“PRISCILLA AND AQUILA INSTRUCTED APOLLOS MORE PERFECTLY IN THE WAY OF THE LORD” (ACTS 18)

Honoring the legacy of Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger

4 Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger: An Evangelical Legacy  Mimi Haddad
11 Travels with Cathie  Dorothy Irvin
13 Tribute to Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger: Her Life and Legacy on Issues of Abuse  Nancy Nason-Clark
18 The Legacy of Catherine Clark Kroeger as Teacher, Scholar, and Mentor  David L. Eastman
21 The Bible’s Nonabusive Intention for Family Relationships  Catherine Clark Kroeger
25 Book Review: Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes  Victoria Fahlberg
26 Book Review: Submission within the Godhead and the Church in the Epistle to the Philippians  Alan G. Padgett
27 Book Review: Man and Woman, One in Christ  Catherine Clark Kroeger
28 Book Review: No Stones: Women Redeemed from Sexual Addiction  Margaret English de Alminana
30 Poem: The Mother  H. Edgar Hix

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Editor’s Reflections

Chrisions for Biblical Equality’s founder, Catherine Clark Kroeger, was one of the most amazing people I have ever met. She defined the words “can do.”

She was a pioneer woman, a globally renowned statesperson who made things happen; for Cathie, to think was to do. I have always contended that her contributions in their international impact will be among the most significant to emerge from our generation: she started two absolutely essential organizations that are changing the world—Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) and Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH)—both aimed at bettering the lot of whole people groups oppressed for reasons of gender or vulnerability. But her compassion also extended and particularized to individuals. She reared dozens of foster children, along with her own, while enriching every life she touched, including mine. Countless people consider Cathie one of their dearest friends—my wife and me included.

Months would go by as all of us worked intensely in our own spheres of ministry, and then, with one phone call from Cathie, there was instant rapport, as if no time at all had passed. To be in Cathie’s presence was to have one’s vision instantly expanded. She was alive to countless areas of need, and she seemed to have an idea about how to fix everything, because everything seemed to be of interest and importance to her.

I remember once walking with her and a group of Gordon-Conwell faculty, spouses, and children in Ephesus. Looking over at a weather-beaten slab of stone, I muttered, “Hmmm, I think there might be writing on that.” “Let’s see,” Cathie said, peering over an intervening wall. “Why, yes, that’s a funeral inscription for a woman—and, oh, she was a bad girl. Oh, my, look at that . . .” and she rattled off a translation. Cathie with her trained eye deciphered out the eroded letters and spent the rest of the stroll reading out loud every sign and inscription all the way up the street.

Cathie’s knowledge of Greek was formidable and legendary among those who knew her. Her authoritative work on “head,” her classic book I Suffer Not a Woman, her many other articles and books, each of which is excellent, are but a small sampling of her overall knowledge. Teaching her classes without notes, she seemed to be able to answer any question by pulling information about any New Testament or classical issue out of her memory, which is reported to have been photographic. She not only seemed to know everything about her subject matter, but she also seemed to be everywhere.

One weekend, my wife, Aida, and I came in to do some teaching at her church. Cathie wasn’t there. She flew in that night, bustled down to breakfast, announced, “I have to go,” and headed off again to the airport. She seemed indefatigable.

In the last several years, bouts with Lyme and related diseases, however, began to take their toll on her rugged constitution. As this spring semester began, she taught her opening class at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s (GCTS) Hamilton campus, “Women in the Early Church,” and felt tired and ill at the end, but still insisted on driving home to Cape Cod to rest—a trip that could run three hours with traffic. Meanwhile, her next teaching trip to Egypt was announced. She was planning two services for the seminary’s chapel. She was working on plans for the upcoming Peace and Safety in the Christian Home conference and, at the same time, completing for Wipf and Stock publishers a new book manuscript, pulling together her vast knowledge and her enlightening photographs on the meaning of “head” in the New Testament. She had also delivered to me the article that appears in this issue of Priscilla Papers to help introduce her newly published co-edited book on combating abuse, which has just now appeared from the House of Prisca and Aquila Series (HPA) of Wipf and Stock (and is reviewed in this issue). And those are only the things I knew about through our connection in GCTS, CBE, PASCH, and HPA.

The recent devastating loss of her husband, Richard, a wonderful friend and leader in his own right, had severed a one-flesh relationship that stretched out to almost sixty years. Terrible weather that had dropped record snows on New England, spiraling temperatures from highs in the 50s to lows below zero, had been falling countless people with flu and pneumonia, and this had apparently been exacerbating the difficulties in her already taxed system from the effects of Lyme disease and its accompaniments, the crushing demands of her great schedule, and the burden of grief of her recent loss. All of this was taking a toll to an extent none of us, perhaps not even Cathie herself, realized.

After all, Cathie was Cathie, a force of nature in herself. Few thought of her as an octogenarian—she was too alive, too brilliant, too innovative, too courageous. And, then, suddenly, she was gone—gathered up in the everlasting arms to join her husband and her Lord on Valentine’s Day, February 14, 2011.

What she left undone was now for others to do. In true Catherine Clark Kroeger fashion, her last words were “book outline.”

It was like a telephone call with Cathie. Anyone who ever called her knows that you had to get the reason why you called into the first minute, or Cathie would start right in on a multitude of issues and then suddenly announce, “Oops, I’ve got another call—I’ve got to go,” and she was gone. And now, just like that, she has heard another call, and she is gone.

Goodbye, dear sister Cathie. We’ll be seeing you again.

And Cathie—thank you for everything.

Love with gratitude from your brother in Jesus,

(With contributions and affirmation by your sister in Christ, Aida)

This editorial is adapted from the tribute I had the privilege to deliver at Catherine Kroeger’s funeral service at Brewster Baptist Church in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and then again at the memorial service held in her honor at the Kaiser Chapel of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Hamilton, Massachusetts.

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Friends and family mourn their loss

If you were blessed enough to attend one of the many memorial services honoring the life and legacy of Catherine Clark Kroeger (1925–2011), you undoubtedly caught a glimpse of a Christian leader whose prodigious ministries touched the lives of thousands. Family members, foster children, friends, colleagues, and members of the community remembered how Cathie’s faith directed her copious talents and energy. Cathie gave of herself on behalf of others, not only through the ministries she inaugurated, including Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) and Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH), but also through her church, denomination, neighborhoods, and academic societies.

At the service I attended in St. Paul, Minnesota, it was abundantly clear that we were commemorating a leader who stands as part of a unique evangelical tradition. Cathie embodied the evangelical belief that God speaks through Scripture, that the cross redeems all of life, and that we are called to live out vigorously our reconciliation with God and others in word and deed. Cathie’s utter devotion to these theological ideals places her beside evangelicals such as Pandita Ramabai, Frances Willard, and Katharine Bushnell.

When CBE decided to dedicate this issue of Priscilla Papers to Cathie’s memory (she often reminded me that her friends call her Cathie), it seemed important to consider Cathie’s life and ministry within a historical context. What follows, then, is a historical assessment of Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger’s contributions as part of a larger and thoroughly evangelical ethos, beginning first with a working definition of the term evangelical. From here, we will observe how females pioneered and enlarged the evangelical movement, though their leadership and initiatives were eventually censured and restricted. Finally, we will observe how Cathie’s theological convictions were parallel to those of the early evangelicals so that she naturally gravitated to the very fields these early evangelicals had planted. With her broad shoulders and strong mind, she lifted the Greek and Hebrew texts over which Katharine Bushnell and Pandita Ramabai had labored for years and resumed their work as an evangelist and activist. Working without much rest, Cathie furthered our understanding of a loving God who speaks on the pages of Scripture to bring healing and restoration to a creation made new through the cross.

An evangelical tradition

What do we mean by evangelical? According to Mark Noll, an American historian of the evangelical movement, from its early usage, the word evangelical referred to the good news of Christ’s completed work on Calvary.¹ Derived from the Greek word euangelion, the word was used synonymously by the early church for the gospel.²

During the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther seized the term evangelical to contrast the truth and power laden in the cross with the indulgences sold by the church. Inasmuch as Luther represents a return to the good news of Calvary, the Reformation was also an evangelical movement, Noll suggests.³ Here, we use the word evangelical in its most basic and fundamental sense—to connote the good news of the cross.

Repeatedly, the term evangelical was associated with renewal movements, because it meant a return to Calvary. From Philipp Spener’s Pia Desideria and his call for reform and holiness to the revivals that swept the British Isles and the United States during the eighteenth century, these evangelical revivals were, according to Noll, “not only intense periods of unusual response to gospel preaching,”⁴ but were also linked with unusual efforts at godly living which “marked the origin of a distinctly evangelical history.”⁵ The evangelical revivals of the 1800s are a prime example. Their leaders were laden with theological convictions which, as Noll notes, directed the lives of adherents.⁶ To be touched or renewed by these revivals was not merely an intellectual exercise or an assent to theological propositions. It signified that, of course, but it also meant that, by affirming these propositions, you had crossed the sharpest line in life and were therefore expected to become a better person. You were to live out the gospel in word and deed. As William Marsh noted in 1850, an evangelical Christian is one who “will aim, desire, endeavor, by example, by exertion, by influence, and by prayer to promote the great salvation of which [they are the] happy partaker.”⁷

David Bebbington, a British historian, was the first to identify the core qualities that characterized the early evangelical movement and which constitute an evangelical DNA.⁸ They are: (1) conversionism, “The belief that lives need to be changed”⁹; (2) activism, advancing the gospel through effort; (3) Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible, “that all spiritual truth is to be found on its pages”;¹⁰ and (4) crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross—an atonement that reconciles sinners before a holy God.¹¹ Called “Bebbington’s quadrilateral,” these four principles capture the theological concerns of early evangelicals—priorities advanced by both men and women. Their organizations, Bible institutes, hymns, sermons, literature, hospitals, and social activism on behalf of slaves, women, and children were driven by these theological convictions, qualities that represented God’s renewing work in history. These four characteristics represent a degree of spiritual health. When one or more is missing, it not only diminishes the good news to which the term evangelical refers, but may also indicate a degree of spiritual malnutrition—that something vital is missing.
Though their names and achievements are often overlooked, females not only pioneered the theological distinctives of the early evangelicals, they also came to hold astonishing places of leadership and service within prominent evangelical initiatives. While their leadership was contested and restricted after 1930, the contributions of Catherine Kroeger not only exemplified the theological priorities of the early evangelicals, but also extended their biblical scholarship and social activism.

The early evangelicals

Conversionism. The early evangelicals believed that, since conversion marks the deepest change in life, those who are the happy recipients of Christian conversion are themselves called to evangelistic work—to leading others to the victories of Calvary. As Bebbington notes, because the "line between those who had undergone the experience and those who had not was the sharpest in the world,"11 the early evangelicals were pressed to engage all converted souls in the task of evangelism, even if it meant challenging cultural taboos such as giving women and slaves new positions of leadership and freedom. The priority they gave to evangelism loosened the grip of ethnic and gender prejudice within the body of Christ.

Consider William Bell Riley (1861–1947), founder of Northwestern College in Saint Paul and founder and president of the World's Christian Fundamentalist Association. Riley was also pastor for forty years of Minneapolis's First Baptist Church—the largest church in the Northern Baptist Convention. Early in his life, Riley heard one of the greatest evangelical leaders in our country speak: Frances Willard (1839–1898). After hearing her describe the desolation suffered by women and children at the hands of alcoholic fathers, Riley said that every speech against it would be justified, no matter who made up their assemblies, and would be approved and applauded by that heavenly assembly of saints and angels when, in defense of all that is true, a suffering woman feels compelled to break the silence and speak against it.12

So assured was Riley of women's call not only to advance the gospel, but also to address social concerns such as domestic violence, he was ready to release women to public ministries. In 1902, when Riley founded his Minneapolis Bible Institute, the doors were open to women, and women graduates served in important ministries such as the China Inland Mission. Newspaper reporters were fond of documenting the work of female graduates who were pastors over congregations around the country and who, despite many challenges, received the unequaled affection and appreciation of their communities. Riley was prepared to oppose gender bias in order to support their education and ministries.

Activism. Because conversion leads to the clearest change in life, a converted person is one whose newness of life is exhibited in word and deed. As Bebbington notes, "A converted character would work hard, save money and assist [one’s] neighbor."13 Consider the ministry of Catherine Booth (1829–1890), a powerful preacher and a tenacious inner-city missionary. Together with her husband, William, she worked among the poverty-stricken people of London's East End. Booth's evangelical priorities are unmistakable. She could not separate her evangelism—leading the lost to Christ—with her activism to rescue young girls from prostitution. Booth traveled back and forth between prostitutes living in London's East to the West End, where she lobbied Members of Parliament to raise the age of consent from seven to thirteen years of age.14

Evangelism and activism were also inseparable in the ministry of Pandita Ramabai (1858–1922), a convert of a Salvation Army revival in India. Ramabai spent fifteen years translating the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Marathi—a prominent Indian dialect. Founder of the Muki Mission in India, an interdenominational mission, Ramabai served needy women and children and was known as the best example of Christian faith in action. Housing more than 800 abandoned babies, the blind, the handicapped, unwed mothers, and the ill, Ramabai published an account of the desperate plight of women in India:15 the child brides, wife burning, temple prostitutes, lack of education, and more. She could not separate the gospel from serving the oppressed. As with Catherine Booth's perspective, evangelism and activism were inseparable in the ministry of Pandita Ramabai.

