most fitting way to give full weight to those texts that speak of the unity and equality of the Persons (John 5:17–19; 10:30; 14:7–11, 23; 17:20–23; compare Matt 28:20 with John 16:7). While affirming the unity of the Persons, we must also affirm the Trinity of the Persons testified to in the baptismal formula (Matt 28:19).

The Athanasian Creed

Western Christians in the late fourth or early fifth centuries summarized their understanding of God in what later came to be known as the Athanasian Creed. In this creed, the Father, Son, and Spirit are described as one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, three “coeternal” and “coequal” Persons, each fully God but still one God, not three—so that they share equally in power and authority, and none is greater or less than another. Similarly, Augustine argues that what is said of one member of the Trinity can also be understood of the others.³

Summary

In seeking to bear witness to their belief that the God revealed in Scripture and in Jesus Christ is one and three at the same time, the early church rejected the idea that the Father, Son, and Spirit related to one another hierarchically and that there was an eternal subordination within the Trinity. With regret, we must warn that any view of the Trinity that posits an eternal subordination among the Persons of the Trinity, in spite of its best intentions, *cannot do full justice* to the evidence of Scripture, *diminishes* the magnitude and significance of the Incarnation, *undercuts* the unity of the Trinity, and *tends to diminish* the full deity of the Son and the Spirit. With the Athanasian Creed, we believe that confessing One Triune God in three coeternal, coequal Persons, each sharing eternally, equally, and fully in the honor, glory, worship, power, authority, and rank that belong alone to God, best represents the One true God revealed in Jesus Christ and in the Bible. We call on our fellow evangelicals, whether they wish to be known as egalitarians or complementarians, or no such label at all, to join us in this reaffirmation of trinitarianism that is at the core of historic Christian orthodoxy.

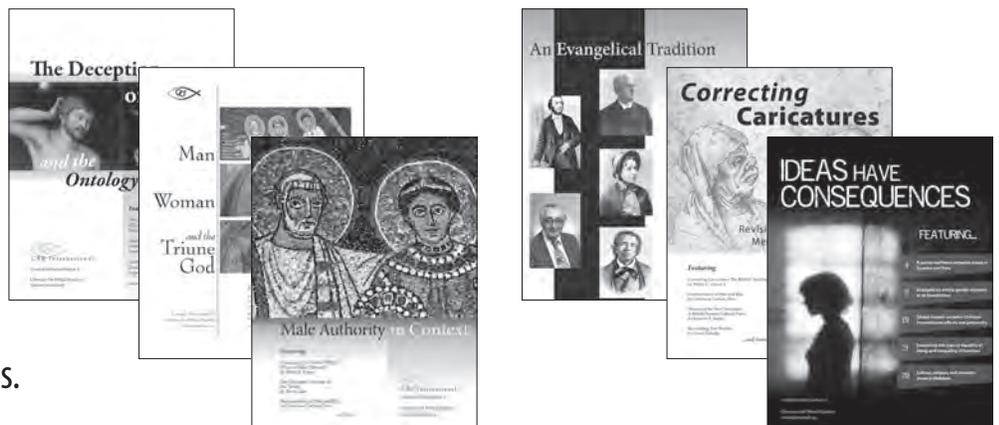
Notes

1. Biblical quotations are from the New International Version.
2. I wish to express my indebtedness to the work of Millard J. Erickson, *Who’s Tampering with the Trinity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009), especially chapter 4, “The Biblical Evidence,” 109–38.
3. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 1.9.19.

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The New Evangelical Subordinationism: Reading Inequality Into the Trinity

PHILLIP CARY

I still wonder how it could have happened. During the twenty years that *Priscilla Papers* has been publishing, opponents of biblical equality have become so enamored with the idea of subordination that they want to make it part of God. I would not have believed it until I encountered the work of Kevin Giles, an Australian Anglican priest who is the most articulate critic of this strange development. In his new book, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Zondervan, 2006), Giles shows how a whole generation of conservative evangelicals has embraced a new-fangled version of the ancient Trinitarian heresy of subordinationism. They do not hide their motives. They are determined to see in God what they wish to see in humanity: a subordination of role or function that does not compromise (they insist) an essential equality of being. Therefore, they teach that just as woman is created equal to man but has a subordinate role at home and in church, so the Son of God is coequal with the Father in being or essence but has a subordinate role in the work of salvation and in all eternity. They even think—quite mistakenly, as Giles shows—that this is what the Bible and Christian orthodoxy have always taught.

So it is clear enough why we have this new version of ancient heresy, but it is still astonishing. It is especially startling to someone like me who has returned to the evangelical orbit after studies among conservative ecumenical theologians, the kind of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant scholars who call themselves “evangelical catholics” (which in circles attuned to European theology has the ring of paradox or maybe a mixed marriage, since *evangelische* is just German for “Protestant”). In these circles, theologians have found time and again that the way to discern our underlying unity in Christ is to rediscover the ancient orthodox (Nicene) doctrine of the Trinity as the basis for all Christian life and thought. It is dismaying to think that so many evangelicals are separating themselves from this common basis of Nicene orthodoxy, with its thorough rejection of any teaching of subordination in the Trinity, in order to ride their hobby horse about the subordination of women.

However, it also affords egalitarian evangelicals an opportunity that is worth pondering: when it comes to the nature of God, egalitarians are the traditionalists, in the sense of adhering to the Great Tradition held in common by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians going back to antiquity. Their disagreements

with the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic tradition about such matters as the ordination of women are minor—and will be recognized as such by Orthodox and Catholic theologians—compared to conservative evangelicals’ abandonment of the Great Tradition on the doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps a new kind of conversation becomes possible at this point.

That all depends, of course, on what kind of interest egalitarian evangelicals take in the doctrine of the Trinity. The problem is that many of us were raised in churches that treated this doctrine as irrelevant to our Christian lives, as if it were merely some kind of mysterious puzzle about how three can be one. Of course, the doctrine of the Trinity is actually nothing less than the Christian teaching about God, and therefore ought to be of interest to any Christians who want to have a relationship with God. What the evangelical catholics discovered is that the doctrine of the Trinity looks irrelevant only to the extent that the church’s life and worship is not Trinitarian, i.e., not fully Christian. It is still rather common for evangelicals to pray “in the name of God,” for instance, without mentioning Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. This makes it increasingly common for the younger generation of evangelicals—my students—to talk of a “personal relationship with God” without mentioning Jesus Christ. A non-Trinitarian experience of personal relationship with God, in other words, is abstract and generic and not quite Christian. To recover an interest in the doctrine of the Trinity is to recover an interest in Jesus Christ and therefore in the heart of Christian faith.

