

# No Will of My Own

---

*By Jon Zens | Reviewed by Olga Soler*

This small book (75 pages) elucidates a great present-day adversary to biblical justice and equality: patriarchy. The book is written for the Body of Christ. It is the wish of the author to bring consciousness of the subject to church membership and leadership alike. The view here presented is that patriarchy is not merely uncomfortable for *some* women, but toxic and dangerous to *all* men and women in the faith. The thesis is punctuated with real- life experiences and with excerpts from several pertinent sources, but mostly from the work of Annie Fransen Imbens, author of *Christianity and Incest*. Imbens details accounts of ten victims of sexual and emotional abuse perpetrated by patriarchs in their families and churches.

Zens's book highlights biblical sources that have been misinterpreted to underpin male dominance. It also quotes from the Mishnah and from books oppositional to Zens's view, currently advocating patriarchy in the American evangelical homeschooling movement, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Dutch Reformed Church. He illustrates and exposes the thinking by which they set up and legitimize the promotion of male superiority and the victimization of girls. The author makes it clear he is not vilifying any denomination or homeschooling per se, since his own children have had seasons of homeschooling. He only wishes to bring to light the abuses facilitated, in these institutions and others, by many whose disgraceful practices were protected by false teaching on this subject. More importantly, he wishes to defend the plight of those who suffered in the unholy wake of such thinking.

*No Will of My Own* does a brief but masterful work of exposing the dysfunctional indoctrination received by boys in severe religious homes, giving them airs of superiority and control. In like manner, it points out the physical and psychological programming of females, promoting strict silence, subservience, and ignorance. Women are depicted as the source of evil because of Eve and blamed for the lust of their male family members. Girls are taught that education is undesirable and that they are to be "help-meets" not only to husbands, but also to fathers. Childlikeness is encouraged in women, even in their sexual practices.

Zens also salts the book with views of egalitarian thinking, offering a merciful, biblical dimension to the argument. A point highlighted for this reviewer was the damage not merely to the personhood of victims, but the effects on their relationship with God as well:

How can a woman under the thumb of patriarchy say to the Lord, "not my will but yours," and "not my life but yours" when she has no will or life of her own? If her life and will do not exist, then the giving of herself willingly to our Lord Jesus Christ is prevented or obstructed. Those who are not allowed to have a relationship, an opinion, an expression, a life, or a heart of their

own will be hindered in entering into a personal relationship with the Lord because it is in the Lord's name that they are told they do not exist." (46)

For the sake of safety, all people, young and old, in the fellowship of believers need to be made aware (age appropriately) of the message of this book. Be warned, however, the subject matter is emotionally hard to digest. Because of the intensity of the subject, the concise presentation and brevity of the book is a plus. Sadly, the secular media has dealt with issues like these before the Body of Christ has. This is a travesty that books like this may be useful in preventing for the future.

Readers of the scholarly persuasion who question the reliability of data from the Internet may need to research the subject themselves to substantiate some of Zens's assertions. He does take quotations from blogs and Web sites. Notwithstanding, this reviewer feels there is enough evidence by way of the testimony of counselors and victims to prove that these accounts are not maliciously fabricated. I highly recommend this book to the entire Body of Christ.

---

OLGA SOLER is a director, writer, and performer for Estuary Ministries, which promotes Christian healing and recovery from abuse and addiction through the performing arts. She authored a chapter in *Just Don't Marry One: Interracial Dating, Marriage and Parenting* by George A. Yancy and Sherelyn Whittum Yancey (Judson, 2003). She is the proud mother of three children and lives with her husband, Christopher, and her dog, Kiji, in Bolton, Massachusetts.

---

Originally published in [\*Priscilla Papers\*, Volume 26, Number 4 Autumn 2012, p. 22.](#)

[Purchase your copy today!](#)