Frances Willard, who had made such an impression on William Riley, was one of the most popular women in the United States in her day, second only to Queen Victoria. When she died, 30,000 gathered to mourn, while flags flew at half mast in Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. A convert of a Methodist revival meeting, Willard was president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), considered the largest women's organization in the nineteenth century. The WCTU was comprised of an army of females, northern and southern, devoted to evangelism, abolition, temperance, and suffrage.

Willard was also president of Evanston Ladies College, which became Northwestern University. She was prominent for her work against prostitution. She called for laws against rape and domestic violence; she also begged fashion designers to eliminate the thin waistlines that harmed women's bodies. She encouraged women to wear baggie bloomers and to learn to ride a bicycle. Her passion for conversion and the gospel, for Scripture and Christian activism, were inseparable from her commitment to Christ—ideals that embodied in the mission of the WCTU and evangelicalism as a whole. Activism, like conversionism, was the responsibility of all those who had crossed that sharp line that marks the deepest change in life. For the early evangelicals, the response to conversion was the pursuit of holiness personally and corporately, keenly noted in the lives of Catherine Booth, Frances Willard, and Pandita Ramabai.

Biblicism. During the evangelical awakening of the 1800s and 1900s, which included successful ministries of women and slaves, Christians began to question the presumed inferiority of these two groups. They did so through a Biblicism that comprised the third ideal precious to evangelicals—for evangelicals love Scripture.

The early evangelicals were Biblicists of the highest order, and it was to Scripture that they appealed when considering the social issues of their day. Scripture guided their faith, their lives,
and their social engagement. Their high view of Scripture made the issues of slavery and women's preaching extremely challenging. For years, evangelicals engaged one another in a debate over Bible words and over methods of interpreting Scripture. Though divisive, this biblical exchange was also enormously productive in developing the first whole-Bible approach that viewed women as fully human and equal to men in being as well as in function or service. Thus, between 1808 and 1930, evangelicals published at least forty-six biblical treatises on gender and service from different branches of the church. These documents signify the emergence of the first wave of feminism—a deeply biblical movement and one that drove the evangelical causes that included suffrage and abolition.

Their belief that God speaks to each generation through Scripture led to a whole new assessment of human ontology. They asked: How does our rebirth in Christ, as male, female, slave, and free, impact our service as Christians in the world? As they answered this question biblically, they also developed not only a whole-Bible approach, but also a Christian worldview that extended to women and slaves positions of service and leadership. By expanding their vision, they represent a radical departure from previous generations of Christians whose patriarchal and racist assumptions went unchallenged. The exegetical work of the early evangelicals inaugurated an egalitarian theology that opposed centuries of teaching presuming the inferiority of women and slaves.

The most extensive biblical assessment of gender was put forward by Katharine Bushnell (1856–1946), a prominent evangelical missionary, medical doctor, scholar, and leader in the WCTU. Working with the British evangelical Josephine Butler (1828–1906), Bushnell traveled to India and infiltrated brothels established by the British military. Bushnell and Butler aimed to bring back firsthand accounts to Parliament and so end the sexual slavery of women in India. While their work was successful, Butler eventually realized that, unless Christians come to see that God values women just as much as men, women will continue to be marginalized and abused. On her deathbed, Butler begged Bushnell to provide the world with a biblical understanding of the nature, value, and authority of women. Acquiring Greek and Hebrew, Bushnell studied every passage in Scripture that referred to gender—more than three hundred passages. Publishing her findings in a book entitled God's Word to Women, completed in 1919, Bushnell notes that the whole of Scripture views both males and females as equal in being and also in service, an observation frequently noted in the early chapters of Genesis. Beginning here, Bushnell concluded that both Adam and Eve were equally created in God's image, and both were equally called to be fruitful and to exercise a shared dominion in Eden. Eve was not the source of sin, and God does not curse women because of Eve. Rather, it was Satan, not God, who inspired the domination of men over women. God extends leadership to those who do what is right in God's sight, regardless of their gender, birth order, nationality, or class.

In assessing the teachings of Paul, Bushnell determined that the apostle affirmed the authority and leadership of women, provided that their leadership was neither domineering nor abusive (1 Tim 2:12); that those who teach must advance the gospel (1 Tim 2:11–12; Acts 18:26; Rom 16:1–5, 7, 12–13, 15); and that, when women pray and prophesy in public, they must not be disruptive, either by their clothing or through their chatter (1 Cor 11:5, 14:34). Ultimately, Bushnell locates her understanding of women's ontological status not in the fall, but in Christ's completed work on Calvary. A correct interpretation of Scripture as it relates to "women's social and spiritual status" should be determined in the same manner as "man's social and spiritual status," based on the atonement of Jesus. Bushnell said that we "cannot, for women, put the 'new wine' of the Gospel into the old wine-skins of 'condemnation.'" For Bushnell, both men and women are renewed by the cross, an empowering that equips both for ministry. Crucicentrism. A fourth and final distinctive of the early evangelicals was their crucicentrism—a vibrant passion for the cross and all that Christ accomplished on Calvary. The early evangelicals were, as Bebbington observes, some of the most cross-centered Christians in all of history. Writing and preaching on Galatians 2:20, the early evangelicals more than any other group "aimed at bringing back, and by an aggressive movement, the Cross, and all that the Cross essentially implies." Perhaps the most prominent crucicentrist was the Welsh revivalist Jessie Penn-Lewis (1861–1927). It was her understanding of Calvary that offered women and those marginalized by society the fullest benefits through the cross. For Penn-Lewis, Calvary was a place of blessing and also reconciliation not only between men and women, but also between all ethnic groups and social classes. Those who have died with Christ on Calvary are grafted into Christ's body where hostilities that had formerly separated Christians were overcome by the sanctifying power of the cross. The cross was the source of both salvation and also sanctification. Penn-Lewis wrote:

The "old creation," in its form of "Jew and Gentile," must die to make way for a new creation "after the image of Him" that created them; where . . . there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for we are one in Christ Jesus. In the face of these words we cannot wonder that the Cross is a stumbling-block, and its message likened to a sword or knife, for it cuts deep into the very core of the pride of the old creation. God's cure . . . is not a superficial one. . . . Nothing but the Cross will bring about the unity He desires.

Penn-Lewis's cross theology not only captured a pivotal theological distinctive of the early evangelicals—that conversion represents a crossing of the sharpest line in life—but also shows
how their soteriology (what they understood about salvation) informed their ecclesiology (what they understood about the church). The fruit of Calvary opposes prejudices and self-centeredness and creates a rebirth, a taking on of God’s perspective now active in people. This was the vision of the early evangelicals: that the cross changes everything.

**A contested and restricted leadership**

Few today realize the number of women who founded, preached, or taught at the Bible institutes, mission organizations, or pulpits of the early evangelicals, despite the sweeping achievements they accomplished biblically and socially. Just this year, for example, I preached on the history of women at a prominent evangelical university. As is often the case, many students were delighted to learn of the historic women who shaped their own denomination or university, though some consider women’s preaching a rejection of biblical authority. Yet, as I have noted, the early egalitarians were the theological conservatives of their day. Obedient to Scripture, they went “into all the world” and preached “the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). In fact, they were so obedient that they outnumbered men in Bible institutes and on mission fields two to one. Though often single, evangelical women were frequently denied a place of leadership within their mission organizations. As a result, they founded their own mission organizations, funded their own work, and occupied all levels of service and leadership—efforts that led to the largest expansion of faith in all of history. However, by the 1930s, their own successful organizations were absorbed under traditional denominational missionary societies. As their service came under male control, they were frequently denied the positions of leadership they had previous enjoyed. As a result, younger women had fewer role models to emulate.

Removing women from prominent positions of leadership happened concurrently with a modernist and enlightenment challenge to Scripture’s accounts of the miraculous. Fearful of the encroachment of higher critical thought and its secularizing impact on culture and theological education, Bible institutes retrenched on their earlier support of female students.

After 1930, evangelicals placed less emphasis on an academic pursuit of Scripture. Therefore, fewer evangelicals were inclined to examine passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:33–34 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in their historical contexts or in their original languages, relying instead upon the “plain reading of Scripture.” Despite earlier support for women preachers, teachers, and evangelists, C. W. Foley, a professor at the Bible institute founded by William Bell Riley, argued that

> The position of teacher or preacher, in the public congregation, in itself implies superiority or authority over those who are taught; and the functions of this office, are, therefore, forbidden a woman, as inconsistent with the subordinate position that God assigned her. . . . [T]his does not bar her from the Sunday School class, daily Vacation Bible School, etc. but certainly closes the door of the public ministry of the church.

It is as plain as anything could possibly be, that a woman is not to take the oversight of the church, or publicly teach or preach in the man’s appointed place.

While work outside the home opened to women during World War II, once men returned from war, women were pressured back to home and hearth. Less familiar now with the leadership of evangelicals such as Pandita Ramabai and Frances Willard, evangelicals were as fearful of women preachers from mainline churches who were influenced by higher criticism as they were of women who pursued professional goals over marriage and family. Evangelicals whose feminism grew from Scripture were nearly eclipsed by second-wave feminists, rising out of the same cultural waters, but who placed their feminist ideas above Scripture.

Today’s egalitarians, like the early evangelicals, are Biblicalists of the highest order. Raised in thoroughly evangelical homes, and many now approaching their ninth decade, remember their parents urging them to discover, develop, and exercise their God-given gifts with complete devotion. Once adults, and after their children had grown, they began to notice a distinctly different message coming from evangelical churches. No longer did they hear a call to use one’s gifts vigorously for God’s glory regardless of gender. Now, the message was, if you are female, these are the ministries available to you, and, if you are male, these are the spheres in which you may serve. Where once all hands had been welcomed in the task of evangelism, churches and institutions had become places of gendered service. Concerned with such a truncated view of vocation and giving, today’s egalitarian pioneers began meeting and discussing how to respond to new gender limitations being set by such a view—none more than Cathie Kroeger.

**The vision of Catherine Kroeger: a new organization**

The autumn 1987 headline in *Priscilla Papers* announced, “New Organization Incorporated.” It was initially organized as “Men, Women, and God: Christians for Biblical Equality” because of its early affiliation with Men, Women, and God, International, based at the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity. The group shortened its name to Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) in 1988, after incorporating as a nonprofit charitable organization. One year later, CBE joined the National Association of Evangelicals.

As the 1991 summer issue of *Priscilla Papers* stated:

> The national organization of Christians for Biblical Equality began in the summer of 1987 when Catherine Clark Kroeger called together a group of people to pray and examine the need for evangelicals to be informed about the basic biblical teachings regarding equality of men and women of all races, ages, and economic classes.

After electing a board of directors, with Cathie serving as president, CBE’s first project was to develop a position statement, entitled “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” which established a biblical rationale for the shared leadership of men and women in
church, home, and society.40 “Men, Women, and Biblical Equality” was published in 1990 on the pages of Christianity Today, Today’s Christian Woman, the Reformed Journal, World Christian, and Faith Today.41 As a result, 1,500 people became members of CBE while 4,000 more were added to CBE’s mailing list. CBE’s academic journal, Priscilla Papers, first published in 1987, had within two years a circulation of 1,540. By 1990, CBE chapters were growing in five locations around the globe, and more than three hundred individuals registered for CBE’s first international conference at Bethel University in 1989. Cathie Kroeger not only gave leadership to these and other efforts, but her vision rarely strayed from those who are victims of abuse. She believed that the gospel is not the means of oppressing women, but constitutes the path of their liberation. Her commitment to conversionism, Biblicalism, and activism permeated Cathie’s work and restored, in significant ways, an evangelical faith that advanced the gospel in word and deed. Let us consider a few examples.

Conversion: The belief that lives need to be changed was as essential to the founders of CBE as it was to the early evangelicals. While meeting in the home of Cathie and Dick Kroeger in 1987, a core group developed CBE’s first mission statement, which not only affirmed Scripture as “the inspired word of God,” but also emphasized the teaching of Scripture—that all persons are sinful. Because of human sin, all people experience “shattered relationships with God, others, and self.” Yet, through Jesus, not only is eternal salvation available, but restored relationships are also “possible through faith in Christ.”42 CBE’s “Statement on Men, Women, and Biblical Equality” explains further that man and woman were “co-participants in the Fall.”43 One consequence of sin was the “rulership of Adam over Eve.” Yet, through Christ, “we all become children of God, one in Christ and heirs of the blessings of salvation . . . .” Declaring that lives are ruptured by sin but also redeemed in Christ was among the first projects under Cathie’s leadership. This deeply held evangelical proposition persisted throughout her writings.