To see what is at issue between Kevin Giles and his opponents, we must start there. What, after all, does the doctrine of the Trinity actually teach? If you are like me, you were never taught this in the evangelical church in which you were raised. So we need to begin with the basics.

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The Nicene doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity grows out of the most fundamental practice of Christian faith, the act of calling upon the name of Jesus Christ as Lord. When we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, we acknowledge that to him belongs “the name which is above every name” (Phil 2:9). Quite simply, we are worshiping him as God. The central aim of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity is to affirm that he is just as truly God as God the Father, even though he is different from the Father—even though, in addition, there is only one God. Everything else follows from this astounding claim about the divinity of Christ built into the very heart of Christian faith and worship.

Nicene orthodoxy takes its name from the council of Nicaea held in AD 325, which established key elements of the creed that is still recited every Sunday in many Christian churches around the world: that Jesus Christ is “God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father.” The Nicene council resolved to reject a virulent form of subordinationism which came to be called “Arianism” after its earliest advocate, an Egyptian priest named Arius. But in affirming that Christ is “of one being” (*homo-ousion*) with the Father, Nicaea went further and actually ruled out every form of subordination in Trinitarian doctrine. Seeing why that is so—and why it is necessary—will bring us to the heart of Giles’ dispute with evangelical subordinationists.

The Nicene teaching on Christ’s divinity

One of the many lies told in the best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code* is that in the council of Nicaea the divinity of Christ won by a narrow vote. Quite the contrary: without exception, everyone at the council, including the heretics, believed that Christ was divine. The question was all about what kind of divinity this is—which is to say, the question was what the Christian view of God really is. What everybody at the council agreed on was that Christ as God is pre-existent: he was the divine Word that was with God in the beginning (John 1:1) long before Jesus was born.

This tells us something important about the focus of the doctrine of the Trinity: it concerns the divine being of Jesus, not his humanity. In his humanity he is not pre-existent but born of woman just like the rest of us, and subordinate to God just like every other human being. Confusing what the Bible says about Christ’s human obedience with what must be said about his divine being is therefore the easiest route to subordinationism. So for instance when Christ says “The Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), the Nicene tradition unanimously rejects subordinationist attempts to see this as a statement about Christ’s divinity. It is only as a human being that Christ is less than the Father; as God, what he says about himself is “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). Only someone who is at once truly human and truly God can say both. But the doctrine of the Trinity, we must bear in mind, is focused on only one side of this two-sided Christology: it is about what it means to say he is truly God.

There is another route to subordinationism, however, which is more direct and philosophical. The people who were out-

voted at Nicaea were subordinationists because they thought that Christ’s divine being was by its very nature an intermediary between God the Father and created beings like us. (By contrast, the Nicene tradition has always insisted with Scripture that “the one mediator between God and human beings” is “the human Jesus Christ” [1 Tim 2:5]. Only in his humanity can he stand between God and humanity—not because he is a lesser divinity than the Father and therefore closer to us, but because he is both fully God and fully human.) By insisting that the Son is less than the Father, the subordinationists thought they could make him a kind of cosmic intermediary between the Creator and the creation—not as fully divine as the Father who created all things, but closer to us mere creatures because he too is a product of the Father. Arius took this kind of subordinationism a step further by frankly adding that the Son too, since he originated from the Father, must be regarded as a creation. Arius proposed that the Son was the highest and first being God made, which means that he does not really deserve exactly the same level of worship as God the Father.

We don’t want our reverence for Christ to turn into idolatry, now do we? That was the ultimate challenge faced by the council of Nicaea. Could it really be that we should give to Jesus Christ a worship equal to the Father? The majority at Nicaea answered a resounding yes. In response to Arius’ argument that the Son must be a creation, the Nicene creed formulated a key distinction: he is “begotten not made.” One could equally well translate: “generated but not created.” This proved to be the concept that was hardest for the opponents of Nicaea to grasp: that even though the Son was begotten or generated by the Father, he was not a creation of the Father and therefore not less than the Father.

To cement this point, the Nicene creed uses the famous term *homo-ousion*, saying the Son is of the same being or essence (*ousia*) with the Father. Though the Greek word *ousia* is a piece of philosophical vocabulary with many shades of meaning, its use at Nicaea made one thing unmistakably clear: the divine being of Jesus Christ is no different at all from the divine being of the Father. (His humanity is different, of course—but we must keep in mind that the doctrine of the Trinity is not about Christ’s humanity.) As God, Christ is no different and therefore no less than the Father.

One God with one will

Not everybody knows that for about fifty years after the Council of Nicaea, the church was in a kind of civil war over the doctrine of the Trinity. The subordinationists did not just go away; among other things, they asked tough questions. One of them was how Nicene Trinitarians could say there was only one God when they also said that Christ is God and the Holy Spirit is God. Unlike the subordinationists, for whom “one true God” in the highest sense means only the Father, Nicene Trinitarians have a serious problem here.

The Nicene solution to this problem is what puts modern evangelical subordinationism outside the pale of Trinitarian orthodoxy. The ancient Nicene theologians argued that everything

the Trinity does is done by the Father, Son, and Spirit working together with one will. The three persons of the Trinity always work inseparably, for their work is always the work of the one God. There is no act of the Father in the world which is not an act of the Son and the Holy Spirit as well. This does not mean there is no difference between the three. We could even use a modern term and call it a difference in roles, though the ancient theologians called it a difference in order. For there is an order in the work of the three persons which reflects the order of their origination: every work of the Trinity originates with the Father, is carried out by the Son, and is completed by the Holy Spirit. For instance, the work of salvation is initiated by the Father sending the Son, who becomes incarnate, lives and dies and rises again for our redemption, so that the Holy Spirit also may be sent to sanctify and perfect the church, the body of Christ, for eternal life.

But here is the crucial point: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not just three persons who decide to cooperate, like Peter, Paul, and Mary agreeing to do something together. Their agreement is essential and necessary, part of their very being, or else they would actually be three Gods just as Peter, Paul, and Mary are three humans. Hence the difference in roles in the Trinity cannot mean anything like a relationship of command and obedience, where one person's will is subjected to another's. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are always necessarily of one will, because there is only one God and therefore only one divine will. And where there is but one will there cannot be the authority of command and obedience, for that requires one person's will to be subordinate to a will other than his or her own.

