

Sects and Gender: Reaction and Resistance to Cultural Change

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A tale of two Baptists

Throughout American history, gender theologies have been used to signify a religious organization's level of tension to the surrounding culture. As a result, religious organizations have changed their gender theologies in response to cultural change. This process can be illustrated by a tale of two Baptists. Invigorated by the First Great Awakening of the 1740s, a robust American tradition of female piety was born. Revivalists broke with Puritan orthodoxy that equated Christianity to a hierarchical family. The revivalists, instead, envisioned a new covenant—one that emphasized individual rebirth within a community that was related, not by biological ties, but by grace. Within the bond of spiritual fellowship, the revivalists affirmed that men and women, rich and poor, lettered and ignorant,¹ were as capable as ordained clergy of discerning spiritual truth, leading to communities of relative egalitarianism.

The revivalist spirit had significant implications for Colonial Baptists. Rejecting the hierarchical Puritan ideals of gender, Baptist women in the mid- to late-eighteenth century served along with men in unprecedented access to Baptist governance and authority. Women participated in all major decisions, including election and dismissal of ministers, admitting and excluding of members, and vociferous theological debates.² In the mid- to late-eighteenth century, Baptist women's religious authority posed a challenge to the hierarchical mainline denominations—the Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists.

More than 200 years later, the largest Baptist organization in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), made headlines when they changed their Statement of Faith and Message for the first time in their history. The SBC “overwhelmingly voted against having women serve as pastors, despite the fact that many women were already serving as pastors.”³

This shift in Baptist theology represents the ways in which gender has come to symbolize an ideological divide within American Protestantism. The divide rests on the *tension* between the denominations and the culture. Both Colonial and twentieth-century Baptist movements stood in opposition to the secular and established religious cultures. Both used gender as a measure of orthodoxy. Yet the outcomes were opposite. Reacting to the cultural norm of patriarchy, Colonial-era Baptists *adopted egalitarian gender ideals*, putting them in *higher tension* to the culture. Reacting to the cultural norm of equality, twentieth-century Baptists *adopted hierarchical gender ideals*, also putting them in *higher tension* to the culture.

The theological shifts represented by these Baptist movements illustrate the *social* nature of religious organization. Sect-church theory explains that religious organizations “range along a continuum from complete rejection to complete acceptance” of the cultural environment.⁴ Sect-like religious organizations

reject the social environment, placing them in *higher* tension with their environment. Church-like organizations accept the social environment, placing them in *lower* tension with their environment.⁵ In rejecting cultural gender norms sect-like religious bodies often maintain higher tension to the society by adopting strict gender beliefs and practices.⁶

Part I: Gender theologies and sect-church theory

Gender Theologies

Throughout Christian history two narratives have been articulated regarding gender. The most well-documented, and perhaps most criticized, is the “tradition in which gender relations are organized by the principles of hierarchy and subordination.”⁷ Sally Gallagher illustrates this strain of belief, citing church fathers who mirrored their own Greco-Roman culture which was predisposed to misogyny.⁸ These writers state that women do not bear the full image of God (Augustine), that women are the means through which Adam was deceived (Ignatius), that women are the devil's gateway (Tertullian), or that women are misbegotten men (Aquinas). This narrative is the root from which many modern Christians adopt gender essentialism (the idea that women and men were created differently in essence) and hierarchy. Today, this narrative relies on the apostle Paul's teachings in 1 Cor 14:34, 1 Cor 11:3, and 1 Tim 2:11-12.⁹

A second narrative may be less well-known, but also enjoys a long history. It emphasizes partnership and mutuality between women and men¹⁰ and relies on the apostle Paul's teaching that “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28 NRSV). Proponents cite heroines who spread the good news of Christ, such as Mary Magdalene, Philip's four daughters, Priscilla, and Phoebe.¹¹ They also point out Paul's apparent inconsistencies, arguing that if women were forbidden from preaching, Paul would not have instructed them to cover their heads when praying or prophesying in public (1 Cor 11:5);¹² nor would he have given spiritual authority to Priscilla in the teaching of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). Church fathers like Tertullian (the same who taught “woman is the devil's gateway”) are also cited for urging mutuality between husbands and wives.¹³

The question most often asked is which narrative is the correct one, which is the true biblical perspective. That is a theological and hermeneutical question. As a sociologist, I ask a different question: “Why do Christian groups change their gender theologies?” This question is critical because the fact that Christians do change their gender interpretations over time strongly suggests they are responding to changes outside of the scriptures. Underneath these narratives lies an often overlooked element of the *social* nature of religion—how religious groups function in regard to the larger culture. At any given moment, religious groups are negotiating,

either as a reaction against or as an accommodation to, secular culture. Today we see the same phenomenon within American Christianity, where mainline and liberal denominations adopt increasingly *egalitarian* gender ideals and fundamentalist and evangelical Christian groups adopt increasingly *hierarchical* gender ideals. To explain these patterns, we turn now to sect-church theory.

Sect–church theory: Tension, strictness, and limits to strictness

According to economist Larry Iannaccone, “Few concepts in the sociology of religion have engendered as much fascination or frustration as those of church and sect.”¹⁴ As concepts that underpin the classification of religious bodies, sect and church have generated significant controversy.¹⁵

By the end of the twentieth century researchers clarified the differences between sect and church by using the concepts of *tension* and *strictness*. Stark and Finke proposed that the acceptance or rejection of the surrounding socio-cultural environment could be characterized by the amount of *tension* between religious bodies and the larger culture: “the degree of distinctiveness, separation, and antagonism between a religious group and the ‘outside’ world.”¹⁶ Thus, sect-like bodies exist in relatively higher tension with the surrounding culture, and church-like bodies exist in lower tension with the surrounding culture.¹⁷

To account for the success of sectarian movements Iannaccone refined sect-church theory using an additional characteristic: strictness. For sectarian groups, tension creates strong in-group boundaries, because the group sustains norms and values significantly different from those of the surrounding culture.¹⁸ These distinctive group norms influence all aspects of the lives of the sect’s adherents, creating strict groups that are extensive, exclusive, and expensive.