Biblicism. When interviewed by Lola Scobey in 2000, Cathie explored the core values upon which she based her life, the first of which was an “adherence to the Scriptures.”44 Cathie advanced Biblicalism as a key priority of CBE and one to which she held throughout her life. CBE’s mission statement and the “Statement on Men, Women and Biblical Equality” give ample space in affirming the authority of Scripture. CBE’s mission statement declares that the Bible “is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice,” while the “Statement on Men, Women and Biblical Equality” begins with: “The Bible teaches that God has revealed Himself in the totality of Scripture, the authoritative Word of God (Matt 5:18; John 10:35; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21).”

As with the early evangelicals, Cathie’s publications and ministry initiatives were more closely “aligned with the evangelical activists and women preachers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than with the various non-Christian and liberal forms of feminism that developed in the latter half of the past century.”45 Though prominent liberal feminist scholars cannot proclaim passages they find oppressive to women “as the Word of God,”46 Cathie believed “that in the Bible God has truly spoken to us. If it appears oppressive, contradictory, and unjust, then there are questions that need to be asked, alternatives which need to be pursued; but it is still the Word of God, still to be heeded as the words of life.”47 Without hesitation or embarrassment, Cathie worked, as Katharine Bushnell did, to harmonize passages of Scripture that appear to subjugate women with those that reveal women’s equal dignity, service, leadership, and authority. Like Bushnell, Cathie’s ease with the ancient languages made this task all the richer, and her publications, like Bushnell’s, have undergone numerous reprintings—a testimony to their usefulness and enduring qualities.

Activism: Finally, we turn to activism—advancing the gospel through effort—in word and deed. Here, more clearly, Cathie’s connection to the early evangelicals is seen. An indomitable scholar and activist, Cathie could not separate her passion for the gospel with her devotion to rescue the abused. From the early articles published in Priscilla Papers, Cathie continually directed CBE’s attention to women who had been abused. From CBE’s incorporation as a nonprofit organization, Cathie endeavored to understand why so many Christian women have encountered violence and abuse and how we as the church might become agents of healing and reconciliation. As president of CBE, Cathie directed a significant portion of the organization’s energies to this challenge. In 1994, CBE held a conference with the theme “Women, Abuse, and the Bible.” There was an overwhelming response to this conference by women who had experienced abuse in a Christian marriage, family, or church. Within several years of this conference, Cathie had enough material to publish three separate volumes on abuse, gender, and faith.48 Ultimately, when Catherine Kroeger retired as the first president of CBE in 1995, she became founder and president of Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH), a nonprofit organization devoted to addressing domestic violence and abuse. PASCH provides resources to individuals, churches, and secular groups. More recently, many city- and state-run entities have turned to PASCH for assistance in addressing the rising challenge of gender abuse.

While CBE was established largely by academics to explore the biblical, theological, and historical material on gender, we were inevitably faced with the challenge of addressing abuse as well, simply by the sheer number of individuals who called upon us for help. Cathie knew, as did early evangelicals like Josephine Butler, that the challenge of abuse within the Christian home is often related to matters of biblical interpretation—discerning what is descriptive from that which is prescriptive in the Bible. After years of working to free abused women around the world, Josephine Butler and Katharine Bushnell began to see that the global abuse of women was inseparable from a devaluation of females that led to male dominance and female submission. Writ-
ing about her understanding of abuse, Bushnell argued that the abuse of women will not be overcome as long as "the subordination of woman to man was taught within the body of Christians."49 Butler and Bushnell agreed that

we must have the whole-hearted backing of the Christian church in our [work], and that we would not have it until men came to understand that a woman is of as much value as a man; and they will not believe this until they see it plainly taught in the Bible.

Just so long as men imagine that a system of caste is taught in the Word of God, and that they belong to the upper caste while women are of the lower caste; and just so long as they believe that mere flesh—fate—determines the caste to which one belongs; and just so long as they believe that . . . Genesis 3:16 [teaches] "thy desire shall be for thy husband, and he shall rule over you" . . . the destruction of young women into a prostitute class [will] continue.

But place Christian women where God intends them to stand, on a plane of full equality with men in the church and home, where their faculties, their will, their consciences are controlled only by the God who made man and woman equal by creation . . . then the world will become a much purer [place] than it is today . . .50

Like Katharine Bushnell, Catherine Kroeger offered an indomitable challenge to the hegemony of male authority which, when coupled with female submission, too often leads to abuse. Like Bushnell, Cathie worked to oppose the subjugation and abuse of women and to teach the biblical basis for the equal value, dignity, and worth of humans, male and female, in her more than ten published volumes and hundreds of articles.

Conclusion

Like the early evangelicals, Catherine Clark Kroeger searched the depths of Scripture to read what appears to restrict women through the more than one hundred passages that teach women's equal authority and service beside men. Like Ramabai, Bushnell, and Butler, Cathie showed in word, in deed, and through her biblical scholarship that authentic Christian faith truly is good news for women, liberating them from abuse through the message of Christ, to which all of Scripture points. May we stand on the shoulders of the early evangelicals and of Catherine Clark Kroeger, may we respect their service, and may we extend their important ministries for the sake of the whole church, and, indeed, the whole world.

Notes

21. Bushnell, God’s Word to Women, 39, 48. This observation alone challenges more than fourteen centuries of biblical scholarship.
22. Bushnell, God’s Word to Women, 75.
23. Bushnell, God’s Word to Women, 68, 75.
27. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 14ff.
28. Galatians 2:20 reads, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (NIV).
29. Gladstone as quoted by Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 14.
30. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, 14.
38. This material was based on interviews with CBE founders Cathie Kroeger, Alvera Mickelsen, and Gretchen Gaebelini Hull and was compiled by Lora Scokey and published by Sara Robertson in CBE’s Board of Directors Manual.
40. “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” written by Gilbert
Bilezikian, W. Ward Gasque, Stanley N. Gundry, Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, Catherine Clark Kroeger, Jo Anne Lyon, and Roger Nicole, has been published in twenty-six languages and has shaped gender policies and practices in hundreds of churches and several prominent evangelical organizations and denominations.

42. For the most recent version of CBE’s mission statement, see www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/statement-faith.
48. For titles dealing with abuse written by Cathie Kroeger and her colleagues, see equalitydepot.com/abuse.aspx.

CBE has been my lifeline. It has been a healing balm for my soul. —Mary, a CBE member

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What a joy it was to be around Cathie! We met seldom, and it was always too short. She had so much information and so many new ideas and insights to share that there was never enough time to do all the discussing we wanted to do. And, underneath the intellectual excitement of learning more about our faith, Cathie always had a related concern for the wellbeing of others.

I first met Cathie and her husband, Richard, in 1978 at a meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature and the American School of Oriental Research in New Orleans. I was giving a research report on spindle whorls, the small stone discs, each with a single perforation, from which all the textiles in the ancient world were made. I had a few of these ancient worked stones, and with me was a drop-spindle spinner, a woman skilled in using these tools, which were perhaps 5,000 years old. We had found sticks to put through the holes and had made working spindles with which the spinner demonstrated to the assembled archaeologists how wool or linen thread was spun. With this thread, all clothing and, in fact, all textiles were woven.

Cathie's interest in women in the Bible and antiquity brought her to this live demonstration of the work to which all women, from slaves and peasants to queens, devoted hours every day in the biblical period. From the "valiant woman" of Proverbs 31, to the weaving of Delilah, to "the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin," textile production is an important piece of the biblical background concerning women. Cathie and I saw that we had interests in common and exchanged addresses.

Coincidentally, a few months later, I obtained a teaching position at Saint Catherine University (at that time the College of Saint Catherine) in Saint Paul, Minnesota, where Cathie lived and studied classics at the University of Minnesota. She included me in the events of the Evangelical Women's Caucus, and I found out more about the missionary history of evangelical women. We were both working on the archaeology of women's leadership in the early church and from then on exchanged information and photographs.

Cathie and her husband took on the question of women's leadership roles in evangelical churches today, writing significant articles and books on biblical passages, always careful to use the most accurate (rather than the best known) translations of the Greek words. Cathie also wove her knowledge of early Christian archaeology into her study of the biblical text at hand, making a convincing case for women pastors and women senior pastors, always gently stated.

Several years later, Cathie put together a tour of Turkey, concentrating on historical and archaeological information about women before Christianity and in the early church. Twenty or more women, several men, and one small child traveled together on a bus for two weeks through Turkey: Istanbul, Ankara, Catal Huyuk, Hittite territory, Cappadocia, the Cilician Gates, An-
tioch, Tarsus, Iconium, Ephesus, and many other places familiar from Greek mythology and the letters of Paul, with Cathie giving a wealth of information at each site.

For many years, she had had an ecumenical concern, leading evangelical women's groups in the United States into convents for dialogue, so her tour of Turkey included a visit to a Catholic church in Iconium, in honor of Saint Thecla of Iconium, and even to the monastery/museum of Rumi, the famous thirteenth-century Muslim Sufi mystic. We always sang Christian hymns for about an hour when the bus first got going in the morning, and I occasionally read a Hittite tale as the relevant territory flashed by. Our Turkish bus driver said he had never experienced such a happy, good-tempered group of travelers.

One day, we were all sitting together in the garden of a restaurant overlooking the Hellespont strait, enjoying a lovely lunch, when Cathie looked back over many years and told us how she swam the Hellespont (as did Leander, visiting Hero) when she was young. She remained a strong swimmer all her life, practicing every day in summer and participating in an annual long-distance swim every year.

Cathie became the coordinator of the women's biblical study group for the Society for Biblical Literature and put together the annual meeting program for years, assembling women scholars to present their research on many different themes. She began to plan, with other women scholars, the Women's Study Bible and the Women's Bible Commentary.

The Society for Biblical Literature, although North American, customarily scheduled a summer meeting in Europe for Americans who happened to be in Europe and for European colleagues. One year, I was able to attend, stopping on my way home from a summer excavation in Jordan. What a surprise to meet Cathie in the lobby of a hotel in Heidelberg! She told me a new group was getting started, Christians for Biblical Equality. Today, that group, centered in Minneapolis, has a large international membership and is extremely active in producing and making available a vast amount of information about women in the Bible and early Christianity, counseling women affected by sexism in the

DOROTHY IRVIN has taught theology at several Catholic universities; published a book on the Old Testament and a commentary on the Sunday Scripture readings for the three-year lectionary cycle; and contributed articles to books, journals, and encyclopedias. She has been on the staff of an archaeological project in Jordan for nineteen years. Most recently, she has begun presenting, in the form of annual calendars, her work on the archaeological documentation of women in the early church who were deacons, priests, and bishops.
home or in the churches, and holding educational conferences in the United States and other countries.

She and many of her family members sometimes traveled to Italy in the summer, an event that included her grandchildren, her students at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and others. She had additional information to give on visits to the usual well-known catacombs and churches in Rome, and she included lesser-known sites, such as the underground sanctuary of the Cumaean Sybil near Puteoli and the funeral fresco of Bitalia, a fifth-century woman bishop shown celebrating the Eucharist, in the Catacomb of Saint Januarius in Naples. She skillfully positioned herself to block the ithyphallic fresco of Priapus from the eyes of her grandchildren as they entered the house where he is pictured, in Pompeii, and there were study sessions every evening in the hotel as the grandchildren discussed what they had seen and pasted the postcards they had chosen at each site into their scrapbooks.

For many years, Cathie had been conscious of the way the message of Jesus was sometimes twisted to seem to say that God gave males authority to dominate women and even physically abuse them. She could not read the Scriptures that way, and she early on became an advocate for abused women, teaching from the New Testament that abusive behavior was not part of the word of God. Early on, she worked with other women to provide protection for abused women and to reassure them that the good news of our salvation did not include approval and acceptance of mistreatment from family members. Jesus never said anything like that. This resulted in the founding of PASCH—Peace and Safety in the Christian Home—and several books on the subject. She also became a consultant to the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston when it wished to start a program for avoiding domestic abuse.

Her specialization in women's lives and women's values in the Bible and early Christianity, as well as her ecumenical outlook and willingness to collaborate with those of other denominations, resulted in her being asked to be part of a team helping the Sisters of Mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Roman Catholic women's religious order, to envision, on the basis of the Christian past, what the future might hold for them. She spoke to groups of these nuns in Iowa, Wisconsin, and Los Angeles.

When she announced a study tour of Egypt, principally for her students at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, but also for others, two of my friends and I quickly signed up. I had heard Cathie, at one of the early meetings of Christians for Biblical Equality, tell how she noticed, when she began college, that the workers in the dining hall, the cleaning staff, and the building and grounds maintenance crews did not go to church services on Sunday. They told her it was because they had to work on Sunday morning. She quickly reserved a room for Sunday afternoon and led them in Bible study and worship. They responded eagerly, and this project continued throughout her four years of college.

Her alertness in noticing the needs of African Americans and her ability to carry out a solution stayed with her throughout life. The focus of the Egypt tour was the Christian history of Africa, particularly for African Americans, who formed a large majority of the group.