Now we can see why modern evangelical subordinationists cannot be consistently Nicene, despite their best intentions. They affirm the Nicene creed, and with it the equality of Father, Son, and Spirit in divine being or essence. But they also insist that there is a distinctive kind of role differentiation in the Trinity, a subordination in role though not in being, so that the Father has the role of giving commands and the Son has the role of obeying them. The problem is that this is only conceivable if the Son's will is at least conceivably different from the Father's. But Nicene orthodoxy says it is not. There is only one will in God. The Son's will cannot be different from the Father's, because it is the Father's. They have but one will as they have but one being. Otherwise they would not be one God. Such are the logical consequences of Nicaea, which orthodox Trinitarians understand but evangelical subordinationists do not. If there were relations of command and obedience between the Father and the Son, there would be no Trinity at all but rather three Gods.

The new role subordinationism

How did evangelical theology ever get to this point? Here Giles' historically informative book is particularly helpful. In addition to extensive documentation of what Nicene theology actually teaches, with numerous quotations from Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, Augustine, and Calvin, a little from Aquinas—and then whole chapters devoted to two great figures of the twentieth century revival of Trinitarian theology, Karl

Barth and Karl Rahner—Giles also traces the very recent origins of evangelical subordinationism.

Far from being ancient orthodoxy, it is younger than most of us are. In 1977, George W. Knight III responded to the growing evangelical ferment about the equality of women by affirming that women were created equal, but adding that they must always be subordinate to men. In his book, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Baker, 1977), Knight argued that women were not subordinate to men in being, nature, or essence, but rather in role, function, and authority. So the new idea here is usefully dubbed “role subordination.” Rejecting the out-and-out denial of human equality that was widespread in Christian antiquity, the middle ages, and the Reformation (a denial that was “traditional” not in the sense of belonging to the Great Tradition of Christian thought, but in that it was a cultural assumption that people just took for granted) Knight affirmed the biblical teaching that women and men were both created in the image of God and therefore stood together as equals in their humanity. But picking up the very modern notion of “role,” he went on to argue that the Scriptures taught a permanent subordination of role along with this essential equality of nature. And then he took the fateful step of suggesting that we could see the same thing in the Trinity: the Son of God is equal to the Father in nature but eternally subordinate in role.

The idea caught on like wildfire. Within a decade or two evangelical theologians were talking as if every good Christian since the apostles had believed in role subordination in the Trinity. Perhaps most influentially, Wayne Grudem made it a centerpiece of his *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 1994), which soon became a widely used systematic theology text in evangelical seminaries in the English-speaking world. Both Knight and Grudem make quite clear what contemporary reality lies behind this historical error: for them, affirming subordination in the Trinity is essential to holding the line against egalitarianism in the church, the home, and the world.

The new evangelical subordinationism, in other words, belongs to an overarching strategy to keep women subordinate to men who can no longer use the old weapons of thoughtless prejudice. After a frank admission that women and men are created equally in God's image, what recourse is there for keeping women under men? The solution is: distinguish their roles, make women's role subordinate to men's, and make the subordination permanent. And then, for good measure, anchor this permanent subordination of women in an eternal subordination of roles within God himself.

Now that the idea has caught on so well, it looks too late to take it back. When Giles pointed out the problem in his earlier book, *Trinity and Subordinationism* (InterVarsity Press, 2002), his opponents responded with scathing criticisms coupled with emphatic affirmations that role subordinationism is historic orthodoxy. I still wonder how such sheer historical ignorance is possible. I can only think of sociological explanations: there must be a wing of evangelicalism with its own seminaries and academic life almost totally cut off from mainstream scholarship

and the life of the larger church. If so, then the current struggle between subordinationists and egalitarians in evangelical churches is creating a new kind of fundamentalist/evangelical split, where “fundamentalist” stands for a separatist strand of conservative Protestantism that thinks it can go it alone without cultural engagement or even theological literacy.

Conclusion

Giles’ new work, *Jesus and the Father*, has the strengths and weaknesses of a book that meets an urgent need. It will catch you up on where evangelicals stand on this, the most important theological issue of all; it documents the claims of both sides as well as the witness of Scripture and tradition; it hammers home the same fundamental points repeatedly. Even the repetitiveness is of value, insofar as it should impress younger evangelicals—or those who have not yet made up their minds—with the weight of the traditional witness against any kind of subordination in the Trinity. Hearing so much from Athanasius, Augustine, Calvin, and the rest has got to help. (Those who don’t need so much convincing might prefer Giles’ earlier book, which covers the same topic within the space of Part I.) Most fundamentally, Giles’ work is an appeal to evangelicals to rejoin the Great Tradition. The

appeal is important and worth the weight of documentation. For if evangelicals go off again in a fundamentalist separatism while clinging to an unorthodox doctrine of the Trinity, their separation from the rest of the body of Christ could prove irreparable, like the invention of a new sect in the characteristically American mode of Mormonism or Jehovah’s Witnesses.

One of the striking things about the original Nicene theologians, in fact, is that by being faithful to the purpose of clarifying the divinity of Christ, they ended up undermining the ancient commitment to a metaphysical hierarchy of being. The ancient church fathers were hierarchicalists to a man. They believed in hierarchical subordination throughout the universe: women subordinate to men, servants to masters, subjects to rulers, inanimate to animate, animals to humans. But despite themselves, what they found at the utmost height of the chain of being was equality in the very essence of God. And the reason was Christ: the biblical witness did not allow them to make Jesus Christ less deserving of worship and adoration than God the Father. We too can expect countercultural results if we give up the willful reading of our own social agendas into the doctrine of the Trinity and submit ourselves to biblical teaching.

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A Long Walk on the Beach

ANTHONY PARROTT

I don't know many college students who, during their spring break trip to Florida, take along and read *Discovering Biblical Equality*. But there I was, just a few years ago, sitting on a beach and devouring the 528-page book. Road trips, beaches, and scholarly essays—I felt like a living example of the Sesame Street children's song, "One of these things is not like the other things. . . ."