Extensive: The higher the tension between the group and its surrounding environment, the more extensive the *commitment* to the group, allowing doctrine (the collective teachings of the group) to impinge on everything from defining whom members associate with to how they spend their leisure time.¹⁹

Exclusive: Protestant religious organizations claim exclusive *beliefs*, worshipping the same God, yet differing greatly regarding what God is like and what is required to be a good Christian. Exclusive Protestant groups recognize only one road to salvation and require a life-changing conversion experience for membership.²⁰

Expensive: Groups impose nonnegotiable demands on members’ behavior.²¹ In meeting these demands, members pay a high social cost to belong to the group.

Extensive, exclusive, and expensive groups generate higher levels of commitment, solidifying the truth of the group’s doctrine, practices, and promises. Strict groups have higher personal costs that are balanced by the higher personal satisfaction of belonging to a strong religious body—higher costs screen out those whose participation would otherwise be low, while simultaneously increasing participation among those who join.²² Members of strict religious groups contribute more money, attend more services, have stronger beliefs, and are less involved in secular activities and organizations.²³ Strictness does more to explain individual

rates of religious participation than any other individual-level characteristic, including age, sex, race, region, income, education, marital status, or even personal beliefs.²⁴ This “strict churches are strong” argument has proven to be a powerful predictor of congregational growth, as well as a powerful predictor of the role of gender within a religious group.

Organizational strictness, however, can result in diminishing returns: increased strictness adds to the attractiveness of a church only because its benefits outweigh its costs. These benefits can take the form of greater group participation, commitment, or solidarity.²⁵ The costs can include stigma, self-sacrifice, and social isolation.²⁶ Groups can “eventually reach a point beyond which the benefits of increased strictness are outweighed by the costs,” driving away virtually all current and potential members.²⁷ To maintain an optimal level of strictness, sect-like groups must maintain a certain tension with society, “adjusting to social change so as not to become too deviant, but not embracing change so fully as to lose all distinctiveness.”²⁸

Part II: Gender and sect-church theory in American Christianity

Gender and social structure

One of the most powerful mechanisms through which sect-like groups maintain tension with the larger culture is their gender theology. Gender has long been a dividing line between sect-like and church-like groups, functioning as a central element of boundary work.²⁹ For sect-like groups, higher tension is explained as an extension of the apostle Paul’s teaching to be in, but not of, the world (Rom 12:2).

Rather than being static, gender ideals are fluid because culture is fluid. As economic, political, or social structures change, gender ideals change, with religious groups rejecting or accepting new ideals. For example, the most powerful predictor of gender ideals—both secular and religious—is changing economic conditions. When the United States shifted from an agrarian to an industrial economy, American gender ideals substantially changed, ushering in the feminist movement as a protest to increasingly restrictive roles for women. The second wave of the feminist movement, the Women’s Liberation movement of the 1970s, resulted from the shift from manufacturing to service economy. During both periods religious groups responded by shifting their gender ideals to maintain a particular level of tension with the culture.

A review of American Christian history demonstrates how and when sect-like groups have reacted against the prevailing culture by shifting gender ideals to maintain higher tension with the culture, whereas church-like groups have accommodated to new gender ideals remaining in low tension with the culture. This historical perspective is crucial to understanding how gender is constructed by social forces that lead to Christian groups’ rejection or acceptance of the culture’s gender ideals in order to increase or decrease their tension with the culture. The following review clarifies the social nature of the shifts in American Christian gender ideals by looking at several historical periods

The upstart sects: Revolutionary-era gender equality, 1790–1840

Throughout American history Christian understandings and practices of gender theologies have shifted with the larger culture.

The largest, most influential denominations of the early nineteenth century, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, restricted women's religious speech and forbade them to preach.³⁰ The 1832 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, for example, declared that "to teach and exhort, or to lead in prayer, in public . . . is clearly forbidden to women in the Holy Oracles."³¹

Inspired by the populist rhetoric of the American Revolution, "upstart" religious groups rejected the established denominations' restrictions on women. Increasing their tension with the larger religious and secular cultures, these Methodists and Baptists supported women in leadership and preaching.³² The "upstart sects" believed that religious authority came from heartfelt experience.³³ Since God communicated directly to believers, it was just as likely that God would inspire women to proclaim the gospel.³⁴ Women participated in governance as well as preaching at meetings³⁵ and exercising full rights as members of the body.³⁶ Nothing, however, symbolized the upstart sects' counter-cultural identity more "than their willingness to allow large numbers of women into the pulpit."³⁷ This widening of women's authority drew strident criticism from Episcopal, Congregational, and Presbyterian ministers, many of whom argued for the continued silence of women at religious gatherings.³⁸ Maintaining strict standards of behavior (for example, no drinking, no gambling, no swearing) and emphasizing the natural equality of all believers, the Methodists and Baptists created high tension with the established religious and secular cultures—by being less restrictive on women.

Strictness, however, does not necessarily mean greater restrictions on women. Strictness is about beliefs and practices that create a higher level of tension with the surrounding culture. The established denominations in the Revolutionary era were especially restrictive for women, meaning that in order to increase tension with the culture, the upstart sects adopted more egalitarian theologies—but still had significantly strict beliefs (the right of all believers to discern God's teachings apart from an established clergy) and practices (no drinking, no gambling, no frivolity). Thus they were strict religious groups in higher tension with the patriarchal culture.

The upstart sects' egalitarian bent and focus on persuasion, rather than coercion, for conversion³⁹ resulted in the groups becoming larger and more powerful.⁴⁰ By the 1830s and 1840s, these flourishing groups had become established denominations. During this shift from sect-like to church-like, the denominations purposely turned away from their more radical roots, decreasing tension with the culture to blend in with the Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians.⁴¹ Denominations like the Methodists that had once been open to women in leadership were now restricting women—going so far as to excommunicate one preacher when she refused to stop holding meetings.⁴² The decreasing of tension of the upstart sects coincided with the significant economic shift to industrial capitalism. This economic shift would prescribe denominational gender roles for several decades.