We began by exploring current Christianity, the Coptic Christians, who have enthusiastic participation in Christian worship and education in spite of the fact that, as Christians, they are restricted by law to the job of garbage-pickers and must live steeped in the smell of the garbage dump.

We went by plane to Aswan and returned north on a Nile cruise ship, extremely comfortable and extremely well fed. In the evenings, Cathie presented slide lectures studying skin color and social status depicted in the tomb paintings of the pharaohs and their families and entourage in the historic temples and other buildings along the Nile. We found that the Egyptian artists had shown people in several different shades of skin, sometimes with people of different colors in the same working or social group. Pharaohs and the royal family, in fact, often showed variation from black to tan to yellow. Cathie did not find that this variation in color was tied to social status. On the contrary, the early Egyptians saw and painted differences, but did not use them as a way of grading people. This insight impressed all of us as a proof that color could be admitted and admired without being used negatively.

As we went south and came to Nubia, the African Americans in the group changed in their own eyes. They became happier and more self-confident. For them, the sight of black people, in the majority and in their original homeland, was liberating. At certain moments, blacks, whites, and Asians had tears of joy running down their cheeks as the realization hit them that people need not be captive to racial prejudice. Our changing mood was noted in the morning prayers and song sessions on the bus.

Some brought African clothing out of their suitcases and blended in with Africans on the street. Others bought bright garments at stands set up near where the ships docked. The group became much more colorful. Non-Africans bought a few items, too, and put them on.

Cathie's emphasis on Christianity in Africa, going back to the earliest records of evangelization in the book of Acts—Philip's instruction to Queen Candace's eunuch from Cush, and Priscà's instruction of Apollos of Alexandría—and following it through the Byzantine period to the Copts of today, made it clear that Christianity was not a "white man's religion" imposed on slaves to keep them silent. It was a most ancient heritage of the black people of Africa who could be confident that the message of Jesus was their own, brought to them almost two thousand years ago. Cathie's conviction, nurtured and acted on since her teenage years, had once again been realized.
Tribute to Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger: Her Life and Legacy on Issues of Abuse

Nancy Nason-Clark

I met Catherine Clark Kroeger over a ball of yarn, so to speak. The year was 1996. We had both been invited to a think tank on abuse. At the opening event, the twenty or so women present introduced themselves with a sentence or two and threw a ball of yarn to another woman who would then take her turn. As personal introductions were made by one woman after another, a web began to form in the midst of our circle. We were knitted together—the twenty of us present—by our interest in helping the Christian church wake up to the reality of abuse in our midst. I introduced myself as an evangelical by persuasion and a social scientist by vocation; I think I said something about teaching at a secular university and researching issues of abuse in families of faith. At the first break that followed our web-making, Cathie marched over to me, smiled broadly, and said in words I will never forget, “We need to work together!” And her words came to pass.

Our first book together, No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence, was published by InterVarsity Press in 2001 and launched at the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We had been serving together with the WEF task force on abuse. Here, we were prompted by the others on the task force to move quickly to get our ideas in print—prompted by the urgency that many women from around the world were anxious to get resources into their own hands and the hands of their pastors. Our sisters on the task force from Africa, the Caribbean, and India were especially enthusiastic about the project and encouraged our efforts.

A few years later, we wrote a second book for the suffering Christian woman, Refuge from Abuse: Hope and Healing for Abused Christian Women, published by IVP in 2004. Whereas No Place for Abuse was written primarily for pastors and those who walked alongside the women, men, and children who were hurting, Refuge from Abuse was intended as a resource for a woman as she journeyed from despair to hope. It outlined steps on the road to healing and wholeness with a particular emphasis on her journey of faith.

As soon as we finished writing the second book, Cathie was eager for us to bring together a small group of interested partners to launch a new organization devoted exclusively to highlighting the issue of woman abuse and other forms of family violence within the Christian community. In January 2004, a new evangelical organization was formed, called PASCH, denoting both the Passover, or time of new beginnings, and Peace and Safety in the Christian Home. In February 2005, PASCH held its first international conference in Newport Beach, California. Attended by 250 men and women, the conference sought to sound a call that would bring those interested in creating peace and safety in Christian homes across North America to one place at one time. A second conference was held in the spring of 2006 at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, just outside of Boston, Massachusetts. Based on several plenary sessions and workshops at these two conferences, an edited collection entitled Beyond Abuse in the Christian Home: Raising Voices for Change, edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger, Nancy Nason-Clark, and Barbara Fisher-Townsend, was published in 2008 under the imprint of the House of Prisca and Aquila series of Wipf and Stock.

Cathie’s desire to put into print what was transpiring at these conferences would not rest. She wanted to give authors who perhaps had never published before an opportunity for their voices to be heard. Her desire for more resources on domestic violence was only matched by her desire to mentor the next generation of evangelical voices for change—especially change in the lives of women and men who had been silenced for too long. As a result, a second edited collection has just been published, Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes: A Challenge to Churches and their Leaders. In fact, when I received word from Cathie’s grandson of her passing from this life to the next, Barb Fisher-Townsend and I were actually sitting at my kitchen table reading the page proofs of this latest edited book. In typical Cathie fashion, only days before her death, she had raised the topic of our next writing project. Cathie was always keen to be working on the next venture before the ink had dried on the last.

Catherine Clark Kroeger’s contribution to the literature on Christianity and abuse

In total, Catherine Clark Kroeger wrote or edited, together with others, six books on abuse and dozens of chapters and articles.1 That is an amazing legacy on a topic for which there has been such a concerted holy hush. She was adamant that the Scriptures taught peace and safety in the home and that God was on the side of the victim/survivor. By her words and her actions, she lived out the principle of the primacy of the Scriptures.

In Cathie’s mind, the Bible was clear: abuse was wrong, it was not part of God’s design for family living, and those who resorted to violence of any kind would be held accountable.

For her, peace and safety in the home was intricately linked to notions of manhood, womanhood, gender equality, and marital bliss. Cathie was so convinced of the centrality of God’s egalitar-
ian message—good news to women and to men—that she felt that, if only pastors and laypeople could be shown the Scriptures, and then believe them, that errant, abusive behavior would change. But interweaving Cathie’s strong belief in the primacy of the biblical message was her pragmatic approach to life. She was a doer. She was a voracious reader of the Bible and other scholarly material. She prayed. She listened to God’s call. And then she acted.

The various strategies that Cathie employed to advance the message of egalitarian biblical teaching, harmonious family relations, and God’s call to a changed life impacted her teaching, her writing, and her personal life. Her home was frequently a safe haven for someone in need of temporary refuge; her phone a place to receive comfort, referral suggestions, and prayer; her email a resource to those who were suffering, and the visits she made to prison, women’s shelters, and other meeting places evidence that Cathie “walked the talk.” Like the Methodists of old, the world was really Cathie’s parish. Women and men from many locations around the globe sought inspiration from her teaching, her writing, and her personal life of commitment and social action.

On several occasions, I accompanied Cathie on teaching ventures abroad—to Croatia and to India. There was a myriad of highlights for me while traveling with Cathie, but morning devotions topped them all. Almost every day, we would begin by reading the Scriptures together—well, to be honest, Cathie read and translated, and I listened with more intensity than I ever had in my whole life. She would get out her Greek Bible, and I would urge her to translate as she went. I knew this was something that very few people anywhere in the world could do with the same grace and ease as Cathie. I always felt that I was close to hallowed spiritual ground when this occurred. Cathie saw it as ordinary—couldn’t any self-respecting Christian woman do likewise?—but I did not. I knew that her love and understanding of what was being read was just a little deeper because she felt the language. I cannot imagine anyone anywhere in the world with whom I would rather share morning devotions than our beloved Catherine Clark Kroeger.

There were some minor challenges in travelling with Cathie. She believed in little sleep, for example. Allow me to share a couple of stories. On our first trip to India, we had a very busy speaking schedule. But Cathie wanted to ensure that we were also writing—not wasting any time. Since she went to bed rather early, she would often wake up in the early hours of the morning. On one occasion, at around 3:00 a.m., she whispered to me, as I was sleeping in the next bed, “Nancy, are you awake?” “I am now,” I replied. “Let’s see if we can write for an hour or so before the sun rises,” she suggested. I got my notepad, and we began to brainstorm about a chapter for our next book. Forty-five minutes later, her eyes began to droop, and she fell back to sleep. This is how Cathie lived her life: every waking moment was to be harnessed for good and for God. This lesson, though I have never fully practiced it as she did, I will take to my grave.

One story from our Croatian travels stands out. It involves a meeting that Cathie and I had with several people from the University of Zagreb, including the dean of law and the chair of the department of sociology. A Roman Catholic sister also joined the group, but, since she did not speak English, conversation with her was rather difficult. Cathie spoke German and then French in an attempt to discover a common set of linguistic tools with which to communicate with the sister. Then, she turned to me—quite astonished that she had not thought of this before—and said, “I shall try Latin. Surely, this is a language with which every nun has competence.” Without a strain, Cathie began to speak in Latin.

Catherine’s love of language and its written form—books—could not be overstated. Her expansive surroundings on Cape Cod included a separate library—replete with artifacts and more than 10,000 volumes. Cathie told me that, as a young girl, she learned to conjugate verbs as she baked bread with her mother. Never wasting a moment was clearly part of her cultural and family heritage. Time was precious. A person was accountable for how she spent her days.

The concept of accountability permeated much of Cathie’s writing on abuse. In particular, she felt that pastors—the spiritual shepherds of God’s flock on earth—were accountable for how they spoke about family living, how they conceptualized family and gender relations within it, and how they responded in the aftermath of domestic violence.

**Catherine Clark Kroeger’s own words**

I have included an excerpt below from our 2011 book *Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes: A Challenge to Churches and their Leaders.* It highlights several features of Cathie’s thinking about the Bible and her passion to help others understand what Scripture says about violence that occurs at home. Hear her words:

As we deal with delicate issues of domestic abuse, it is important to deal carefully and faithfully with the Word of God.

Commencing in the seventies, there began to be a growing awareness of the widespread existence of domestic abuse. Originally many of us maintained that no such evil was to be found among those who had been born again; but the evidence proved us wrong. It was evident that the gospel called us to minister to both victims and perpetrators inside and outside of the fold of faith. All too often there has been a vast gulf between those grappling with a profound social problem and the voice of the church.

Clearly Christians needed to rethink what the scriptures and the Fathers of the church were telling us about family relationships. Misconceptions have led to tragic forms of abuse and misery that call for correction. None are more susceptible to misinterpretation than the biblical statement that man is the head of woman. How often it has led to abuse! This was recognized very early in the life of the church. One such voice was that of the greatest early biblical exegete, St. John Chrysostom. He perceived that women are often wonderfully attuned to the concerns, needs, and emotions of those around them, and have a gift of responding sensitively and sympathetically. Their gifts enable them to create an environment of care and
loving support for the entire family. But abuse and brutalization deprive a wife of the ability to give freely of herself to those around her. Chrysostom wrote:

“For when she has been subjected to her husband through force, fear, and violence, it will be more unbearable and unpleasant than if she commands him with total authority. Why do you suppose this is? Because this force drives out all love and pleasure. If neither love nor desire is present, but instead fear and duress, how valuable can the marriage be henceforth?”

“For someone can subdue a slave through fear, but even he will soon try to escape. But your life partner, the mother of your children, the source of every joy, must not be bound through fear and threats, but by love and a kind disposition.”

Christianity is not a faith about who should be the boss, but about each one of us assuming the role of a servant (Phil 2:3–8). How often we fail to notice that the practice of Christianity requires mutuality. We are told to be subject one to another (Eph 5:21). Indeed, the word allelos (one another) occurs no less than one hundred times in the New Testament! Our trademark is to be meekness, humility, and a concern for others. We might think of Jesus’ declaration:

“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.” (Mark 10:42–43, cf. Matt 20:25–28, Luke 22:24–27)

Jesus said that we would know a tree by its fruits and that we must beware a message based upon a mistaken ideology (Matt 7:15–20, 12:33; Luke 6:44). He called for a differentiation to be made between those commandments that are truly given in the scripture and those that develop from human misconception (Matt 15:6–9). If we have embraced a theology that requires further development, now is the time to get on with the work of reconsideration.

Later in this same chapter, Cathie picks up the theme of authority. She writes:

Sometimes we have been guilty of claiming over others an authority that is not biblically sanctioned. In particular there has often been an emphasis on the exercise of power by the male over the female. All too often that has led to methods of control that destroy family life. The Scriptures caution us against the dangers of distorting the words of Paul. Peter wrote:

“Some of his [Paul’s] comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do other parts of Scripture and the result is disaster for them. I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends, so that you can watch out and not be carried away by the errors of these misguided people. I don’t want you to lose your own secure footing.” (2 Pet 3:15–17)

Peter warns as well not to use honest biblical values as a cover-up for evil (1 Pet 2:16) nor as a selfish occasion to serve one’s own flesh (Gal 5:13).