To me, though, this was just the next step. I was a couple of months away from proposing to my then-girlfriend Emily and only a year away from graduating from college with a biblical studies degree and then moving on to full-time ministry. Understanding headship in marriage, leadership in the church, and biblical views on gender were at the forefront of my mind. I had questions and I needed answers.

Had you asked me about these issues a couple of years before that spring break trip, I would have had no questions to speak of. I was raised in a patriarchal home, had never been taught by so much as a female Sunday school teacher, and had been homeschooled using a fundamentalist Baptist curriculum. I had full confidence in my own understanding of what the Bible said about women and their role in the home and in the church: submit to men.

Admittedly, my parents were fairly balanced. My dad never angrily ruled over my mom or belittled her intellect, abilities, or talents. But, in times of differing opinion, it was always stated, "Dad is the head of the household and his is the judgment that matters above all." I never questioned this position. In Genesis 2, the male was created first. In Ephesians, Paul said something about women submitting to men. My family made sense.

This lack of questioning changed within my first couple months of college. I was in a class called "Exploring the Christian Faith" taught by Dr. Tim Erdel. Our class took on contentious issues: pacifism, predestination, secular art, and—of course—biblical equality.

His first assignment was easy enough: find and discuss each time Scripture used the phrase "head of the household." I went to—what else!—my trusty King James Version exhaustive concordance and couldn't find anything. I then remembered Ephesians 5, but there I found "man is head of the wife." Nothing about the household in general. I finally went to an online concordance. The closest thing I could find was 1 Timothy 5:14, ". . . I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes . . ." (emphasis my own).

This simple discovery—that the "biblical" phrase "man is the head of the household" wasn't biblical at all—was enough to cause me to question most everything I had assumed I knew about the Bible. In fact, I changed majors from piano performance to biblical

studies. God, through Dr. Erdel, had kindled in me a passion for knowing what Scripture actually said and for understanding what it meant for those who read or heard it for the first time.

I didn't put much more thought into biblical equality, however, until sophomore year, when our biblical studies department asked Dr. Linda Belleville to come on staff. To many within the CBE community, she is well known as a contributor to *Discovering Biblical Equality*, Zondervan's *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, and her own *Women Leaders and the Church*. At first, she was yet another challenge to my worldview. My patriarchal beliefs about women had softened some, but I still had many years of fundamentalist Bible training under my belt. And, I have to confess, I let it get to me. I avoided a class taught by Dr. Belleville for two semesters. Somehow, I had convinced myself that by taking one of her classes I was endorsing some twisted view of Scripture.

But, by junior year of college, I had finally been humbled enough to realize I didn't know all there was to know about Scripture. I couldn't help but want to learn from Dr. Belleville; the level of training, expertise, and experience she had to offer was impressive. I enrolled in her Gospels course, and it didn't take long for me to realize that Dr. Belleville was not only a good professor, but she was also better than most! Teaching is usually about conversation, and that is exactly what she offered—discussions on those difficult, messy, and sometimes contentious teachings of Scripture.

I knew that my mind had begun to change on what the Bible said about marriage and gender roles when my older brother had me listen to an MP3 of a sermon on relationships. It followed the typical pattern of quoting Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5, using these passages as texts to prove that it was the husband's responsibility to spiritually, emotionally, and physically provide and care for his wife. When I gave my brother back the MP3 player, I said, "Thanks, but I really don't agree with what this pastor has to say."

Minutes later, I found myself at the dining room table, defending myself against my brother, his wife, and my mom. Bibles flew open, fingers jabbed at people and at verses, and I soon realized that their level of emotional attachment to this debate far outweighed my cognitive ability to argue back. The conversation ended when my

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brother simply walked away from the table, while shaking his head and saying, “Well, colleges just get more liberal as time goes on. It’s a shame that they’re teaching these things to you.”

I knew I had to do some research on this topic before I ever brought it up again. I went to Dr. Belleville, who pointed me in the direction of the library and to *Discovering Biblical Equality*. A couple of weeks later, I found myself reading it on a beach in Florida.

Even the act of reading this book was enough to arouse suspicion in my friends. Two of my fellow ministry students also on the spring break trip asked me to take a “long walk on the beach” with them. Once we were out of earshot of the rest of the group (which included my then-girlfriend Emily), I was immediately assaulted with questions and concerns about where my theology was going. “We know you care about Emily,” they said, “but doesn’t that include taking care of her spiritually, of being willing to take responsibility and being the head of the household?”

Later I found out that the girls had also taken Emily aside and asked her the same sort of questions. “What if he doesn’t take care of you like he should? What if he makes you responsible for everything in the household?”

When I returned from spring break, I asked Dr. Belleville, “What on earth makes everyone so scared of this topic?”

“Because they don’t know any other way to handle it.”

I realized that what I was dealing with—with my family and with my peers—was mostly misunderstanding. A misunderstanding of Scripture. A misunderstanding of the people who see male and

female as equal before God. I myself had assumed the worst of Dr. Belleville, but instead found a great teacher and friend. My brother had supposed that my college had “gone liberal,” when, in fact, it was trying to teach Scripture the way it was meant to be understood.

In a matter of a few years I had completely changed my mind on biblical equality. What’s more, I was able to articulate why. I don’t know if my friends on the beach ever changed their minds about this topic,

but at least they got an intelligent response from me when they asked what was going on.

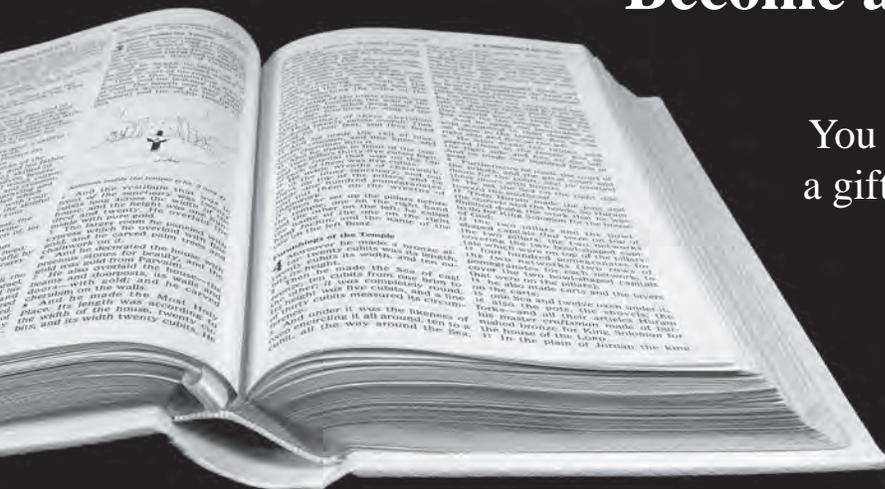
What changed? First of all, I was given permission to ask questions. Many in the church condemn questions, and I’m afraid it’s not because we understand Scripture so well, but rather because we don’t understand it well enough. When you’re allowed to confess you don’t know something, you’re simultaneously given the freedom to learn.