The Cult of True Womanhood and the Cult of the Self-Made Man, 1840-1880

In the nineteenth century, America's agrarian economy gave way to the wage-based industrial economy, where not only did the

nature of work change, but gender ideals changed as well. By the mid-nineteenth century industrialization had created a "separate spheres" gender ideology. As men moved away from the family farm and home production and into wage-based urban factory work, women carried on with the traditional home production of the rural economy. The separation of families—women still engaged in home production and men working in factories—created a gender ideology that constituted women and men as opposites. This ideal awarded some human traits to men and others to women, creating what we now call the Cult of True Womanhood and the Cult of the Self-Made Man. True Women were pious, sexually pure, submissive, and domestic.⁴³ Self-Made Men were economically successful, independent, self-controlled, and responsible.⁴⁴ This gender dichotomy shifted the institution of religion into the female sphere, defining women as the naturally religious sex. Defining men as the naturally productive sex shifted work and business into the male sphere.⁴⁵

American denominations quickly adapted to these gender ideals, legitimating them through scripture and stipulating that women and men were created by God to hold these particular gendered traits and roles—even though praxis and history illustrated otherwise. The white middle-class⁴⁶ denominations that accepted the gender theology of True Women and Self-made Men were often the same denominations that had previously existed in higher tension with the culture—the old upstart sects were now church-like in their acceptance of cultural gender ideals.

Not all white Protestants acceded to the upstart sects' slide toward church-like denominations and their acceptance of restrictive gender theologies. The holiness movement served as a protest to denominations decreasing their tension with the culture. Phoebe Palmer, one of the foremost leaders of the holiness movement, wanted a stricter religion with higher tension with the culture, including the right of women to preach. When denominations like the Methodists criticized the women preaching in the holiness movement, Palmer responded with a spirited defense of their right to preach in her 1859 book, *The Promise of the Father*.

While most white denominations were adapting to the Cult of True Womanhood and the Cult of the Self-Made Man, black Christians created an alternative gender theology. Traditionally designated as "laborers," a category that cast them as less than fully human, black women and men were excluded by the dominant gender theology. Developing an alternative theology, black families rejected "separate spheres," instead defining women (like men) by their resourcefulness, independence, and intelligence. For white women to openly be and/or use their intelligence was not considered acceptable, for it was equated exclusively with masculinity.⁴⁷ For black women, not using their God-given intelligence was to dishonor God and their families. Black feminist Maggie Walker declared in a 1912 speech to the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs that, "every woman was by Divine Providence created . . . not for some man to marry, take home and support, but for the purpose of using her powers, ability, health and strength to forward the financial . . . success of the partnership into which she may go, if she will."⁴⁸ Therefore, white Protestant denominations decreased their tension with the culture, adopting

the Cults of True Womanhood and the Self-Made Man, while black Protestant denominations increased their tension with the culture, rejecting the Cults of True Womanhood and the Self-Made Man.

The cults of True Womanhood and the Self-Made Man segregated women and men into separate spheres; men inhabited the competitive economic world of business, while women inhabited a world of religion and piety. But as industrialization and the market economy grew, people worried about the moral dangers of unrestrained capitalism.⁴⁹ To minimize these dangers, while maximizing the potential rewards, Protestants married morality to productivity—literally—by coupling productive men to pious women, to create a moral capitalist order. Together, pious women and productive men formed Godly homes—“the epitome of Christian progress.”⁵⁰

Muscular Christianity, 1880-1920

By the end of the nineteenth century, the changing relationship between religion and business called for a new gender theology. Protestant men began to see religion as effeminate and moved to recodify it as masculine.⁵¹ As one proponent of Muscular Christianity stated, “The women have had charge of the church work long enough.”⁵² In the words of Muscular Christianity star, Billy Sunday, “The Lord save us from off-handed, flabby-cheeked, brittle-boned, weak-kneed, thin-skinned, pliable, plastic, spineless, effeminate, ossified, three-carat Christianity.”⁵³ The Muscular Christianity movement was an effort to counteract the attachment of women to religion,⁵⁴ bringing congruence to Protestantism and twentieth-century business and politics.⁵⁵

Muscular Christians successfully realigned the relation between religion and commerce by reshaping constructions of gender,⁵⁶ reducing tension between the established Protestant denominations and the economic culture. Women, who had been considered the purveyors of religious faith for home, church, and society during industrialization, lost their influence in Protestant denominational life. In fact, by the end of the 1920s, the vibrant women’s missionary associations, which had been organized and run entirely by women, had all been taken over by male denominational leaders.⁵⁷ By decreasing tension with the larger culture the established Protestant denominations significantly restricted religious women.

Fundamentalism and modernism, 1920-1942

Muscular Christianity peaked in the 1920s, precisely when American Protestantism fractured into fundamentalist (sect) and modernist (church) factions.⁵⁸ Fundamentalist Protestantism “was born in an era of anxiety over gender roles.”⁵⁹ The Great Depression made women’s economic contributions to the family crucial for all but the wealthy. As women moved more and more into paid labor, mainline denominations decreased tension with society. These denominations relaxed restrictions on women, mirroring the culture’s new economic realities and gender ideals. Fundamentalists increased tension with society in a “decisive reaction” against the conventional Victorian piety that had elevated women as the “keepers of morality.”⁶⁰ Reversing Victorian ideals, fundamentalism asserted that men had a natural aptitude for religion and were divinely equipped to defend Christian orthodoxy.

Women, on the other hand, were defined as the psychologically vulnerable sex.⁶¹

Because fundamentalism claimed a monopoly on Protestant orthodoxy, by adhering to five fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith,⁶² their emerging tradition conflates gender theology with orthodoxy. In the wake of fundamentalism’s success at defining orthodoxy through a strict gender theology, and increasing tension with society, the Protestant modernists (mainline) lowered tension by adopting increasingly egalitarian gender theologies—to blend in more with the culture, but also to separate themselves from the fundamentalists.

Mainline denominations defended gender equality primarily through a Wesleyan perfectionist doctrine that required a “nonliteral, thematic reading of the Pauline prescriptions used to silence women.”⁶³ This egalitarian argument relied on the idea that biblical restrictions on women’s leadership in the church were temporary, swept away by the atoning death and resurrection of Christ.⁶⁴ Fundamentalists rejected cultural and historical readings of the NT, especially regarding women and women’s roles.⁶⁵ Fundamentalists increased their tension with the secular and religious establishments by rejecting arguments for gender equality in both home and denominations.