“O members of the household of God, you have been called to liberty, but not as a starting point for gaining your own selfish objects. Rather serve one another out of love. Indeed. The entire law is fulfilled in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ For if you bite and gnaw at one another, watch out that you are not totally destroyed by one another.” (Gal 5:13–15)

How very often we see this scenario played out among those who claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior! In the above text, I have translated the Greek word aphporē as “starting point,” though it is often translated as “pretext” in this verse. Two of its essential meanings are “a military base of operations” or “a means of war.” The terminology led me to contemplate instances of other military and violent images that were used by evangelicals in the last half century. Do we not need to deal with a doctrine that in many instances has inappropriately become a springboard for injustice and abuse?

Cathie believed in the power of the scriptural witness. That is precisely why, in our joint work, she spent so much space quoting the biblical passages that for her gave an imperative for Christians to abhor violence and offer respite, safety, comfort, and practical advice to its victims. Listen to the way she frames the issue in a chapter entitled “Searching the Scriptures” in our 2010 book, No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence.

We are told that batters abuse those in their family because in this manner they achieve the results that they are seeking. Frequently the abuser convinces his family that his treatment of them stems in response to their own misdeeds. Victims are humiliated, degraded, shamed, reproached, made to feel inadequate, and guilt-ridden.

Thus, they are coerced into compliance with the perpetrator’s wishes. Whether by physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, they are able to exercise control over the household. The harm done to individual members is ignored or justified. Frequently the reproach falls upon the victims rather than on the offender. If they had only been more prayerful, more submissive, more careful not to arouse anger, the problem would not have arisen. But this is not where the Bible puts the responsibility. The Bible says that the offender is at fault: “In your hearts you devise wrongs; your hands deal out violence on earth” (Ps 58:2). We fail to understand that abuse hurts the abuser. “The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head” (Ps 7:16). Their own spiritual lives are drastically imperiled (Prov 2:6–14, Isa 58:4, 1 Pet 3:7).
The power of the Spirit works not only to restrain evildoers, but also to empower those who would obey the biblical command to deliver the helpless from the hand of the violent, to correct those of the family of faith who fall into sin, to set free those who are oppressed, to rebuke, admonish and instruct. Let us, the people of God, be instructed by the Scriptures.

Both Old and New Testaments vigorously condemn violence of many sorts. A major theme is God’s abhorrence and denunciation of violence. Such behavior is a characteristic of sinful people and brings the judgment of God (Ps 11:5–6; Ezek 7:11, Joel 3:19, Amos 3:10, Obadiah 10, Hab 2:17, Zeph 1:19). Because of violence the earth was destroyed:

“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.... And God said to Noah, ‘I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.’” (Gen 6:11, 13)

Violence is associated with Satan (Ezek 28:16). It is accompanied by many sorts of wrong attitudes and conduct (Isa 59:6–8; Jer 6:7, 22:17; Jon 3:8). The wicked drink “the wine of violence” (Prov 4:17), and the unfaithful “have a craving for violence” (Prov 13:2). Offenders develop a way of life sustained by their violence (Ps 73:4–8). Hebrew law made special provision to prevent violence within the home. Even a household slave was not to be treated abusively:

“If a man hits a manservant or maidservant in the eye and destroys it, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of a manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the tooth.” (Exod 21:26–27)

Proverbs, too, addresses violence in the home:

“Those who trouble their households will inherit wind. . . . The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but violence takes lives away.” (Prov 11:29–30)

“Do not lie in wait like an outlaw against the home of the righteous; do no violence to the place where the righteous live.” (Prov 24:15)

The New International Version offers an interesting alternative translation for a famous passage on divorce: “I hate a man’s covering his wife with violence as well as with his garment,” says the Lord Almighty’ (Mal 2:16 NIV mg.). According to the New Testament, violent persons are not eligible for church leadership (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7).

Thinking about Cathie’s legacy

Cathie’s work on violence was informed by the voices of the victims she met, helped, and called her friends; the strength of survivors from around the world; the importance of networking; the call of God to comfort and to challenge; the promise of new life; and the potential of change. She was a person who never stopped learning and never stopped listening to others or that still, small voice—heard amid the noise among us or in our own private prayer closet. She had an expansive view of others and a modest view of herself.

Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger’s work will live on—through her writing and in the lives of people in whom she invested time and personal energy. I would like to close this tribute to Cathie with four lessons I have learned by working with her and watching how she lived life right to the finish line. Hers was a life well lived!

1. The bidirectional link between scholarship and compassion. Cathie was a servant/scholar before the term gained popularity in contemporary evangelical circles. She learned, and then she put her knowledge into practice. Sometimes, it operated in the other direction. She was moved by someone’s story and then set about to learn why it might be so.

2. Do not be put off by your detractors. Cathie had a remarkable level of energy for the good she sought to do. And she did so in the face of those who wished to stop her. She gave of her resources—material, intellectual, and emotional. At times, it took its toll. It is never easy to give generously and without ceasing.

3. The power of the printed word. Words are powerful. Cathie read and she wrote, convinced that knowledge produces power even in the most impoverished among us. Her passion for education at all levels was unmatched.

4. Harnessing your personal resources. Cathie believed that the world could be changed, under the power of the Holy Spirit, one person at a time. And it was the responsibility of the church to rise up to the challenge.

She had a word or a funny song for almost every occasion—her good humor ensured that she did not take herself too seriously. During one of our trips to India, we were speaking in front of a large audience of mostly women who had gathered to talk about issues of abuse and the church. Some of the women wanted a time to sing before we began to teach. Cathie simply turned and asked me to play the piano—no prior practicing, no music, no music leader. I had no choice, really, but to walk to the piano and remember the words we were taught in Sunday school—to be ready to preach, pray, sing, or testify at a moment’s notice. Later, some of the women were highlighting their cultural traditions, and we had no one present to offer a funny song about American culture. Cathie sang impromptu “The Itsy Bitsy Spider.” She could always laugh at herself and her own foibles. At the same time, she took the questions of others very seriously. Once, one of my daughters had a question about angels—I sent it along to Cathie at the end of a “work-related” email. Early the next day, I received a two paragraph response complete with references! That was vintage Cathie—harnessing every occasion to educate and empower others.
Without a doubt, Cathie was a storyteller. And the Bible came alive as she told its stories in front of an audience or in print. She was particularly skilled at using the characters of the Bible to highlight features of the journey in the aftermath of domestic violence: the unrepentant heart of Cain, the well of hope for Hagar, the image of God’s marriage to Israel, the charge to those in leadership, and the long road toward forgiveness as experienced by Joseph and his brothers. She highlighted God’s angst with those who employed violent words or acts, and the mandate of the New Testament to live in a way set apart from the world. She knew the stories of the Bible and could draw out both the original meaning and its contemporary implications. She never hesitated to encourage others to search the Scriptures as she herself had done and to draw inspiration from the very good news it contained for those whose lives were in turmoil or replete with angst.

Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger’s work was bathed in the Scriptures, comforting to victims and survivors, challenging to religious leaders, and calling all of us—men and women alike—to live according to the biblical mandate of peace and safety in our homes.

Notes

6. Taken from No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark. Copyright © 2010 by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.
They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—
for he has done it.

– Psalm 22:30–31

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The Legacy of Catherine Clark Kroeger as Teacher, Scholar, and Mentor

DAVID L. EASTMAN

Like many who knew her, I was shocked to hear the news of Cathie Kroeger’s death. She had an indomitable spirit and as much energy for life as anyone I have ever met. She was one of those rare people who possessed a contagious enthusiasm and passion for teaching, combined with an admirable ability to focus and produce substantial amounts of scholarship. And all this was done in the midst of a dizzying array of commitments, both academic and personal. It never occurred to me that Cathie would one day be gone, at least not without the intervention of an Elijah-like chariot of fire. There are many things that could be said about Cathie, but here I will focus my comments on my experience of her as a teacher and scholar of early Christianity.

The foundation for any eminent scholar in our field is a mastery of the ancient languages, and Cathie possessed this in full measure. While her study of languages began later in life than many of her colleagues, her technical ability in Greek and Latin was on par with anyone. As a student at Gordon-Conwell, I expressed my concerns about not being to continue my study of the more complicated and specialized forms of Classical Greek, and Cathie’s immediate suggestion was an independent study course that included Homer and Plato as well as Greek epigraphy (the study of inscriptions). I would spend hours working through the texts before our meetings, but she would simply pull a volume of Homer off the wall and read along. Without any preparation, she could comment on the broader semantic ranges of words or the technical use of certain terms in the religious context of the ancient world. Anyone familiar with I Suffer Not a Woman, the book that she co-authored with her husband, Dick, is well aware that many Greek words carried multiple layers of meaning and resonance. These resonances, as the book’s appendices demonstrate well, were often informed by multiple narratives and cultural traditions that lay outside the Jewish and early Christian literary traditions (e.g., legends of the Amazons, the Egyptian cult of Isis, ancient novels). Cathie possessed a profound grasp of these complexities and their interpretative implications. She had command even of the specialized subfield of Greek epigraphy. Her translations of the Cnidus curse tablets provide a chilling insight into the sometimes violent, even murderous, interactions between women and men in ancient Asia Minor, while her final days were spent working on a book on epigraphical evidence for kephalē (head) as “source.” Only in recent years, when I have begun teaching my own courses in Greek, have I fully come to appreciate the depth of expertise and the breadth of reading that she displayed in those meetings.

Cathie was also not afraid to talk about the ancient world as it was, and this meant talking about subjects that I thought were reserved for awkward conversations in pastoral counseling courses. Take pornography as an example. Today such images are readily available over the Internet and at the newsstand, but we would never expect to see pornography featured prominently in a private home or on the carafe with which we were served wine at a restaurant. The archaeological evidence shows that both were the case in the ancient world. In a class on early Christianity, she showed us images of ancient pottery that were quite shocking at the time. I have since realized that she selected some of the tamest of these images to make the point, and I have no doubt that some found even this unnecessary. However, the goal of these frank conversations was to introduce us to the grittiness of the ancient world, the world that people like the Apostle Paul actually encountered. The scandals of the Corinthian church then came alive, as we realized that those were not the “good old days” when everyone was basically honest and moral, except for these few problem cases. In Paul’s epistles, rather, we encounter a world very much like our own, full of both “saints and sinners” (as Cathie used to say).

She was also a very honest historian of the social realities of early Christianity. In her teaching and her writing, she presented neither the sanitized version of the early church that I was taught growing up, nor the self-consciously deconstructive image that has become popular among some scholars today. Her commentary on 1 Corinthians in The IVP Women’s Bible Commentary provides an illustration of this. Even a cursory reading of this letter reveals that there were big problems in this community. Honestly, how many of us would want to join a church that was dealing with internal power struggles, lawsuits, and incest (and all that before we even get to food and conflicts over the role of women)? Cathie takes these issues head-on and points out that, in Paul’s mind, the sin of individuals stained not just them, but the entire community. In the case of the sexual affair between a man and his father’s wife, for example, she notes that “the Corinthian Christians view the situation with complacency. They take pride in their permissive attitude.” This is hardly an idealized Christian community by any reckoning. Paul’s response to the perplexing collection of issues may appear to lack a central argument, yet “the letter is not the patchwork that it may seem at first. The theme most consistently running through this epistle is an
appeal to respect the unity of the church and to preserve it from
doctrinal and moral corruption.” The Corinthians were a mess,
but not a hopeless mess, and 2 Corinthians suggests that they did
respond to Paul’s call for unity (at least for a little while).

In every scholar’s work, there are times of needing to take
some leaps into the abyss of the silence of our sources. Cathie did
this in ways that were fearless and provocative, but never done
just for the sake of shock value. As much as I respected her, I was
not always convinced that she got her reconstructions right in all cases, and
she knew this. However, this very point highlights another important element
of the way Cathie went about her work.

Cathie was mature enough as a scholar and a Christian to disagree
with people without using that as an excuse to part ways with
them. As recent conflicts within several academic societies have
borne witness, it has become en vogue in certain quarters to re-
place meaningful engagement with meaningless rhetoric. Atten-
tion often goes to those who can cause the biggest stir, even if it
means insulting or treating unfairly some of their professional
colleagues. Sadly, Christian academics have proven not to be im-
mune to this.

Because of her stance on the place of women in the church
and the home, Cathie was openly and publicly attacked by some
of her Christian detractors in ways that, to borrow a phrase,
“are not even heard among the Gentiles.” The slander that she
endured over these matters, which all involved would agree are
nonessentials, was hurtful to her personally, but her family also
had to absorb some of the shrapnel. Indeed, during one of my
visits to the Kroegers’ home, her husband related with sadness
and frustration a recent comment made about her by a promi-
nent evangelical scholar of the New Testament. (In the spirit of
Cathie, I will not name him here.) And yet, on every occasion
that this issue would arise, she never returned fire in like manner,
even in a private conversation over dinner. This was not her style.
She would always deflect the conversation, even—or perhaps
especially—when she sensed that those in her presence wanted
her to react. She never reacted; she only responded, and she did
so with grace, even toward those who assailed her scholarship
and questioned her character and her faith. The harshest words I
ever heard her speak were reserved for her own people, the Pres-
byterians, whom she would sometimes refer to as the “Frozen
Chosen.” But, even then, she would say this with a twinkle in her
eye and often a little wink. Her consistently graceful responses to
these attacks were an amazing model for me as a young scholar.
Cathie instilled in me that difference should never prevent dia-
logue, at least as far as I can control the situation.