Secondly, relationships change minds. Dr. Erdel and Dr. Belleville never rammed a certain perspective down anyone’s throat. But by getting to know them and comprehending their love for God and for Scripture, I was able to discover for myself that what they said made sense. It wasn’t an attempt to escape the truth of Scripture, but rather an endeavor to live in it.

A few months after that spring break trip, Emily and I went hiking and got engaged. Together we decided to become one in marriage; together we decided to go into full-time ministry; and together we submit to our Lord and to each other, eagerly serving God’s kingdom. I’m glad I changed my mind.

I realized that what I was dealing with—with my family and with my peers—was mostly misunderstanding. A misunderstanding of Scripture. A misunderstanding of the people who see male and female as equal before God.

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Reconciling Two Worlds

CAROLE ELDRIDGE

I married a minister when I was twenty years old, just as I was finishing my degree in nursing. I had long felt a call to ministry, and I believed my training as a health care worker would enable us to minister as a couple to hurting people. My husband and I worked together in churches as God led, with me filling leadership roles suited to my gifts and interests.

We had an egalitarian marriage from the beginning. We believed that Scripture taught mutual submission, and that the dominance of any person over another, in marriage or otherwise, went against Christ's teachings. Our views on gender and relationships were often different from those held by people we ministered with, but initially our choice was accepted. We lived and taught servanthood founded on love, with men and women equal in all respects. My husband was my encourager, offering me opportunities for service and inspiring me by his confidence in my abilities.

A few years after we married, it became apparent that a shift was occurring in our denomination. We began hearing from our leaders and teachers that Scripture prohibited women from leading in church or home, and that God wanted men to be the authority in all matters. We heard at one conference after another that the scriptural model for families and churches required submissive women and decision-making male leaders. Complementarianism became the approved model, and other views were deemed to go against God's order for the world.

We tried earnestly to conform to this model, even though it felt awkward to us both. I dropped from leadership roles at church, and with our two children I continually deferred to their father as the decision-maker and spiritual leader. I felt like I was abdicating my responsibilities, but the lessons I heard from our denomination were clear and definite, so I did my best to follow them. We believed that the people holding positions of authority in our churches and in our denomination must know more than we did about such matters. We saw apparently successful marriages that seemed to conform to the approved model, so it made sense to follow their example. I taught complementarianism to the women in our local church, and strived to live it.

Meanwhile, I was doing well in my career. I started health care businesses, worked hard to make them successful, and then sold them to bigger companies. I became chief executive officer of a multi-state corporation and then senior vice

president of a large publicly held national firm. My husband was also succeeding in his world, assuming ministry positions in successively larger churches and then moving into a denominational role with wide influence. Our lives were very full, with enormous demands, but in our respective work worlds we were happily using our gifts. The problem was that the more leadership I took on in the secular world, the wider the gap became between who I was at work and who I was expected to be at church and home.

I tried to find ways to reconcile the two worlds. I was traveling a lot, speaking at national conferences, and finding myself with previously unimagined opportunities. Yet I still carried the work burdens of the household and was the main caregiver for our children. Paradoxically, I continued pushing decision-making onto my husband. He didn't want the role I was trying to force on him any more than I wanted to be subservient. I was fulfilled at work and frustrated at home; conflicted and confused.

As my work responsibilities grew, my husband and I finally realized we had to rethink our division of labor. We worked things out so that everyone pitched in to keep our home on an even keel. We took on nontraditional roles in which we had strengths: I managed the money, while my husband cooked and decorated. We resumed our collaborative approach to decision-making. We moved back into the egalitarian marriage we were most comfortable with, working as a team for the health and security of our family, at least as far as tasks, finances, and everyday decisions were concerned.

However, I still wanted to follow my church's teachings, so I continued trying to conform in other ways. I stopped leading our children in prayer and Bible study. I left that to my husband, although my resentment grew as I felt he wasn't doing the right things. I wanted him to provide spiritual leadership as I defined it, which meant I was asking him to take on responsibilities God had actually given me. As I look back on

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this, I am particularly ashamed of abdicating this responsibility to help lead my children in spiritual growth.

I continued trying to conform to expectations at church. Putting on the cloak of a submissive woman, however, became more and more burdensome as time went on. I felt a stranger to myself at the denominational gatherings I attended, smiling and pretending to be content with being on the sidelines. On more than one occasion I wanted to shout, “I have abilities that could help this organization, but I cannot contribute because my ideas are not welcome!” I identified with an acquaintance of ours, a chief financial officer for a major banking system, who left her church after being told she could not serve on the finance committee because that level of decision-making was reserved for men.

As I led my companies—and as it became apparent that the best, most loving, and most practical model for our family was egalitarian—I became increasingly conflicted. My own lived experience of what was right for me and for my family was in direct contradiction to the things we were being taught, and I couldn’t make sense of why what I felt and lived were so at odds with what God supposedly wanted.

One morning the conflict inside me came to a breaking point. As I was entering one of our branch offices, I was stopped by an employee who was waving a page of *The Wall Street Journal* and wearing a wicked grin. “So,” my employee said, “are you going to start being a submissive woman now?” I didn’t know what she was talking about, but I soon learned. Our denomination had made a historic change to its statement of faith, adding language that affirmed the complementary view of men and women. Women were being told very publicly what our scriptural place was, and that we were to stay firmly in it or be out of God’s will. Although I knew this was the message being taught in many of our churches, it had never before been the official position of the denomination. Now it was, and my internal conflict finally had to be faced.

One thing was clear: I could not continue to lead my hypocritical double life. I either had to find some way to reconcile my personal experiences, sense of calling, and abilities with the scriptural teachings that seemed to deny women an equal place in the world, or I would abandon my faith. I could no longer live with the inconsistencies, and I no longer wanted to follow a God who seemed to want to make me a second-class citizen.