In the 1930s and ’40s a group of men within fundamentalism sought to bridge the chasm between fundamentalist and “moderate” Protestantism with “neo-evangelicalism.”⁶⁶ What we refer to today as “evangelical” comes from this fundamentalist fracture. The evangelical movement was an attempt to bring fundamentalism out of intellectual isolation in order to broaden its appeal.⁶⁷ These evangelicals (e.g., Billy Graham, Charles Fuller, Harold Ockenga) wanted to combine the scriptural orthodoxy of fundamentalism with the social engagement of liberalism, creating a Protestant movement of engaged orthodoxy.⁶⁸ Conflating gender theology with orthodoxy, the evangelicals adopted gender hierarchy as the naturally ordered creation of masculine authority and strength, and subsequently feminine weakness. As America came out of World War II, fundamentalist and evangelical gender theologies would set the stage for the gender controversies that would consume Protestants from the end of the twentieth through the beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

The long decade of the breadwinner/homemaker, 1946-1965

Having adopted the gender hierarchy of fundamentalist Protestantism, the fledgling evangelical movement of the 1950s lowered tension with society by reinforcing the ideal of a husband as provider, leader, and decision-maker and wives as helpmates and mothers—ideals perfectly suited to the post-War family life of the breadwinner/homemaker cultural ideal.⁶⁹ Fundamentalists and evangelicals saw the breadwinner/homemaker roles as self-evident God-ordained roles for women and men. Their ability to practice these roles was a result of the post-War economic boom that enabled an unprecedented number of white, middle-class families to live on the wages of one earner.⁷⁰ Fundamentalist and evangelical Protestants decreased their tension with society, aligning with the breadwinner/homemaker gender ideal—as did mainline Protestants.

While the breadwinner/homemaker gender ideal remains the most iconic standard of American Christian gender ideals, it

began to fray by the late-1960s. With higher levels of education for women, compressed child bearing and rearing, and an expanding service market, middle-class white women re-entered the labor force in striking numbers.⁷¹ As wages began to fall for men, working wives became critical for families trying to maintain a middle-class lifestyle. Responding to these changing social and economic conditions and with a push toward equality for women dominating discourses of the larger culture, mainline denominations adjusted their practices, decreased tension with the culture, and adopted more egalitarian gender theologies. Fundamentalists and evangelicals reacted harshly to changes in women's roles, blaming working women for rising divorce rates, out-of-wedlock births, declining marriage rates, and the destruction of the American family.⁷² They increased tension with society in order to maintain a strict breadwinner/homemaker gender theology.

Fundamentalists and evangelicals rejected equality and feminism outright, making the case that "gender hierarchy and difference were not only the clear message of the Bible but unavoidably reflected in the physiological and psychological differences between women and men."⁷³ Unable to dismiss the spread of feminism in the culture and the mainline churches, conservatives worked to discredit it. One tactic was to claim that egalitarianism undermined the authority of the Bible by treating texts related to gender as culturally relative truths. Moreover, according to conservative Christians, when egalitarians treated texts on gender as culturally relative, they were distorting God's ordained hierarchy, erasing the clear differences between women and men in both function and authority.⁷⁴ The result would be utter social chaos.⁷⁵

Headship/submission vs. egalitarianism/Christian feminism, 1970-1990

By the end of the 1970s the word "feminism" had become conservative Christianity's true "F-word." Conservative Christians embraced a "gender essentialist" ideology, where God's primary design for men is as economic providers and for women as homemakers and nurturers. In the mid-1990s, researchers focusing on conservative Christianity and gender found that, although gender essentialists still espoused a gender hierarchy, the rhetoric and practice had shifted. Noting that much of their audience were dual-working families, conservative Christians decreased tension with society, somewhat, by redefining hierarchy as a headship/submission hierarchy rather than breadwinner/homemaker. Even this was mostly symbolic.⁷⁶ The "headship/submission" gender ideology preserved hierarchical gender roles, while allowing dual-earner families to align with a religiously legitimated gender ideology. The mostly symbolic nature of the headship/submission gender ideal decreased tension and muted hierarchy while maintaining conservative Christianity's orthodox core.⁷⁷ Mainline churches responded to the cultural movement toward women's equality, decreasing tension with the culture.

Yet, by the end of the twentieth century, social scientists and historians specializing in gender and religion found that conservative Christian hierarchy had yielded to pragmatism.⁷⁸ Most conservative Christians affirmed two ideals, the ideal of husbands' headship—including men being the spiritual leaders of

the household and having the final authority in decision-making—and the ideal of partnership in marriage.⁷⁹ The latter ideal gave way to a wider acceptable range of gendered experience, particularly for men.⁸⁰ Hierarchy is still used by conservative Christians as a baseline understanding of gender relations, resulting in a higher level of tension with society. Hierarchy is softened, however, by "complementarianism," which argues that women and men are *equal in essence*, but different in role.⁸¹

In spite of the fact that most conservative Christians are pragmatically egalitarian, they retain the ideals of headship and submission. Because they are pragmatic egalitarians, husbands' headship takes on even greater significance as a mark of conservative Christian identity. Abandoning the ideal of husbands' headship would remove a primary way in which evangelicals distinguish themselves from secular culture: "What is the benefit, after all, of arguing that God calls men and women to share responsibility and authority within the household when the broader culture espouses the same ideal?"⁸²

Promise Keepers, 1990s

The Promise Keepers movement of the 1990s came as a response to the softening of conservative Christian gender ideals through symbolic headship and pragmatic egalitarianism. The movement initially sought to increase tension with society by exhorting men to "take back" leadership within their homes and congregations. With the economic necessity of dual-earner families, the movement also tried to decrease tension by broadening men's gender roles, making them practical in light of the changing social and economic realities of home life.⁸³ For example, drawing from practical egalitarianism, some in the movement advocated men take leadership by helping their wives with household labor.

Promise Keepers initially appealed to both conservative and mainline men, growing rapidly. But the movement was ambivalent in regard to gender. Started by conservative Protestants who tried to increase tension with the culture using a message of male headship, the movement eventually decreased tension with a message of practical egalitarianism. John Bartkowski writes that, "Although many Promise Keepers would probably not see themselves as heirs to the egalitarian legacy of evangelical feminism . . . much Promise Keepers rhetoric has clearly been informed by biblical feminist critiques waged against 'unchristian' forms of domination and exclusion."⁸⁴ This ambivalence between gender hierarchy and egalitarianism partially explains the movement's quick demise; Promise Keepers did not create enough tension with the culture to satisfy sect-like groups, but created too much tension for church-like groups. The rapid rise and fall of Promise Keepers illustrates that by the end of the twentieth century the rhetoric of strict gender roles had given way to a less aggressive and more ambivalent division of gender.⁸⁵ Conservatives and mainliners had both decreased tension to survive in the economic climate, yet by keeping the symbolism of headship conservatives were able to remain in higher tension to the larger culture.