I respected Cathie greatly for her work as a scholar and for
the way she did her craft, but I was also blessed to come to know
her outside the classroom. On several occasions, she invited me
to come down to their house on Cape Cod: “You can stay in the
library house and curl up every night with Plato.” During my
doctoral studies, I made several trips to visit Dick and her, and I
am very glad that I did so. (Incidentally, my wife also stayed with
them on several occasions, and Cathie even invited my mother
out to the Cape for a writing retreat. She clearly had the gift of
hospitality in spades.) Dick was a Yale man, so he was happy to
have a Yale graduate student as a guest. I enjoyed many hours sit-
ting and talking with them at their dining room table or looking
at pictures of their grandchildren reenacting Constantine’s vic-
tory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge—pictures taken on the
actual Milvian Bridge in Rome. Each
time a new guest arrived, Cathie would
give a tour of the house where the town
of Brewster was chartered. She would
show artifacts of the voyages of seafar-
ing ancestors, including a sea captain
whose ship survived the eruption of

Krakatoa in 1883. Then she would show the four-poster bed in
the front room: “This is the bed where most of my ancestors were
conceived, born, and died,” she would say. Although prolific and
in demand as a scholar and teacher, she was also very “normal”
as a mother, grandmother, wife, and friend.

My time spent with the Kroegers was always enjoyable, but
I cannot leave the topic without mentioning their library. Oh,
that library! The collection in the “library house” (and annex)
was certainly the most impressive private library that I have ever
seen, and I have seen quite a few. (It was willed to the Gordon-
Conwell Center for Urban Ministerial Education [CUME].) The
collection was significant not just for the number of volumes, but
also for the breadth of scholarly approaches represented. The li-
brary reflected who Cathie was as a scholar, a person not afraid
to engage the work of others across a wide range of perspectives,
even perspectives very different from her own. On one of my
visits to the Kroegers’ home, a New Testament colleague from
Yale accompanied me, and we spent an entire morning combing
the shelves and being repeatedly amazed that anyone would have
time to amass such an erudite collection.

The loss of Cathie Kroeger indeed fills me with sadness, for
I have lost a teacher, a mentor, and a friend. Admittedly, I feel a
particular sadness at the suddenness of her death. In academics,
one of the great joys for a teacher is the success of her students,
and I know that Cathie was happy for my success as a graduate
student and then a lecturer at Yale. However, she eagerly awaited
my first permanent academic appointment, which I was offered
in early February of this year. I had been contacting friends and
former teachers, but had not yet written to Cathie. On Wed-
nesday, February 16, I came into the office early specifically for that
purpose. When I opened my email, I found waiting for me the
notification that she had died just two days earlier. I was stunned
as I walked into the classroom that morning to teach, appropri-
ately enough, a Greek class, and I am still left with a sense of un-
finished business. Thus, this brief tribute takes on a very personal
meaning for me. It is in some sense my chance to tell her a final
“thank you.”

I will miss Cathie. I owe her a great deal, and I can only hope
that my career as a scholar of early Christianity would make her

Priscilla Papers • Vol. 25, No. 3 • Summer 2011 ～ 19
proud. I can think of no more fitting way to close this tribute than with the words of the twelfth-century philosopher Bernard of Chartres (words later adapted and made famous by Sir Isaac Newton): “We are like dwarfs on the shoulders of giants, so that we can see more than they, and things at a greater distance, not by virtue of any sharpness of sight on our part, or any physical distinction, but because we are carried high and raised up by their giant size.” I, like many others, see farther because I am standing on the shoulders of this giant.

I give thanks to God for the life and legacy of this amazing woman.

Notes


Articles by Catherine Clark Kroeger

Bitalia, the Ancient Woman Priest
Priscilla Papers, volume 7, issue 1

Faith, Feminism and Family
Priscilla Papers, volume 13, issue 1

An Illustration of the Greek Notion of ‘Head’ as ‘Source’
Priscilla Papers, volume 1, issue 3

The Legacy of Katharine Bushnell: A Hermeneutic for Women of Faith
Priscilla Papers, volume 9, issue 4

1 Timothy 2:9-10 Revisited
Priscilla Papers, volume 8, issue 1

Toward an Egalitarian Hermeneutic of Faith
Priscilla Papers, volume 4, issue 2

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Priscilla Papers, volume 20, issue 3

Wifely Submission in Biblical Context
Priscilla Papers, volume 12, issue 4

Find these and other articles at cbeinternational.org/kroeger.

7. C. Kroeger, “1 Corinthians,” 646.

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The Bible’s Nonabusive Intention for Family Relationships

Catherine Clark Kroeger

In Saint Paul, Minnesota, during the 1970s, the first shelter in the nation opened “for battered women,” a phrase I had never heard before. This was not all that was happening in the city.

At the same time, the Civic Auditorium in Saint Paul was filled to capacity as a supposed expert held forth for a whole week on how to build constructive relationships within the family. At the time, he was enormously popular with the Christian public. The event had been widely promoted by churches and parachurch organizations, and I, too, had been encouraged to attend. I sat there, along with many thousands of others, watching as the “expert” drew a diagram of a man and woman standing side by side in a dating relationship. Then, while sketching the downward swoop of an arrow, he explained that, after marriage, the woman dropped below her husband to a servant status.

There followed another cartoon of the husband as a hammer pounding down on the wife, who was depicted as a chisel hacking away at the children. There were as well other symbols that were harsh and violent, such as the military image of a chain of command. I could not bring myself to attend the last two nights, but friends told me that they were present when women were instructed to praise God for their husbands even when they were beating them.

Within the following week, I was speaking with the Christian education director of a church located near a psychiatric hospital. There, a single psychiatrist was treating three patients who required hospitalization as a result of their attendance at those meetings. Another therapist told me that he, too, had been busy treating both male and female clients in the aftermath of that particular program. Time moved on, and the “expert” lost a good deal of his popularity, but some of the impressions that he created lingered on. Was it not the Apostle Paul who warned us “not to go beyond what is written” (1 Cor 4:6)?

I attended another event, this time at another church in Minneapolis. Here, another family life expert explained how he had repeatedly knocked his teenage son to the ground in order to gain his compliance. This was followed by an example of having forced his daughter into the car when she was unwilling to attend a weeknight prayer meeting. One could not miss his point that sometimes force and violence were useful tools in promoting orderly family life. He explained to us that veterans understood very well how to command, control, and coerce, and we came to consider this a biblical pattern.

Obviously, such instances of warped instruction are now an embarrassment to many of us who participated in the events or acted on the advice of those gurus. But the influence is still with us. Other Christian leaders adopted some of the concepts in a more modified form—concepts, nevertheless, that could lend themselves quite readily to abuse. Usually, the argument is made that these concepts are biblically based, but here is where we must examine what is being propounded. There is much that we need to rethink. As a good Christian mother, I spanked my children, but now I regret having used corporal punishment. As we deal with delicate issues of domestic abuse, it is important to deal carefully and faithfully with the word of God.

Moving on in Christian thought

Beginning in the 1970s, a growing awareness began to spread concerning the widespread existence of domestic abuse. Originally, many of us maintained that no such evil was to be found among those who had been born again, but the evidence proved us wrong. It was evident that the gospel called us to minister to both victims and perpetrators inside and outside of the fold of faith. All too often, there has been a vast gulf between those grappling with a profound social problem and the voice of the church.

Clearly, Christians needed to rethink our understanding of what the Scriptures and the Fathers of the church were telling us about family relationships. Misconceptions have led to tragic forms of abuse and misery that call for correction. None are more susceptible to misinterpretation than the biblical statement that man is the head of woman. How often it has led to abuse! This was recognized very early in the life of the church. One such voice was that of the greatest early biblical exegete, John Chrysostom. He perceived that women are often wonderfully attuned to the concerns, needs, and emotions of those around them and have a gift of responding sensitively and sympathetically. Their gifts enable them to create an environment of care and loving support for the entire family. But abuse and brutalization deprive a wife of the ability to give freely of herself to those around her.

Chrysostom wrote:

For when she has been subjected to her husband through force, fear, and violence, it will be more unbearable and unpleasant than if she commands him with total authority. Why do you suppose this is? Because this force drives out all love and pleasure. If neither love nor desire is present, but instead fear and duress, how valuable can the marriage be henceforth?

For someone can subdue a slave through fear, but even he will soon try to escape. But your life partner, the mother of your children, the source of every joy, must not be bound through fear and threats, but by love and a kind disposition.

Catherine Clark Kroeger, founder of CBE and PASCH, was an evangelical stateswoman. This article is adapted from one of three chapters she authored (and another co-authored) in her newly published book Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes (House of Prisca and Aquila series, Wipf and Stock, 2011). It is reviewed in this issue of Priscilla Papers. Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wipfandstock.com.
Christianity is not a faith about who should be the boss, but about each one of us assuming the role of a servant (Phil 2:3–8). How often we fail to notice that the practice of Christianity requires mutuality. We are told to be subject one to another (Eph 5:21). Indeed, the word *allelos* (one another) occurs no less than one hundred times in the New Testament! Our trademark is to have meekness, humility, and a concern for others. We might think of Jesus’ declaration:

> You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. (Mark 10:42–43, cf. Matt 20:25–28, Luke 22:24–27)

Jesus said that we would know a tree by its fruits and that we must beware of a message based upon a mistaken ideology (Matt 7:15–20, 12:33; Luke 6:44). He called for a differentiation to be made between those commandments that are truly given in the Scripture and those that develop from human misconception (Matt 15:6–9). If we have embraced a theology that requires further development, now is the time to get on with the work of reconsideration.

**Beware the twisting of Scripture into a launching pad for selfish gain**

After a spate of eight domestic murders in Massachusetts during a span of thirty-one days, a front page article in the *Boston Globe* declared:

> These were cases with much in common, for this kind of killing is among the least random of crimes: Assailant and victim, by definition, know each other intimately. Power, and the unnatural need for it, is the recurrent motive.

The article states that authorities were seeking a pattern and could find none. Yet, the journalist herself sees a “recurrent motive” in “power and the unnatural need for it.” We have heard a thousand times over that issues of power and control lie at the heart of domestic abuse, but the concept of an unnatural need for power could move our thought in new directions. Have we been guilty of promoting a doctrine of male privilege that permits domination, possession, and even the power of life and death? Surely, Vienna’s famed psychiatrists demonstrated the lust for power that dwells within our sinful human breasts, but have we in the church of Jesus Christ exacerbated that lust? Have things been said in church contexts that have led to unnatural extremes? Have we been swept along when we should have been considering the biblical warnings?

Sometimes, we have been guilty of claiming over others an authority that is not biblically sanctioned. In particular, there has often been an emphasis on the exercise of power by the male over the female. All too often, that has led to methods of control that destroy family life. The Scriptures caution us against the dangers of distorting the words of Paul. Peter wrote:

> Some of his [Paul’s] comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters around to mean something quite different from what he meant, just as they do other parts of Scripture—and the result is disaster for them. I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends, so that you can watch out and not be carried away by the errors of these misguided people. I do not want you to lose your own secure footing. (2 Pet 3:15–17)

Peter warns as well not to use honest biblical values as a cover-up for evil (1 Pet 2:16), nor as a selfish occasion to serve one’s own flesh (Gal 5:13):

> O members of the household of God, you have been called to liberty, but not as a starting point for gaining your own selfish objects. Rather, serve one another out of love. Indeed, the entire law is fulfilled in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” For if you bite and gnaw at one another, watch out that you are not totally destroyed by one another. (Gal 5:13–15)

How very often we see this scenario played out among those who claim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior! In the above text, I have translated the Greek word *aphormê* as “starting point,” though it is often translated as “pretext” in this verse. Two of its essential meanings are “a military base of operations” or “a means of war.” The terminology led me to contemplate instances of other military and violent images that were used by evangelicals in the last half century. Do we not need to deal with a doctrine that, in many instances, has inappropriately become a springboard for injustice and abuse?

**Is the husband supposed to be the boss?**

Although some will insist that the Bible teaches male dominance, this is stated only in the book of Esther—by a pagan king!

> The king sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in its own language, proclaiming in each people’s tongue that every man should be ruler over his own household. (Esth 1:22)

The decree is issued after an enormous drinking party by a king angered because his queen refused to appear in a compromising situation before the royal court. The rest of the story of Esther deals with how the valiant heroine subverts both this decree and the order for the extermination of all Jews in the empire. King Ahasuerus (aka Xerxes), known in other circumstances for his lack of good judgment, ultimately recognizes the wisdom of Esther and vests her with authority. Other than this statement, the Bible does not say that the man should be the boss. The question we must ask is whether that position, espoused by one who was not a follower of the God of the Bible, does not lead to conclusions that may provide justification for the demeaning, degradation, and brutalization of women. But does not the Scripture speak of the husband as head of the wife? It does indeed use this metaphor, and it is important for us to understand that, in this instance, the Apostle Paul is
using a figure of speech. When we approach his writings, we are dealing with an ancient language and ancient thought patterns. Of course, the head is the uppermost member of the physical body. Clearly, Paul was not using "head" literally, but as a figure of speech, as a metaphor for some other value or relationship.