Not long after this, our denomination declared that all the ministers holding denominational posts would be required to sign a document affirming their agreement with the revised statement of faith. This was a difficulty of another level entirely. My husband was supportive of my journey, and together we were exploring other ways to understand the confusing scriptural passages about women. But he did not feel as strongly as I did, and now he had to choose between keeping his job and making his wife happy. I actually threatened to divorce him if he signed it, although we both knew that was an empty threat.

He signed, not knowing any other way to keep his job, and feeling that I was making too big an issue of it anyway. He said I should just learn to ignore this particular teaching and make the best of the other good things our church offered. On most days, I thought he was right, and that it was very unloving of me to expect him to change his career because of my struggles with principles that millions of other people believed. On other days, I knew this was a teaching I couldn’t ignore, because it meant living my entire life as a lie.

We continued studying, reading, and praying to achieve a proper understanding of Christian gender roles. Someone recommended Dr. Bilezikian’s book, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says About a Woman’s Place in Church and Family*, and I read it eagerly. My excitement grew the more I read, because here was a respected Bible teacher giving a reasoned picture of God’s true view of women, based soundly on Scripture. I experienced enormous relief as the puzzling inconsistencies in my head and heart began to dissolve. I understood at last the overarching principle of God’s empowerment of women through the centuries, his encouragement of our gifts, and his liberation of our gender from the restrictions placed on us by culture. I began to feel whole again and affirmed in my leadership abilities, instead of feeling out of God’s will. I could finally accept what I knew in my heart—God gifted me as a leader, and he wants those gifts used in his service.

My husband, however, pleased that I was settling things in my own head, put the issue aside for a few years. During that time, pressures at his job to conform to increasingly rigid theological positions led him to start looking for alternatives. As he followed God’s prompting away from his denominational role and into another area of ministry, he came across another of Dr. Bilezikian’s books, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness*. The picture of God as community, and our call to community, transformed my husband’s view of how God wants us to operate, including how God views people in community, male and female as equal contributors to the whole.

As God continued bringing us the books we needed to read, I found CBE. I cried as I realized there was an entire organization devoted to helping people like us. My husband, after much agonizing, deliberation, and prayer, left his denominational position and stepped out on a risky ministry venture that was more compatible with our new understanding. He even began, slowly and cautiously, to quietly champion women in ministry leadership.

Interestingly, sometimes I still have to remind myself that it’s okay to lead, okay to step out and be in front at church and home. I have to give myself permission to be a whole person everywhere, not just leading at work but also in God’s kingdom. Yet, I am convinced that God does not want to relegate me to the margins of life. God wants me and other women in the thick of things, changing our worlds for the better.

A Bridge to Meaning and Ministry

KATE A. JOHNSON

“I was born. Whether or not that is of consequence is yet to be determined.”

I still remember writing those words for a high school creative writing assignment. I had not yet determined if my life was relevant or even necessary. Those thoughts were not new to me; they had haunted me for as long as I could remember. Why?

My mother was eighteen years old when I was born. I was the second child of three girls. When I was eighteen months old, she left us for good, leaving me with a deep emptiness since my mommy didn't love me or want to see me. Even though my father had custody, he worked full time, and so we were sent to live with an aunt and uncle. It was then that the sexual abuse by my uncle began.

I already felt unimportant being abandoned, and the message I received from the abuse was that a girl's worth was tied to what she could do for men; girls were objects to be used. That belief continued as my father remarried, divorced, and remarried again, with sexual abuse not only continuing by my uncle, but also later on by other male relatives. At age seven, my sisters and I were living with my father and second stepmother full time. The lessons of the subjugation of females were reinforced daily in our home. Only the male voice counted — specifically my father's voice—and when my brother was born, his voice counted, too. Mine did not; I was told I was a stupid girl and that girls were “less than” boys. My father's abusive treatment grew worse, and I lived in a constant fear that ruled my life. “Yours is not to reason why, yours is not to give reply, yours is but to do . . . or die” was his adaptation of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” It was a mantra that ruminated so often that after a while he really didn't need to repeat it. My role in life was to serve and fulfill the needs of the male species and keep my opinions to myself. Since I equated my view of God with my father, I concluded that God didn't care about me (or females). I didn't matter to anyone and had nothing worthwhile to say. I believed that I was too stupid to go to college, and, with so little self-worth and a desperate desire to matter to someone, at age seventeen I married a man who seemed different. He was not, and his views and treatment turned out to be even more demeaning and abusive than those of my father and male relatives. I resigned myself to a life of suffering and abuse under male domination and headship.

Hierarchical views are a part of our culture; one doesn't have to go to church to learn them. However, when I did start going to church as an adult, the message was repeated. Men are the head of the house; they are the final authority in all matters. There was no option but to stay in an abusive marriage because I had been taught that Christians don't divorce. Trying to be a “good Christian wife” and be submissive in all things didn't stop the emotional and physical beatings, degradation, and rapes. I knew I would eventually die

psychologically under that oppression, but what choice did I have?

A mother can forget the baby at her breast. I know that first hand. And it leaves the baby with a sense of wrongness about who he or she is. But I also lived with another gnawing sense in my soul that knew that the way I was treated was wrong. It may have felt “normal” because it was the only thing I knew, but it never felt “right.” Buried under the layers of shame, worthlessness, and guilt, a Still Small Voice was trying to tell me that there was more to life, and that there was a meaning to my existence. Life had taught me not to trust anyone, including myself, so I didn't know whether I could trust the Voice or my interpretation of what he was saying. So I stayed silent and remained in my marital prison for almost twenty years. I had my first son, then my second, and then my third. They were my rays of hope in a life of despair. I loved them and held them dear and cared so deeply about them. I worked hard to make their lives worthwhile and full of meaning. Yet, while I held my precious boys, inside my little girl wounds were crying out, “Where was someone to hold me close? Why couldn't someone care about me?” One day, I learned the truth—Someone did care.