Neo-Muscular Christianity, 2000-present

As headship/submission became mostly symbolic and practical egalitarianism reigned within conservative Christian homes,

this caused a crisis for sect-like groups who contested the church-like accommodation of symbolic headship and practical egalitarianism. In response to the softening of strict gender ideals and praxis and the ambivalence about gender within Protestant culture, a competing sectarian gender ideology seeking to raise tension with the culture emerged—neo-Muscular Christianity.

Neo-Muscular Christianity focuses on adopting more masculine styles and developing programs that teach men to be manly, casting Jesus as a “religious Rambo” and portraying the Christian life as a “heroic quest” of spiritual manhood.⁸⁶ Books like John Eldredge’s *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul* state that men are hardwired by God to be wild and dangerous creatures—that all men need to live out three essential desires: to fight a battle, to live an adventurous life, and to rescue a beauty.⁸⁷ Men are adjured to reappropriate traits like action, leadership, courage, and economic prowess as exclusively male by biological and divine design in order to reclaim Christianity from women, who have feminized the church.⁸⁸ In this milieu, Christian theology and doctrine are interpreted to validate the norms of hegemonic masculinity, while being billed as “counter-cultural,” creating a strict gender theology in significant tension to the secular norm of gender equality.

Part III: Strictness and gender at Mars Hill Church

The rise and fall of Mars Hill Church emphasizes the social nature of sect-like movements and the importance of gender theologies as a boundary marker. Nondenominational megachurch pastor Mark Driscoll received international attention for his rhetoric of Christian masculinity. Driscoll’s strident masculine focus helped Seattle’s Mars Hill Church become one of the fastest growing congregations in the country. Similar to other sect-like movements, Driscoll’s gender theology was a reaction to the softening of sect-like gender ideals, increasing the tension between his congregation, local Seattle culture, and other Christian groups.

Driscoll’s theology reverted to a strict gender essentialist ideology. In an online forum from December 2000, Driscoll outlines his perspective on gender. Posting as William Wallace II (a nod to Mel Gibson’s character in the movie *Braveheart*, apparently an exemplar of a true Christian man), Driscoll writes:

We live in a completely pussified nation. We could get every real man as opposed to pussified James Dobson knock-off crying Promise Keeping homoerotic worship loving mama’s boy sensitive emasculated neutered exact male replica evagellyfish, and have a conference in a phone booth. It all began with Adam, the first of the pussified nation, who kept his mouth shut and watched everything fall headlong down the slippery slide of hell/feminism when he shut his mouth and listened to his wife who thought Satan was a good theologian when he should have lead [sic] her and exercised his delegated authority as king of the planet. . . . And so the culture and families and churches sprint to hell because the men aren’t doing their job and the feminists continue their rant that it’s all our fault and we should just let them be pastors and heads of homes and run the show. And the more we do, the more hell looks like a good place because at least a man is in charge, has a bit of order and let’s [sic] men spit and scratch as needed.

Driscoll’s gender theology created significantly more tension toward the culture than the “soft patriarchy” of symbolic headship and practical egalitarianism. But Driscoll is no rogue itinerant teacher—he is one of many (though he stands alone in his flamboyant language and caricatures of women and men).

Driscoll teaches strict gender essentialism and complementarianism: “God made men and women equally important, but gave them distinct roles in the church and home.”⁸⁹ These roles are hierarchical with the man as the head and the woman as his helper, as Driscoll describes:

[The Bible] lays out authority and respect for authority and submission to authority. God the Father, and then who? Jesus Christ, and then who? The husband or the man, and then what? The woman or the wife. That’s the order of authority. . . . A lot of you women will say, “I don’t need to submit to any authority.” Well, you’re not any better than Jesus, and if it was good for him it’s good for you (CGW25).⁹⁰

While Driscoll draws clear lines between women and men, his focus is on *men*: “Mars Hill is about men. . . . We see Mars Hill as a man factory; boys come in, men go out. Period. That’s what we’re about” (CGW33). Driscoll upholds Jesus as the ideal man: “Before I was a Christian, I was very disinterested in Jesus because I thought, ‘Why give your life to a man you can beat up?’ That’s what I thought. Because the pictures I’d all seen of Jesus—he had feathered hair, was wearing a dress, listening to a lot of Elton John” (VJ5). Luckily for his followers, Driscoll found a Jesus he could worship:

Now, this guy right here, I can’t take Him, right? He’s got a robe dipped in blood. Any guy who has blood as an accessory is tough, right? And it ain’t His blood, that’s another point. . . . On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written, “King of Kings, Lord of Lords,” tattooed down the leg of Jesus, right? This is tattooed-up, white-horse-riding, blazing-eyes, all-seeing, sword-coming-to-slaughter-the-nations, robe-dipped-in-blood Jesus. Love that guy. (VJ5)

Like other neo-Muscular Christian proponents, Driscoll blurs the line between sex and gender, proclaiming that gender is fixed, unchanging across time and place. “Men should be masculine, women should be feminine . . . chicks should be chicks, dudes should be dudes. That’s the way it is [because] gender roles are not subject to change and preference” (CGW25). Yet he is also telling his audience that men have forgotten how to be men and must learn how to be masculine—like Jesus.⁹¹ Driscoll uses the apostle Paul as an example of how to learn true Christian manhood from Jesus:

Paul was out making trouble, [Jesus] comes down from heaven and smacks Paul around, kind of like an Ultimate Fighter. I love that about Jesus, because you never know when he might show up and just knock you around a little bit. . . . Jesus comes down from heaven knocks [Paul] on the ground and blinds him for three days. . . . Yeah, if Jesus came down and like punched you in the mouth and then made you blind for three days and said you’re gonna be a Christian now, and you’re gonna be a missionary—after

three days you'd be like, "Yeah, that's what I'm doin' now that I'm blind, and I would like not to be blind." (CGW₂)

Once Driscoll established Jesus's largely misunderstood masculine nature and Paul's new masculinity, he casts a hypermasculine lens over the interpretations of other biblical characters:

You got around Paul when he was a young guy, you got around John the Baptist, or Elijah, I mean these dudes seem pretty rough to me. You know, they don't look like church guys... walking around in sweater vests singing love songs to Jesus. I mean guys like David are well known for their ability to slaughter other men. I've got to think these guys were dudes: heterosexual, win a fight, punch you in the nose, dudes.⁹²

Another important component of neo-Muscular Christianity is a man's ability to be the sole economic provider for his family. True men must emulate Jesus the carpenter, "a normal working guy with a lunch box and a tool belt." (VJ₁) Driscoll tells his audience: "Paul says if a man does not provide for the needs of his family, he's denied the faith; he's worse than an unbeliever" (CGW₁).⁹³ While Driscoll's rhetoric harkens back to the iconic breadwinner/homemaker ideal, he takes it a step further, telling men who do not fully provide for their families that they are neither real men nor real Christians.⁹⁴

Boundary keeping: Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing

For pastors like Driscoll, neo-Muscular Christianity creates strict boundaries between a congregation and the culture at large, helping congregations to thrive because sect-movements thrive on distinction, tension, conflict, and threat.⁹⁵ While Driscoll successfully created high tension between his congregation and the larger culture, he did more than that. Driscoll created a religious group with all of the hallmarks of strictness; Mars Hill Church was extensive, exclusive, and expensive.

Recall that strict religious bodies proclaim an exclusive, comprehensive, and eternal doctrine, demanding adherence to a distinctive faith, morality, and lifestyle.⁹⁶ Sect-like groups distinguish two classes of people. The group's members comprise the true believers. The non-members—the heathen or heretics—reject the sect and their doctrines, and in turn are rejected by the sect.⁹⁷ Being a true believer is exclusive, creating not only tension between the sectarian group and the larger culture, but tension between the group and other sect-like and church-like groups.

Mars Hill Church created clear boundaries around who was a true believer, cementing the collective identity of the Mars Hill family.

There's a lot of people who say they're a Christian and they're not.... Well, we're not all Christians. Some of us are lying or deceived. Just like when you look at Jesus and his twelve disciples, there was Judas on the team who looked like he was on the team but was ripping off Jesus and didn't love him. There's always a few Judases in the bunch.... In this church, there are people who love God and are living new lives; there are people who aren't living new lives, which indicates that they don't love God. (CGW₁₂)

Mars Hill Church created a strikingly expensive group. Mars Hill not only put boundaries between the congregation and outsiders,

but also generated boundaries within the congregation. Driscoll describes the threat from within:

So the question becomes if [Mars Hill is] . . . constantly under attack from within by people that are deceived and claim to be Christians. . . . How in the world does a church like Mars Hill defend, protect itself from this kind of deception coming in, leading to the destruction of the church, getting completely off track, and thus becoming yet another church that had a great start and a tragic end? (CGW₅)

Mars Hill members understood that the biggest threat to the congregation came from within—the wolves in sheep's clothing. One woman articulated to me in an interview how she interpreted this dynamic at Mars Hill:

The core mission of Mars Hill Church is to give you direct ways to get to Jesus—and it may cost you friends, loved ones, family members, [and] lovers, because loving Jesus is the core mission. But that breeds a distrust between the people in the pews and that distrust has to occur for someone to be on board with Mars Hill Church. When Mark Driscoll talks, there's a divide between those who are Christian and those who aren't. You are never sure who's next to you in the pew—if it's a believer or not. . . . you're always on guard.

Costs were high for those who could not or did not conform to group doctrine. The ever-present threat of being defined as a wolf kept members adhering to complementarian gender theology. A strict gender theology, however, is not always a successful strategy for groups. Shifts in the economy and other social conditions impact the ability of members to maintain the theology.

Mars Hill Church's gender theology was successful in setting the congregation apart from the larger culture. In 2013 the group claimed more than 12,000 members across fourteen campuses in four states.⁹⁸ But things were changing for Mars Hill. While sect-church theory can explain the growth of religious groups through strictness, the theory can also explain the decline of groups that are too strict. How strict is too strict? How extensive, exclusive and expensive can groups be and still survive?

Gender in hindsight

Mars Hill Church thrived under Driscoll's leadership, taking strictness to new levels. For nearly twenty years Mars Hill sustained an optimal level of strictness, resulting in explosive growth. There are, however, limits to strictness: "As a group becomes progressively more strict, it eventually reaches a point beyond which the additional benefits of increased strictness are outweighed by additional costs."⁹⁹ At some point too much strictness will drive away virtually all current and potential members, causing just as much harm as too little.¹⁰⁰ There is a balance; adjusting enough to social change in order to maintain tension with society, but not adjusting too much, driving the tension beyond an acceptable level.

In the wake of the economic recession, Mars Hill Church exceeded the acceptable level of strictness. As Mars Hill fell apart over the summer of 2014, many stories emerged, linking the congregation's strict gender theology to the disillusionment of

members who found they could no longer practice the doctrines. The result of this shift often resulted in these members being shunned by the larger congregation. These former members describe their initial acceptance of the strict gender theology at Mars Hill:¹⁰¹

Kyle: “Mark set a high bar for men: a mix of ‘hardline’ complementarianism. . . . I and many others in Mars Hill Church mirrored much of what Mark taught. We’d get together to watch UFC fights. . . . We’d take our brothers to task when we saw them not looking like the cultural version of ‘men’ Mark pressed us to look like.”

Chandin: “At Mars Hill I felt like women were occasionally brushed aside in favor of men. I even felt that Mark gave permission to objectify women as long as the woman was their wife. But I never felt like it was misogynistic. That seemed too strong, too extreme.”

Economic shifts in the culture significantly altered the costs of complementarianism. Even for those who followed the prescribed complementarian path, at some point circumstances changed and the costs of maintaining strict gender ideals became too high:

Sara: “Over time, we were influenced by the pressure we heard from the pulpit on how we need to have children because they are a blessing (not saying they aren’t) and it is biblical to not use birth control. . . . The more we went to church the more we thought about having children and so we changed our plans and got pregnant. . . .”

But during the recession, when Sara’s husband lost his job she was told by congregation leaders that her husband “wasn’t doing enough and wasn’t fit to be a father or husband since he had no job. As if all his other Godly qualities are worthless because of the economy! Unfortunately, I agreed with the church and started to resent my husband for not having a job.” Like Sara, others from Mars Hill noted that watching their spouses struggle with gender ideals made them question the ideals.