Frequently, there are difficulties in understanding a language different from our own. Even if a person understands basic English grammar and vocabulary, she or he might not be familiar with our idioms and our metaphors. Metaphors can hold different values in different cultures. For instance, in our English context, to "harden one’s heart” means to determine not to show compassion, while in the African Fulani language it implies being courageous. We use many idioms in our own language that must be understood in order to grasp the intention of the author or speaker. As an example, in the United States, we could say that someone had “tied one on” or was “three sheets to the wind,” and this might be impossible for a person from another culture to understand the sense even if they knew the English words.

In the same way, "head” is a metaphor that in the English language can be used to imply "boss, chief,” or "one in charge." This was seldom true in Greek, the original language in which the New Testament was written. Other languages, such as French, do not necessarily use the word in this way. In Greek, too, "head” seldom meant the ruler or leader, although it does indeed have that sense in Hebrew. Indeed, the Septuagint, the ancient translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, carefully uses other Greek words when the Hebrew text employs "head” as meaning chieftain or ruler.

When used as a metaphor by ancient Greek writers, "head” often had the sense of "beginning, source” or "point of beginning.” Today, even in English, we speak of the “head” of a river. That first great exegete of Christian Scripture, Chrysostom, whose native language was Greek, discussed what relationship the Apostle Paul intended to designate when he used the term "head.” Chrysostom asked: How, then, should we understand "head”? He answered: Understand it in the sense of "perfect unity and primal cause and source.”

In classical literature, we find many statements attesting to the Greek belief that the head was the source from which the rest of the body grew. Even the art of the ancients demonstrates their concept that new life sprang from the head. Ancient scraps of poetry speak of Zeus as head and source of all things, while a well-known myth tells of the wisdom goddess Athena springing full-grown from his head. Sometimes, a bearded head of either man or bull was set up at a fountain or source of a river because, as Eustathius explained, the river’s head is that which generates the whole river.

In statuary buried for two thousand years by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, fountains burst from the heads of mythological figures. Both the actual fountains and the frescoes depicting them still remain. In the ancient tombs of Magna Graecia are found both statements of belief in the transmigration of souls and figurines depicting the reincarnation of the soul as it issues forth from the head of Persephone, queen of the underworld. Around the emerging souls cluster tiny leaves, demonstrating the belief in the head as the source of life and growth.

The statements of Paul himself demonstrate the same concept of life springing from the head, as it promotes growth: “From the head the entire body grows with the head of God as it is supplied by the head and held together by every ligament and sinew” (Col 2:19). Here, and in Ephesians 4:15–16, are the only two instances wherein Paul gives us his understanding of the function of the head and how he applies it metaphorically. The head causes the body to grow, and, thus, he invites his readers to grow up in Christ:

Let us grow up in all things unto him who is Christ, the Head. He causes the body to build itself up in love as the head provides empowerment according to the proportion appropriate for each member as they are bound and supported by every sinew. (Eph 4:15–16, cf. Col 2:19)

In Ephesians 5, Paul holds Christ to be the Head of the Church as the man is head of the wife. Here, the husband is encouraged to take Christ as model in causing his bride to grow, to realize her full potential, to become all that she can be, nourishing and cherishing her (Eph 5:25–27). It is the power to build up rather than to tear down (see 2 Cor 10:8, 13:10).

The Bible tells us many things about growth, and surely all of us need to mature in the things of Christ. In some areas, the need can be particularly urgent. Sometimes, historic and sociological events have ways of changing us. In the early days of the church, there were many church councils, and much heat was generated as believers struggled to understand theological truths. Numerous corrections were needed along the way. Distorted ways of thinking were addressed as God’s people were challenged to think more carefully and to respond articulately. Out of it all, new convictions grew, and faithful believers moved on. The Holy Spirit is still at work in our midst. Let us, as Paul admonishes, grow up unto Christ in all things, including our understanding of what Chrysostom and similar early church interpreters of the Bible were trying to tell us about the nonabusive biblical view of family relationships.

Notes

3. All translations by the author.
**Book Review: Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes**

*Edited by Nancy Nason-Clark, Catherine Clark Kroeger, and Barbara Fisher-Townsend*  
*(Wipf and Stock, House of Prisca and Aquila Series, 2011)*

**Reviewed by Victoria Fahlberg**

*Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes: A Challenge to Churches and their Leaders* represents the final book edited by Catherine Clark Kroeger, together with her colleagues Nancy Nason-Clark and Barbara Fisher-Townsend. Similar to other publications by the late Dr. Kroeger, this book addresses the link between violence against Christian women by their (oftentimes) believing husbands and the incorrect theological presuppositions which enable the violence to persist. This book was born out of the third international conference by Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH), a nonprofit organization founded by Dr. Kroeger in 2004 and to which she dedicated the remaining years of her life in her fight against domestic violence. The primary audience for this book is pastors of local congregations. However, the insights into the lives of pastors, congregants, batters, and victims, including immigrant victims, and their relationships to the secular world of social services, is invaluable to any Christian concerned about the limits and possibilities of accessing support outside the church.

The insight, experience, and wisdom of the book’s twenty-one contributors, including pastors, theologians, social workers, sociologists, psychologists, and others, makes the book both scholarly and practical. It is divided into three sections, each opening with a poem by Robert Pynn. The first section, “A Call to Peace and Safety,” examines what needs to happen for a victim to feel safe in her home, marriage, and church. The opening chapter addresses the importance of the correct interpretation of biblical headship, while chapters 2 through 7 focus on the need for pastors to address intimate partner violence (IPV) effectively, the need for batters to obtain adequate help, and the importance of peace in the home resulting from those beliefs and behaviors that keep marriages healthy.

Section 2 describes the barriers and challenges to preventing domestic violence, with each of the four chapters focused on a specific population with unique struggles. Chapter 8 provides evidence of the difficulty batters have achieving lasting change. Chapter 9 focuses on the additional hardships faced by victims from ethnic communities. Chapter 10 gives advice for pastors on how to work with victims and perpetrators, while chapter 11 provides a compelling look at the challenges faced by professional advocates and shelter workers and their need for support in this difficult work.

The final section, “Removing the Barriers and Bringing Peace,” focuses on theology, truth, and the practical realities of domestic violence. In Chapter 12, Dr. Kroeger compares the lies of the false prophets who incited Zedekiah with the whitewashing that too often masks the truth about IPV. Chapters 13 and 14 focus on women victims of faith who must reconcile the disconnection between theology and reality. Chapter 15 describes the Religion and Violence e-Learning project (RAVE), an online resource for victims, pastors, and others. Chapter 16 provides advice on how to build bridges between clergy and community-based professionals, and the final chapter summarizes research that demonstrates the lack of information on domestic violence provided to seminary students during their course of study.

The strength of the book lies in the collective wealth of experience of the contributors and the diversity of their ministries and relationships to victims and perpetrators of IPV. This book provides a solid theological basis for helping victims find safety and shelter away from their abusive spouses, but moves beyond theology to the sphere of practicality. In addition, the book is filled with true stories of sadness and triumph that add richness to the text, making it easy and interesting to read.

*Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes* is a how-to book for Christians on dealing with domestic violence. In addition to providing tools for helping victims, it asks the right questions: Is marriage worth more than a life? If domestic violence is not tolerated by God, why is it tolerated in many churches? Do seminaries teach enough on domestic violence? While the purpose of this book was not to delve into complex answers to these questions, it helps readers begin that search. As I read this book, I found myself asking additional questions: Have we, as Christians, used the cliché “Hate the sin, love the sinner” so often that we have lost sight of what love and hate really mean in the context of IPV? Could anything be more important than learning how to help abused children of God? Does our emphasis on personal piety keep us focused on helping individuals rather than dismantling religious structures that prevent full gender equality and result in sins such as IPV? And, finally, if we cannot help women victims of violence in our own congregations, how can we possibly ever be salt and light in the world?

This book is a tribute to the remarkable life of a remarkable woman. With God’s grace and help, we will grasp hold of Dr. Kroeger’s baton and continue the race to bring peace and safety to Christian homes.

Victoria Fahlberg has a PhD in Clinical Psychology and a Master of Public Health in Population and International Health from Harvard. From 1989 to 1997, she lived in Brazil, where she founded a social service/mental health clinic in a large favela (City of God) in Rio de Janeiro and initiated the first graduate program in Brazil in family violence at Pontificia Universidade Catolica. She was executive director of ONE Lowell, a community-based organization in Lowell, Massachusetts, from 2002 to 2010. She teaches as an adjunct professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary’s Center for Urban Ministerial Education in Boston and at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell.
Book Review: Submission within the Godhead and the Church in the Epistle to the Philippians

By M. Sydney Park (T & T Clark, 2007)

Reviewed by Alan G. Padgett

This volume by Sydney Park started life as a doctoral dissertation in New Testament studies. The style of the work is very academic, and the price of the hardback means very few, if any, non-specialists will read it. This review will be devoted primarily to explaining the author’s main argument, but I will indulge in just one critical comment toward the end.

The so-called Christ-hymn in Philippians 2:6–11 is one of the most widely studied passages in the whole Bible. Park does a good job of reviewing the research of the last three decades or so (mostly in English) and indicating those places where he disagrees with established scholars such as Ralph Martin, N. T. Wright, and James D. G. Dunn. This is a formidable task for a new scholar, and I admire his boldness in taking on these internationally respected figures. What I like about his proposal is that he has learned from the major interpretive models, but has refused to be drawn into a one-sided reading of the text. His major contribution is to provide a balanced and holistic approach to the question of the meaning of this key text and its place in the larger teaching of Paul in this letter.

There have tended to be three schools or models of the interpretation of this passage. One model, associated with Ernst Käsemann (a very famous German New Testament scholar) and Ralph Martin (formerly of Fuller Seminary), argues that the original meaning of this Christ-hymn has no ethical implications whatsoever—despite what we might think from reading Philippians 2:1–5. They focus particularly on the meaning of the passage prior to Paul’s using it in this letter. They argue that this is a fragment of an early Christian hymn to Christ, which Paul then uses in his letter later on and for his own purposes. The point of the passage is a kind of drama of salvation, not an ethical injunction we are called to imitate. Another model is developed over against this one by Dunn and Wright. They analyze the text against the background of an Adam Christology where the main point is the typological contrast between Adam (who fell, of course) and Jesus, who is the Second Adam (cf. Rom 5). Unlike the first Adam, Jesus is obedient to God and so is exalted to be the Lord of all humanity. Finally, the great British New Testament scholar C. F. D. Moule, and more recently Stephen Fowl, have argued for a return to seeing this passage in the context of the letter as a whole, and Fowl in particular argues for an ethical thrust to the text in its larger context.

Park wants to say “yes and no” to all of these arguments. He is critical of the work of others in places where he finds that their conclusions go beyond the evidence. For example, he argues that Wright reads an Adam/Christ typology too deeply into this passage. Park finds something to take away from each scholar’s work as well. I find his general point—that the passage is about both a drama of salvation and an ethical exhortation to imitate Christ in his humble, submissive service—to make good sense of the final form of the text as we now have it. Following Fowl and many moral theologians today, Park sees ethics as involved with narrative, a highly important development for his thesis which could have been made more explicit. In any case, Park wants to say that this passage is as much about God’s identity as it is about either ethics or the story of salvation. This is where his remarks on the Trinity come in.

Park’s interpretation of the ethics of submission in Philippians draws upon the work of postmodern social theorist Michel Foucault. He is quite critical of the earlier work of postmodern critic E. A. Castelli, who also drew upon Foucault in her Imitating Paul (1991). In terms of the ethic of imitation, Christ himself demonstrates true submission in Philippians 2:6–11. Park argues (following Marcus Bockmuehl on this and other key points) that Paul exhorts the Christian community to follow in this same way of the cross, both in Philippians 2:1–5 and in the next chapter, 3:4–11. There is, therefore, a definite theme of the imitation of Christ in the letter as a whole. And this imitation implies a humiliation, a submission on the part of the Christian to others. For Foucault and his followers, power is radically social, practical, and embodied. Those at the top of a hierarchy do not “possess” power, rather, power is found in relations. It is a set of actions, loosely coordinated and very much at play in the complex relationships between the “higher” and “lower.” It is not so much in gross violence as in the symbolic and practical means by which governors guide and herd the free actions of the governed that power is made manifest in human societies. Park argues on this basis that any ethic of imitation must necessarily include some kind of a hierarchy and distinction. The copy can never be the full equal of the model, and the follower will never be identical with the exemplar. Yet, for him, hierarchy does not have to be oppressive. He carries out a careful exegetical study of the many places where Paul uses “imitation” language to press the point that, for Paul, his authority is not a goal in and of itself. Paul is not interested in maintaining his own personal power nor in lord- ing it over others, but in submission to Christ for the purpose of building up the community and establishing unity in the body of Christ. For Paul, “Christ is the ethical paradigm for believers” so that “the definition of submission is primarily anchored on the mindset/action of Christ in Phil. 2:6–8” (117).