God showed me his love in a most amazing way. At the time, I didn't think it was so amazing. Oh, how I hated him that day. As I sat watching a video on abused children, God brought me face to face with my past. I began to wrestle with God. I dared him to face me! We didn't just wrestle overnight as Jacob did; we spent three days and nights wrestling. I screamed, raged, yelled, “Why didn't you do anything? Why was this my life?” As I sobbed with pains too deep for words, he waited patiently for me to tire out. When it ended, I was so exhausted that I could do nothing but tearfully wait and listen. God spoke to me and told my heart that he loved me. I began to understand that he cared about me and all who suffer. I realized he didn't hate females. Imagine that! In fact, he made me a female on purpose. I started a journey that day, one in which I began to believe that Voice from long ago — the One that would not be silenced. The One that told me I had just as much worth as anyone else. The One who told me I had meaning. The One who showed me I didn't have to live the way I was living. And he told me something else that day. He told me he would not waste a single tear I shed over the years and that he would use all that I went through to help others. I believed him, and still do.

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It was a long journey to believe in my own value, but as I did, changes occurred. As I learned the truth about God's tender mercy, a truth that included full equality for women, it became the bridge that rescued my faith. More than that, it redeemed my life. The Lord showed me that all the things I had been told by so many were wrong. Through prayer and study, God showed me that he wanted more for my life because my life mattered—I mattered. A hierarchical credence kept me from knowing the Lord's true design for men and women and perpetuated the over forty years of abuse I endured as a child and adult. Believing in biblical equality gave me the courage to seek freedom for myself and my three sons. I had found the bridge to meaning and still stand on its crest.

God's redemption became my source of strength. But he was not finished. My bridge to freedom and meaning included gaining the courage to, as a single mother with three children, go to college and graduate school. I found out the most amazing thing—I am not stupid! In fact, I graduated Summa Cum Laude with both degrees! It still astounds me sometimes—not that I could do it, but that for all those years I believed I couldn't. I became a licensed counselor, specializing in helping those who suffer abuse, and I could see God's redemptive plan working in my life. God also restored my relationship with my dad, and for that I am richly blessed. But the words God placed on my heart years ago still echoed. I knew God would use the wounds from my past for good purposes, however I wasn't yet sure how. He was using me to help others, but the Still Small Voice was again whispering, Was there more?

God brought a wonderful godly man into my life, and in 2003 we were married. George is also a counselor and has helped men with relational issues for over twenty years. I primarily work with women and children and he primarily works with men, and both of us believe in biblical equality. Perfect match! He shares my heart when it comes to helping those who suffer. Together, we co-founded the Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, a nonprofit ministry committed to changing the lives of women and children. Our mission is to educate, equip, and empower the Christian community to be God's hands to rescue the oppressed, correct the oppressors, and promote respectful treatment of all. We offer help, hope, and healing through seminars, resources, support, and counseling, and we assist churches in beginning their own domestic abuse ministries. This is the ministry God placed on my heart many years ago. The task is great and the battle against patriarchy is fierce, especially because I, a woman, am the main presenter. Yet the ministry is making a difference in the lives of the women and girls in our Christian community and the community at large. We do, and we will continue to, build bridges to freedom. However, all-encompassing change in our world will only be brought through the bridge of biblical equality.

God's truth about women was my bridge to finding meaning in a life filled with abuse. This led my life experiences, pain, and healing journey to become my bridge to ministry. Embracing equality changed things—it changed me. Hierarchical views kept me a prisoner with no purpose. Biblical equality not only gave me freedom, meaning, and a vital ministry, it also saved my faith . . . and my life. Now, I know the answer to the statement I made so many years ago. I was born. . . and that is of consequence.

Call for Papers

Priscilla Papers Guidelines for Writers

The editor of *PRISCILLA PAPERS*, CBE's scholarly journal, is issuing a Call for Papers. The award-winning journal is published quarterly.

Intended Audience

- ▶ Original scholars/opinion leaders
- ▶ The serious Bible student
- ▶ Egalitarians needing encouragement and new knowledge
- ▶ "The Christian Academy"
- ▶ The thinking/questioning person in the pew/seekers

Manuscript/Article Guidelines

- ▶ Whenever possible, a query letter should be sent first, giving details of the subject and how the author plans to develop it.
- ▶ All articles must serve to advance the cause of CBE. (See our Statement of Faith on page 39.) We are seeking fresh readings of Scripture or theology that make original contributions to our understanding of God's call to women and men to minister together. Topics need not be confined to Bible study or theology, but may range in church history, missiology, etc.
- ▶ Please try to use inclusive language for God and inclusive language versions of the Bible, such as NRSV and TNIV. Inclusive language for humanity is, of course, expected in all submissions. We will treat all correspondence seriously and with respect.
- ▶ Articles should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines and should average 5,000 words in length (approximately 15 pages, double spaced, twelve-point font).
- ▶ Poets, artists, and illustrators are also encouraged to submit original, unpublished work.

Please send all query letters and correspondence to Deb Beatty Mel at DebBeattyMel@aol.com. Please mail ms. hard copies to Rev. Dr. William David Spencer at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Box 229, South Hamilton, MA 01982. After approval, please submit all email mss. in Microsoft Word or rich text format (*.rtf) to DebBeattyMel@aol.com. The author's name, address, phone number, email address, and short bio should be included at the beginning of the submission.

President's Column

ONE FLESH, ONE PURPOSE, ONE RANK

If you are like me, you never tire of celebrating with family and friends when a man and woman join their lives as husband and wife. Though we have all enjoyed countless weddings over the years, there always seems to be that one moment in a wedding ceremony where we feel the immensity of the occasion—when two become one flesh. As bride and groom commit before God and their community to love and serve one another, despite what life may bring, their boundless joy splashes over us. We feel a knot in our throats, a tear on our cheeks, and we reach for the hands next to us. Something within us recognizes that we have encountered the ecstasy of oneness before—in the early chapters of Genesis.

Standing amid the infinite pleasures of Eden, Adam's aloneness is the only "not good" in a perfect world. The parade of lively creatures marks his loneliness, his void. Among the many animals, Adam cannot find a suitable partner. What is missing? Adam needs a creature like himself, made of his substance—a woman. Notice he recognizes her immediately: "At last! This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). Adam declares their shared origins with these words, "I will call you woman because you came from my body." They are of the same stuff! Scripture emphasizes not the differences between Adam and Eve, but their unity of substance—their oneness of being. They share in a metaphysical substance because they are both created in God's image. They also share a physical being because Eve comes from Adam's body. Because of their shared origins, they also have a common destiny: a divine mandate to share authority in caring for the earth and being fruitful in it (Gen 1:27–31). Their shared being (their *ontology*) reveals a shared purpose (their *teleology*). Rank, authority, and hierarchy weaken the purpose of those who share the same substance.