Autumn: “I want to share how harmful Mark’s preaching was to my husband. . . . my husband is the most humble man I know and I am still sad about what he went through for years as a result of being told almost every Sunday; how he’s not man enough, how he needs to live up to unrealistic expectations, and how to live by the gospel of hard work and shame instead of the gospel of grace and love.”

Mike: “Misogyny. There, I said it. I stood idly by and willingly participated in a culture of misogyny. . . . During this time I made some huge mistakes. I pressured my brilliant and hard-working wife to give up her dream of law school and have a baby and be a stay-at-home mom as soon as possible.”

As they began to see gender ideals differently, some of the women and men expressed concerns about the impact of the group’s strict complementarian ideals and their complicity in the system.

Amanda: “People were afraid to question the severe complementarian theology Pastor Mark encouraged. . . .”

the chauvinistic culture was negatively impacting the marriages of people I knew and loved. I knew women who were afraid to deny sex to their husbands, women who were afraid to pursue passions outside the home, and women who were afraid to speak about the neglect they experienced from husbands who were absorbed in ministry. These women thought that any unhappiness they felt was because they weren’t praying hard enough, didn’t know how to submit to their husbands well enough, didn’t have hearts that were right enough.”

Whereas women were concerned about how other women were impacted by gender ideals, men were more likely to express how they had participated in the shaming of other men for not being “man enough.”

Kyle: “Over the past few months I’ve sought forgiveness from several men I sat across from and shamed: I yelled at them and intimidated them for failing to ‘stand up as men’. . . . The hardest thing for me as I process my time at Mars Hill Church has been my response to Mark’s shaming of men—shaming of me—from the pulpit.”

For others, the consequences of following strict complementarian theology were more severe.

Christine: “I took what I was being fed and foolishly believed it because it was disguised so well with scripture. I believed what was preached numerous times over the years about how a woman should look, so much to the extent that I thought I was being a good wife by starving myself so that I’d be pleasing for my husband to look at almost to the point of my death. . . .”

Mars Hill’s gender theology did not change, but economic conditions did. Mars Hill’s strategy to set themselves apart from the culture and from other religious groups made it impossible for them to accommodate to changing social conditions. Adhering to a strict complementarian theology became too expensive for many members.

Conclusion

American Christians have regularly shifted their gender ideologies in response to cultural changes. Sect-church theory explains *how* and *why* Christian gender theologies develop: groups change their gender theologies in order to maintain a particular level of tension with the society. The current secular cultural ideal of gender is egalitarianism. Therefore sect-like groups adopt headship/submission gender theologies to be in greater tension with the culture, while church-like groups adopt egalitarian theologies to be in lower tension to the culture. For sectarian groups like Mars Hill Church, increasing tension by adopting strict essentialist or complementarian theologies may initially produce high levels of commitment. In the midst of changing cultural conditions, however, strict gender theologies may impose demands that become too costly for members.

American Christians often have trouble seeing the impact of social and cultural forces on religious institutions and belief structures, leaving them vulnerable to adapting to a status quo that shapes, and may even subvert, Christian ideals. The apostle

Paul says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:2 NRSV). Sect-church theory states that religious groups shift their gender theologies as a reaction or accommodation to the culture. Constantly shifting our gender theologies by reacting or accommodating to the world makes us lose sight of being transformed by the renewing of our minds to test and approve God’s will.

Notes

1. Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics & Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).
2. Juster, *Disorderly Women*.
3. Julie Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women: War Stories in the Gender Battles* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 47. Their new faith statement was revised to say, “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” Southern Baptist Convention, “The Baptist Faith and Message” (2000), <http://www.sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp>.
4. Benton Johnson, “On Church and Sect,” *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963): 542.
5. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Johnson, “On Church and Sect”; H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Holt, 1929); Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
6. Before reviewing gender shifts in American Christianity, it is important to delineate gender from sex. “Sex” refers to the biological characteristics that distinguish females and males, emphasizing anatomy, physiology, hormones, and reproductive systems (“male” and “female” are the appropriate words when referring to sex differences). Sex differences, because they are rooted in biology, are universal across time and place. “Gender” refers to the social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to females and males (“women” and “men” are the appropriate terms when discussing gender). Gender differences vary significantly across time and place because they are socially constructed. Distinguishing these concepts allows us to measure the differences between biological characteristics of males and females and the cultural characteristics of women and men. See Jennifer McKinney and Kevin Neuhaus, “Divided by Gender: How Sociology Can Help,” *Cultural Encounters* 9, no. 1 (2013): 38-55.
7. Sally K. Gallagher, “The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism,” *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 3 (2004): 218.
8. Gallagher, “The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism.”
9. Catherine A. Brekus, “Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America” (2009), <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/98759.pdf>.
10. Gallagher, “The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism.”
11. Brekus, “Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America.”
12. Brekus, “Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America.”
13. Notice that proponents of both Christian gender narratives draw from the same sources. The first narrative draws on specific statements made by church fathers for gender prescriptions. The second narrative draws from statements from the same church fathers that contradict prescriptions for gender. Gallagher, “The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism.”
14. Laurence R. Iannaccone, “A Formal Model of Church and Sect,” *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): 268.

15. Iannaccone, “A Formal Model of Church and Sect”; Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong,” *American Journal of Sociology* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1180-211; Benton Johnson, “A Critical Appraisal of the Sect-church Theory Typology,” *American Sociological Review* 22 (1957): 88-92; Johnson, “On Church and Sect”; Benton Johnson, “Church and Sect Revisited,” *JSSR* 10 (1971): 124-37; Dean D. Knudsen, John R. Earle, and Donald W. Shriver Jr., “The Conception of Sectarian Religion: An Effort at Clarification,” *RRelRes* 20 (1978): 44-60.
16. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, 143.
17. Sect and church as organizational designations operate as “ideal types.” Ideal types function as abstract descriptions of characteristics of a phenomenon. Rarely will a phenomenon perfectly correspond to an ideal type. For example, no religious body can completely reject or completely assimilate to the social environment. See Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*; Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 20-21.
18. Stark and Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion*; Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.
19. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.
20. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.
21. Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.
22. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong.”
23. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong”; Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.
24. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong.”
25. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong.”
26. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong.”
27. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong,” 1202.
28. Iannaccone, “Why Strict Churches Are Strong,” 1203.