ALAN G. PADGETT is an ordained minister and professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota. His most recent book is As Christ Submits to the Church (Baker Academic).
Park is right in following a few modern interpreters (like Bockmuehl) who see submission in this passage, even though the word “submission” does not appear in the text. The mindset and action of mutual submission is here, and that is the point. Since Christ is “equal with God,” we find a kind of submission within the Triune God without hierarchy: “Divine submission ensues not from hierarchy but from equality; Christ’s submission is the direct consequence of his contemplation of his equality with God (2.6)” (130 n.). Submission includes obedience, but also involves a voluntary giving up of rights, privilege, and status, which is characteristic of taking on “the form of a slave.”

Park goes on to argue that both in Christ’s humiliation and in his exaltation, God the Father exercises a unique authority. Thus, Park finds in Philippians 2 a permanent hierarchy between Father and Son. For Park, Christ’s equality is not unqualified, but “resonates undertones of hierarchy” (139). Here, we must say of Park’s extended conclusions and speculations what he says of so many others: his conclusions go beyond the exegetical evidence. Nowhere in Philippians 2 do we find anything of God exercising authority over Christ. Christ is equal with God and displays his full divinity exactly in his loving, submissive service and obedience. The obedience of Christ comes from the Son’s own love, not from the Father’s command or authority. There is no reason, therefore, to find in Philippians 2:9–11 anything less than the full equality of the name of Jesus with that of God. The exaltation of the Son back to equality with God is indeed the very thing which gives glory to the Father. Park reads his “binary hierarchy” into the text at this point. Here, his conclusions are unsound, and this mars his long conversation with egalitarian theologians. In any case, his conversation with modern theologians is only based upon Philippians, and so his extended argument is necessarily weak. Christian doctrine and ethics must be based upon the whole of the biblical canon and not merely on one text, however interesting and important it may be.

This is a stimulating monograph on a key text in New Testament Christology. Park fully justifies his claim that an ethic of submission is found in Philippians, even though the word is not used by Paul. He is right to see both soteriology and ethics at work in these passages. But his tendency to read a binary hierarchy into the God/Christ relationship in Philippians 2 undermines some of his expansive conclusions toward the end of the book. Still, any biblical scholar interested in current interpretations of Philippians 2 and 3, or in the ethic of submission in the New Testament, will want to study this monograph.

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**Book Review: Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters**

*By Philip B. Payne (Zondervan, 2009)*

**Reviewed by Catherine Clark Kroeger**

The research of Philip Payne is exceedingly important for all who are concerned about justice for women. Over the years, gifted women and those who support their cause have treasured the work of Dr. Payne—one of his articles, presentations at learned conferences, and accessible Bible studies. Year in and year out, he has been there for us, by his patient handling of Scripture authenticating the legitimacy of women in ministry.

With a painstakingly meticulous approach, he has examined the biblical passages that are so often used oppressively against women. His magnum opus, *Men and Women, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters,* is at last in print. It has rapidly become the classic manifesto for those committed both to the authority of the Scriptures and the validity of women’s ministry. With excruciating care, he examines each of the Apostle Paul’s passages that have been used to restrict the equality and ministry of women.

This treatment does not make for an easy read, nor is it intended to. Rather, it sets out to review the difficult passages in enormous detail and to answer with care the complexities pro-

powered by those who would employ the texts to disbar feminine participation in church leadership.

This remarkable book delves into all sorts of minute details—seemingly unimportant, but crucial when they appear at crucial points in the text. For instance, his second chapter on 1 Timothy 2:12 (chapter 19: “1 Timothy 2:12 Part II. Does oude Separate Two Prohibitions or Conjoin Them?”) analyzes similar constructions (neither . . . nor) in thirty-one other usages in Paul’s undisputed letters and four in the disputed epistles. Each case is examined, along with similar constructions in contemporary non-biblical writers such as Polybius and Josephus.

In his scholarship and in his personal stance, Philip Payne has been a real champion, especially for women who come from a conservative church background.

*Catherine Clark Kroeger* was Ranked Adjunct Professor of Classical and Ministry Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.
Marnie Ferree presents a deeply moving and sometimes disturbing investigation of sexual abuse from the perspective of the injured, as one who was deeply wounded through sexual victimization, and the healer, as an actively working counselor and minister to those who have experienced similar abuse. And, as if such revelatory investigations from the first-person perspective were not difficult enough, Ferree takes the discussion to an entirely new depth of difficulty: she presents herself as the perpetrator as well.

Those who might benefit from this tangled complication of wounds and wounding, hurt and healing, through the investigation of these diversely difficult and painful perspectives are others who have been similarly wounded, as well as other healers. These are the brave souls who dive into the depths of human darkness in order to provide some much-needed restoration and relief.

Part 1 begins with an exposé of the secret sin of sexual addiction. In her introduction to the subject, Ferree informs the reader that she, as a once-divorced and remarried woman, received a diagnosis of cervical cancer caused by a sexually transmitted disease. The event forced this wife and mother of two young children to admit that she'd been a sex addict since the age of fourteen—a sex addict involved in a long chain of illicit, adulterous affairs. Ferree paints a picture of her spouse as a good and loving husband who was completely unaware of this circumstance, victimized by the infidelity, and bruised by the revelation.

Ferree began a journey of self-discovery that eventually led to a better understanding of herself as a sex addict, a pathway that would eventually permit enough healing in her life to allow her to bring healing into the lives of others. She unrolls for the reader a painful story of sexual abuse and emotional abandonment by her father, a pastor who never remarried following her mother's death early in her life. Instead of ministering to his young daughter's needs, he shut himself off in increasing isolation that made it impossible for him to notice that a young man who had taken an interest in his ten-year-old female child did so for the purpose of sexual abuse. This misadventure and the brokenness it caused over many years fueled Ferree's lifetime of duplicity and promiscuity.

Ferree paints a vivid picture in part 1 of the secret life of a female sex addict. As with other addictions, such as alcoholism, Ferree describes the behavior in terms of a sickness, a disease from which one must be cured. She says, "Perhaps a helpful illustration is to compare sexual addiction to the disease of diabetes. While no one denies the clear biomedical nature of diabetes, we also understand the patient's responsibility to implement lifelong choices in managing the disease" (32).

Ferree explores the many sexual messages absorbed by females throughout their lives through culture. Power, body image, subtle inducements to exhibitionism, love seeking—these social and peer pressures all accost young females, molding self-images and behavior. She also investigates conflicting religious messages that are often equally inappropriate. For instance, the religious community sends a message that women are inferior: "The religious world also sends mixed messages about female sexuality. It encourages women to look sexy but condemns them for having sex. The church teaches it's positive to be feminine, frilly and flirtatious, but it's wrong to be sexually active" (38–39). Such messages lead to a culture of "technical virginity," a "setup for sexual failure" (39).

In part 2, Ferree continues to untangle the knot by addressing unhealthy families, the trauma of abandonment, the continuing pernicious impact of abuse and trauma, and the addict's core beliefs. In parts 3 and 4, Ferree presents the well-employed tools of recovery, including understanding one's own feelings of abandonment, pain, and addictive history, as well as the benefits of counseling, twelve-step programs, and the like.

While I appreciated Ferree's compelling and stirring perspective, I must admit that I disagreed with several of her conclusions, which I felt were rooted in her deep pain and ongoing recovery. She said, "Sexual addiction is clearly more than simply sin. Addressing the problem through only religious solutions is incomplete and doomed to failure. All the prayer, Bible study, church attendance and repentance in the world won't change the course of a life-threatening disease" (53). "When we use prayer, Bible study or other religious acts as the only weapons against complex life problems like addiction, I believe we're using these spiritual tools as impotent religious Band-Aids" (54). "God intended them to be expressions of devotion and vehicles of intimacy with him. They're not meant to be punch-tickets for removing pain" (54).

Although I respect her position and understand what she intended to communicate, I also sense the unhealed remnants of her early spiritual disconnection and personal disappointment, which must have been considerable. My own work with prostitutes and addicts at a large inner-city jail in Orlando, Florida, does not bear out her conclusions.
In fact, having walked alongside innumerable addicts and prostitutes with the rare opportunity of witnessing many who found recovery and many others who did not, I made some observations. I witnessed that a sexually broken and addicted inmate might recover in one of two ways: either with a genuine spiritual conversion experience coupled with a strong recovery plan, or solely with a genuine spiritual conversion experience coupled with the introduction of a strong church network, even when little or no formal recovery work was undertaken.

The common denominator in recovery, in my observation, was a genuine spiritual commitment. What I also noted was that, when a deeply sexually broken and addicted woman attempted to work through the recovery process without the concomitant spiritual experience, this pathway appeared more likely to fail. In fact, so common was this observation throughout the jail administration that it was noted by the highest ranking administrators. This broadly held, long-term observation of recovery success provided the chaplaincy with the systemic credibility to create and launch faith-based, in-jail recovery dorms.

At the same time, Ferree’s experiences of sexual abuse and ongoing rejection by the church are a reproach that believers must come to terms with and address. I deeply regret her experiences with the church. Nevertheless, in my work in the trenches with deeply broken prostitutes and female addicts of all kinds, I also discovered no dearth of willing and eager souls ready to jump into the trenches alongside the chaplaincy to attempt to make a difference in the lives of the hurting. One might even say that this seemingly endless source of love and goodwill, backed up by faithful service to the very least among us, was a bright testimony to balance Ferree’s story—what is truly good about the church.

Ferree writes, “Addressing the problem of addiction requires a dual approach: using every spiritual tool available and using every medical, behavioral and psychological tool, as well” (55). I fully agree with this evaluation. However, she also assessed that “the church has failed miserably, however, to encourage Christians to use other, more worldly tools to fight sinful behavior and addictive diseases. In fact, the church has often shamed those who used resources like therapy or medication or Twelve Step programs as treatment for their addictions” (55).

I must provide a statement of balance here again, using my own observations from the trenches, and rejoin that I did not experience this attitude. In fact, many of the individuals working in all programs of recovery, counseling, and education were Christian believers who joined together with other professionals as a team to create a sometimes seamless network of help. Perhaps one of the great benefits of working in such a dark and difficult environment is that, at times, those genuinely decent souls called to help are able to lay aside their personal differences for the benefit of others.

Ferree writes, “It’s time (actually, it’s way past time) for the church to stop throwing stones at women who are sexually addicted and, instead, to encourage them toward informed ap-

In conclusion, I believe Ferree is making an important statement regarding the need for greater help, healing, and acceptance by the church for women broken by sexual abuse. The church at its noblest and best, at its most forgiving and compassionate, is a force for great good. Christ alone, working through the hearts and minds of a skilled and caring network of faith, can offer genuine and full recovery to even the most broken and rejected among us. This is the miracle of the cross, a living reality at work through God’s people.
The Mother
H. Edgar Hix

Each drop of blood on the road to Golgotha
was matched with a thousand tears of mine.
I, who held Christmas in my body, saw Him carry the tree
and decorate it dank with blood, dark with death.
Oh, the carols he sighed. “Father Forgive Them.”
“I Thirst.” “Son, Behold Your Mother.” What Father would forgive?
What gall could quench that Voice? What Son
could give his mother away on that God forsaken hill?
And then, Hallelujah Chorus: “It Is Finished!”
I gave up the ghosts of Christmas Past and Present
with one vast, vacant, virulent voice wailing, “No!
Oh God on earth, no!” I stood like a tree in a forest fire,
my limbs flaming, my bones charred and breaking, my words
robbed of oxygen by the presence of Hell ripped open, exposed
by nailed Hands; by lifeless hands devoid of
Yet-To-Come.

Then, I woke to find the bed curtains still there,
the dead body gone, the Son returned as red
and irresistible morning. Son, behold your mother
alive again, embraced and embracing. It Is Started!

H. Edgar Hix is a poet who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He works with the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis. He blogs on the CBE Scroll as Hubert Edgar.
Believers and God

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 free 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.
New Resources from CBE

Responding to Abuse in Christian Homes
A Challenge to Churches and their Leaders
Nancy Nason-Clark, Catherine Clark Kroeger, Barbara Fisher-Townsend, editors

There is no easy answer to the problems that surface when abuse impacts the Christian family. This collection provides an opportunity to examine a diversity of perspectives, with the hope that each will advance our understanding of the complexity of domestic violence issues in our midst.

As Christ Submits to the Church
A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission
Alan G. Padgett

Does Christ submit to the church? Should Christians submit to each other? What about husbands and wives? Padgett articulates a creative approach to mutual submission and explores its practical outworking in the church today, providing biblical and ethical affirmation for equality in leadership.