The Apostle Paul makes the same point when describing ministry within the body of Christ. Those who share in a spiritual rebirth are also inaugurated as equal members of Christ's body—the church. Rank, authority, and hierarchy are unnecessary among those born of the same substance—the Spirit. Paul was certain that God was building a New Covenant people, with Jesus as head and you and me as joint members of Christ's body.

Scripture emphasizes not the differences between Adam and Eve, but their unity of substance—their oneness of being.

That is why Paul does not hesitate to celebrate the woman Junia as an apostle. Nor is he reluctant to require respect for Phoebe as a deacon and *prostatis*, or "leader," in the church of Cenchrea. Scripture records the service of teachers like Priscilla, and house church leaders like Lydia, Chloe, Nympha, and Apphia. Slaves, Gentiles, and women serve equally with free people, Jews, and men in the purposes for which God had called and gifted them because they too are born of the same Spirit.

Likewise, in his teaching on marriage, Paul reminds husbands to love their wives as they love their own bodies. They share the same substance! Ten times Paul reminds husbands to love and to have tender empathy for their wives as a one-flesh relationship requires. Again, authority, rank, and hierarchy are unnecessary among those who share the same body, the same substance. To emphasize the one-flesh union between husband and wife, Paul quotes Genesis 2:24: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." Just as all Christians submit to one another (Eph 5:21) because they are born of the same Spirit and are joined together in the same body, the church, so too are husbands and wives "one flesh." Therefore, husbands and wives submit to one another (Eph 5:21) as one flesh, as husbands nurture and love their wives as they do their own flesh, because her body is his, and his body is hers (a point Paul also stresses in 1 Cor 7:3–7).

The only authority Christians have over one another is to love and serve each other, just as the emphasis of Ephesians 5 is not on the authority of husbands, but on their obligation to love their wives as they love themselves. Oneness of substance leads naturally to mutuality, love, and a shared purpose, underscored both in the early chapters of Genesis and also in Paul's teachings on redeemed relationships among Christians. While some wish to ascribe authority and rule to male headship in marriage, to do so misses Paul's point, beginning with Ephesians 5:21. Headship, for Paul, is an opportunity to imitate Christ, who, though Lord of heaven and earth, came not to rule, but to lay down his life to serve and love others.

What might husbands expect in Christ's New Covenant community? They can anticipate a cross, a place to lay down their cultural authority and to concern themselves with sacrificing their lives for the needs of their wives; loving them as their own bodies, just as Christ loved the church. In Christ, husbands now exalt with Adam, "At last! This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh! I love her as I love myself. We are one flesh. We share the same substance and therefore a common purpose." Authority, rank, and hierarchy are unnecessary among those who are born of the Spirit, and also contrary to the very nature of a one-flesh union. This is part of the newness of life made possible through Christ!

MIMI HADDAD (PhD, University of Durham) is president of Christians for Biblical Equality. She is a founding member of the Evangelicals and Gender Study Group at the Evangelical Theological Society, an adjunct professor at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, and an adjunct associate professor at Bethel University, Saint Paul, Minnesota.



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.

Opposing Injustice

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.

Envisioned Future

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.

Statement of Faith

- *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.
- *We believe* in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.
- *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.
- *We believe* that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society.
- *We believe* in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as God's design.
- *We believe* that, as mandated by the Bible, men and women are to oppose injustice.

CBE Membership

CBE membership is available to those who support CBE's Statement of Faith. Members receive CBE's quarterly publications, *Mutuality* magazine and *Priscilla Papers* journal, as well as discounts to our bookstore and conferences. Visit our home page and click "Membership" for details.



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Membership Fees *(all fees are in US dollars)*

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$49 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$129 |
| Household | <input type="checkbox"/> \$69 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$184 |
| Low Income* | <input type="checkbox"/> \$27 | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Subscription Only** | <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$115 |
| International Members | 1 Year | 3 Years |
| Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$59 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$154 |
| Household | <input type="checkbox"/> \$79 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$204 |
| Low Income* | <input type="checkbox"/> \$37 | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Subscription Only** | <input type="checkbox"/> \$49 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$140 |
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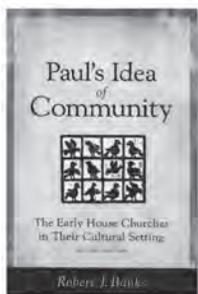
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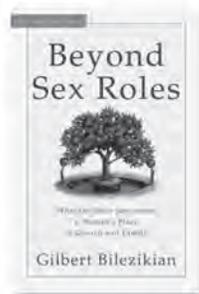
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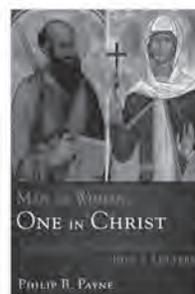
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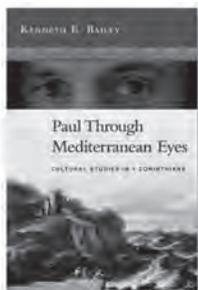
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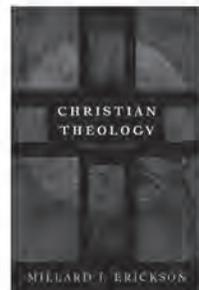
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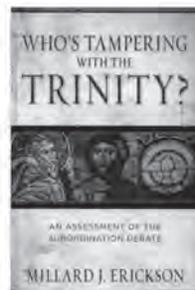
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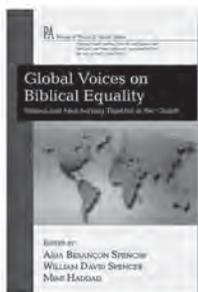
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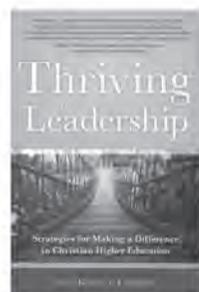
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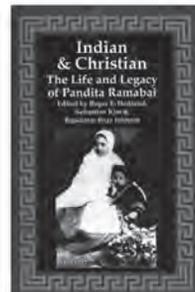
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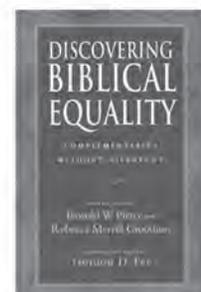
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