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29. Sally K. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism"; Ingersoll, *Evangelical Christian Women*.
30. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America."
31. Cited in Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America," 21.
32. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America."
33. "Upstart sects" describes the sectarian groups that formed in the early republic. They are "upstarts" because they turned the established rules of religion upside down. See Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*; Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America."
34. Baptists, for example, were considered "back-country" egalitarians whose meetings recognized no racial, class, or gender distinctions, where "Rich and poor, men and women, black and white all communed together in the presence of the Lord." See Juster, *Disorderly Women*, 19; Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America."
35. Members of the sects drew from Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy," to support women's equality in the pulpit.
36. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America"; Juster, *Disorderly Women*.
37. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America," 22.
38. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America"; Juster, *Disorderly Women*.
39. The disestablishment of religion in the US Constitution gave everyone equal footing in pursuing adherents. Whereas established state churches coerced members by law and taxes to support their organizations, the lack of regulation made persuasion the best tactic for converting new members to a religious organization.
40. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America"; Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*.
41. Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*.
42. Brekus, "Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America."
43. Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992); *idem*, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Bart Landry, *Black Working Wives: Pioneers of the American Family Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
44. Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
45. Gail Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough': The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism," *American Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1989); Margaret Lambert Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*; Landry, *Black Working Wives*.
46. While the Cult of True Womanhood and the Cult of Self-Made Man pervaded American culture, only the economic elite could afford to forgo the economic contributions of women to the household. White working class and immigrant women who could not afford this gender ideal masked their economic status by working inside the home for wages by taking in laundry, doing clothes repair, and supplying boarders with their cooking and cleaning needs.
47. Landry, *Black Working Wives*.
48. Landry, *Black Working Wives*, 73.
49. Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough.'"
50. Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough,'" 436.
51. These movements were organized around the practices of white, native-born Protestants, not immigrants, blacks, or Catholics, the latter finding movements like the Men and Religion Forward Movement unappealing. See Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough.'"
52. Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough,'" 432.
53. Cited in Margaret Lambert Bendroth, "Why Women Loved Billy Sunday: Urban Revivalism and Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth-Century American Culture," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 14, no. 2 (2004): 251-71.
54. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*; Michael A. Messner, *Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997).
55. Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough.'"
56. Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough.'"
57. R. Pierce Beaver, *American Protestant Women in World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980); Patricia R. Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Women's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1985.
58. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*.
59. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*, 6.
60. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*, 3.
61. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*.
62. The five "fundamentals" of fundamentalist doctrine include: the virgin birth of Christ, substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the supernatural reality of miracles, and the inerrancy of scripture. See Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*.
63. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*, 6.
64. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*; Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism."
65. As dispensational premillennialists, fundamentalists believed that women were under the curse in Genesis, which placed them in a subordinate position to men until Christ's Second Coming could lift their curse and the penalty of sin produced by the fall. See Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*; Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism."
66. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*; Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
67. Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*.
68. Smith, *American Evangelicalism*.
69. Margaret Lambert Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*.
70. Largely excluded from the breadwinner/homemaker were the working class, poor, and communities of color, who continued to have dual-earner households. See Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*; Coontz, *The Way We Really Are*; Landry, *Black Working Wives*; W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
71. Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*; Landry, *Black Working Wives*.
72. Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men*; Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*; Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
73. Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism," 225.
74. Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism."
75. William Lockhart, "'We Are One Life,' But Not of One Gender Ideology: Unity, Ambiguity, and the Promise Keepers," *Sociology of Religion* 61 (2000): 73-92.
76. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Sally K. Gallagher and Sabrina L. Wood, "Godly Manhood Going Wild?: Transformations in Conservative Protestant Masculinity," *Sociology of Religion* 66 (2005): 135-60; Griffith, *God's Daughters*; Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men*.

77. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Griffith, *God's Daughters*; Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men*.

78. John P. Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers: Servants, Soldiers, and Godly Men* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism"; Griffith, *God's Daughters*; Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men*.

79. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*.

80. Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers*; Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism."

81. Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism," emphasis added.

82. Unless, of course, conservative Christians demonstrated more egalitarianism than the culture in the sharing of paid and unpaid family labor. See Gallagher, "The Marginalization of Evangelical Feminism," 231.

83. Lockhart, "We Are One Life."

84. Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers*, 41.

85. Bartkowski, *The Promise Keepers*; Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity*; Griffith, *God's Daughters*; Lockhart, "We Are One Life"; Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men*.

86. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*.

87. Conversely, in their follow-up book, *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul*, John and Stasi Eldredge write that women are designed by God to watch a man's battle, facilitate his adventure, and be rescued by a man.

88. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*; Messner, *Politics of Masculinities*.

89. Mars Hill Church, "Annual Report" (2013), <http://marshill.se/marshill/annual-report-2013>.

90. Sermon quotations come from two sermon series, "Christians Gone Wild" (CGW) and "Vintage Jesus" (VJ). The number attached to the sermon is the number for that sermon within the series (which is how Mars Hill Church denoted them on their website).

91. For a review of the practices and processes through which men learn and perform manhood acts as part of the socially constructed category of "man," see Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe, "Man, Masculinity and Manhood Acts," *Annual Review of Sociology* 35 (2009): 277-95.

92. "Church Needs Dudes" (2006), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lex6orNNzTs>.

93. Here Driscoll refers to 1 Tim 5:8.

94. Women who want to work once they are married with children are told they are denying God's call; they are deceived idolaters who are in sin. For a compelling example of this, see Elizabeth Pak's post, "A Desperate Housewife Comes Clean" on the Reforming the Feminine blog, <http://reefem.wordpress.com/category/professional>.

95. Smith, *American Evangelicalism*.

96. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong."

97. Iannaccone, "A Formal Model of Church and Sect."

98. Mars Hill Church, "Annual Report" (2013), <http://marshillbus.com/marshill/annual-report-2013>.

99. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong," 1201, emphasis added.

100. Iannaccone, "Why Strict Churches Are Strong."

101. These data come from the website WeLoveMarsHill.com, a forum for former members to share their stories.



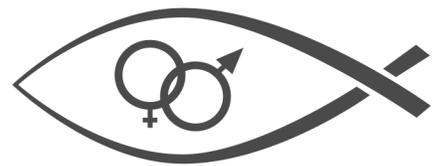
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