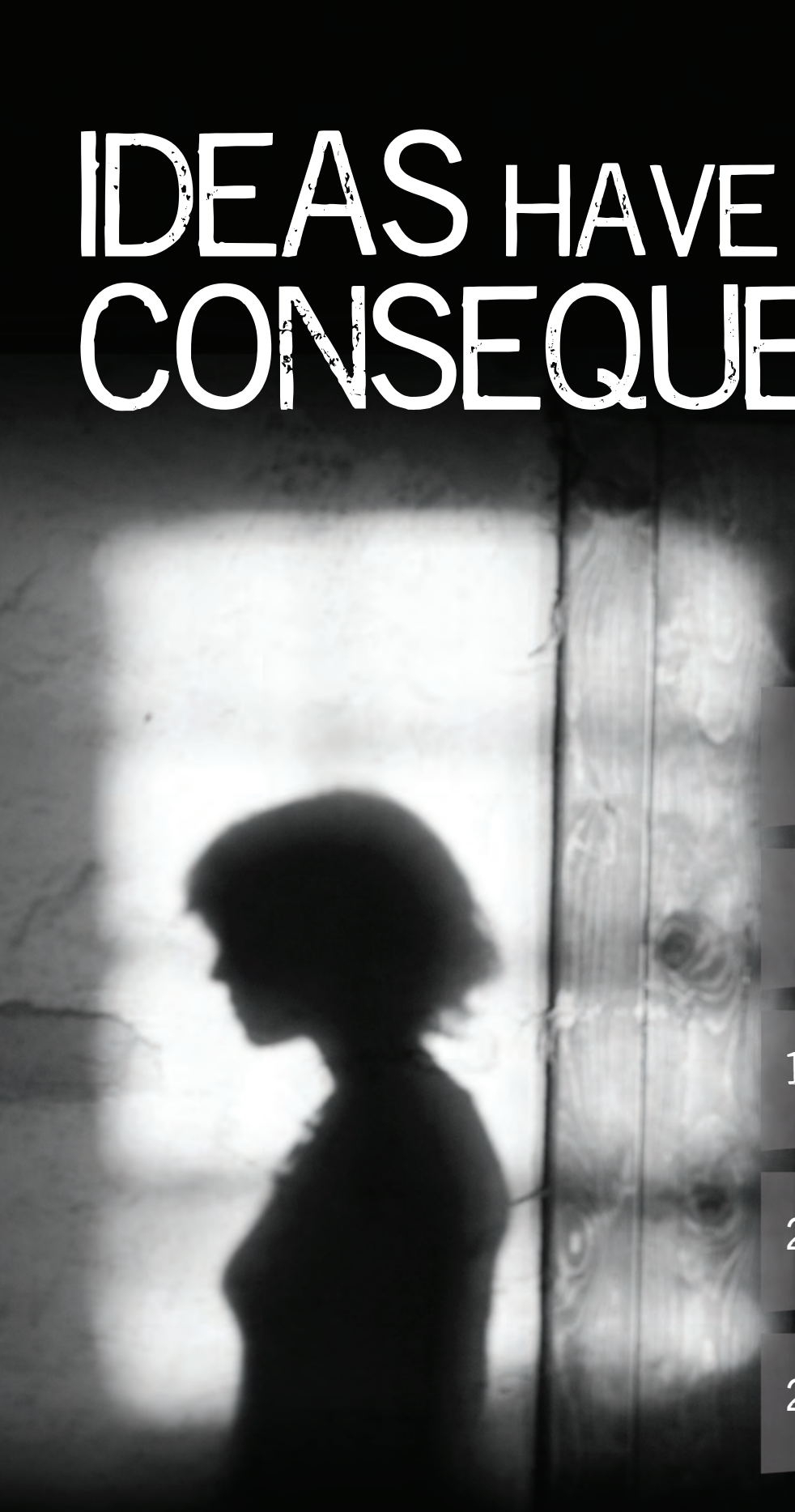
IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES



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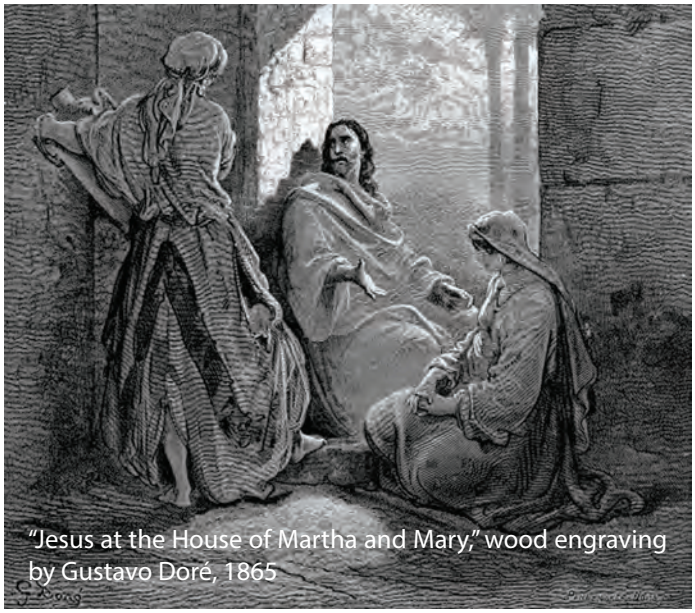
From the Editor

Subverting Injustice


"Jesus at the House of Martha and Mary," wood engraving by Gustavo Doré, 1865

Dozens of cities battle prostitution through a program called "john school," which is designed to educate first-time "johns" about the negative consequences of prostitution.[1] This includes learning about sex workers themselves. A Nashville man found himself in tears after hearing the story of a woman who had been bartering sex since the age of ten. By twenty, she was hooked on drugs and engaged in prostitution. She'd been arrested more than eighty times and been shot on the job. "I'm so embarrassed," the man said. "These girls are somebody's daughter. I have a daughter."[2]

The program counts on this type of response. It is built on the idea that once we view a person for what they are—fully human, just like us and our loved ones—our actions toward them will change. When men view prostitutes as nothing more than a resource for sex, they can easily justify treating them as such. When we believe that prostitutes willingly choose or want a life of prostitution, we can lack sympathy for the difficulties they face, and this is reflected in our actions and even our legal system. When culture devalues women, they have no escape.

All around the world, women pay dearly for their cultures' deeply rooted ideas about gender. They are held responsible for the moral failings of their cultures and families, they are blamed when they are raped, they are excluded from full participation in society, and their bodies are considered an economic resource, worth more than their humanity. A culture's fundamental view of women and men is shaped largely by its religious and moral consciousness. And, unfortunately, for most of history, religious teachings about the innate worth of women have too often been negative. Christian teachings are no exception.

Yes, Christians ought to be commended for their long history of combating abuse, working to end the sex trade, rescuing women from war and domestic violence, and otherwise seeking to alleviate abuse. Yet, at the same time, many Christian organizations model and promote a hierarchy of function and therefore value between the genders, designating leadership and authority exclusively to men. In doing so, they undermine their own humanitarian objectives. The gospel demands more.

Jesus did not only address the abuses of the ancient patriarchal world, but also the underlying ideas that allowed and perpetuated them. When Mary sat at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42), Martha's complaint was not merely that Mary was avoiding chores. Mary had assumed a formal position of discipleship, and Martha perceived that in doing so, Mary was living outside her created purpose as a woman, slapping her Creator in the face. Yet, Jesus affirmed Mary. When Jesus spoke publicly with a disreputable Samaritan woman (John 4), he violated his culture's standards for moral behavior. To the disgust of his disciples, when he treated this woman as an equal, he denied first-century values regarding the nature of women, adulterers, and Samaritans. Jesus did not simply challenge abuses of the system; he subverted the very foundations of religious thought and identity that enabled injustice. Paul would urge the same in his ministry.

Paul taught that in Christ, we are one. Speaking to churches deeply divided by ethnicity, class, and gender, he attacked the root problem, teaching them, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female." He knew that as we realize that we are fundamentally the same—fully human, fully redeemed—divisions and injustice will fall away.

This journal is designed to affirm Paul's vision. The articles that follow challenge us to examine our deeply-held convictions about women, many of which we believe are scriptural but are in fact incongruent with the kingdom of God as described by Jesus. It is only by tapping into this underlying problem—pseudo-Christian ideas that claim to be scriptural but in fact devalue women and undermine the gospel—that we can truly and fully address the injustices women face. May God guide us as we discern his will for all people, and may justice spring forth.

Notes

1. Michael Shively, Sarah Kuck Jalbert, Ryan Kling, et al., "Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program," NCJRS (March 2008). NCJRS.gov https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf, accessed November 28, 2012.

2. Stephanie Chen, "'John schools' try to change attitudes about paid sex," CNN (August 27, 2009). CNN.com http://articles.cnn.com/2009-08-27/justice/tennessee.john.school_1_prostitutes-victimless-crime-john-schools?_s=PM:CRIME, accessed November 21, 2012.

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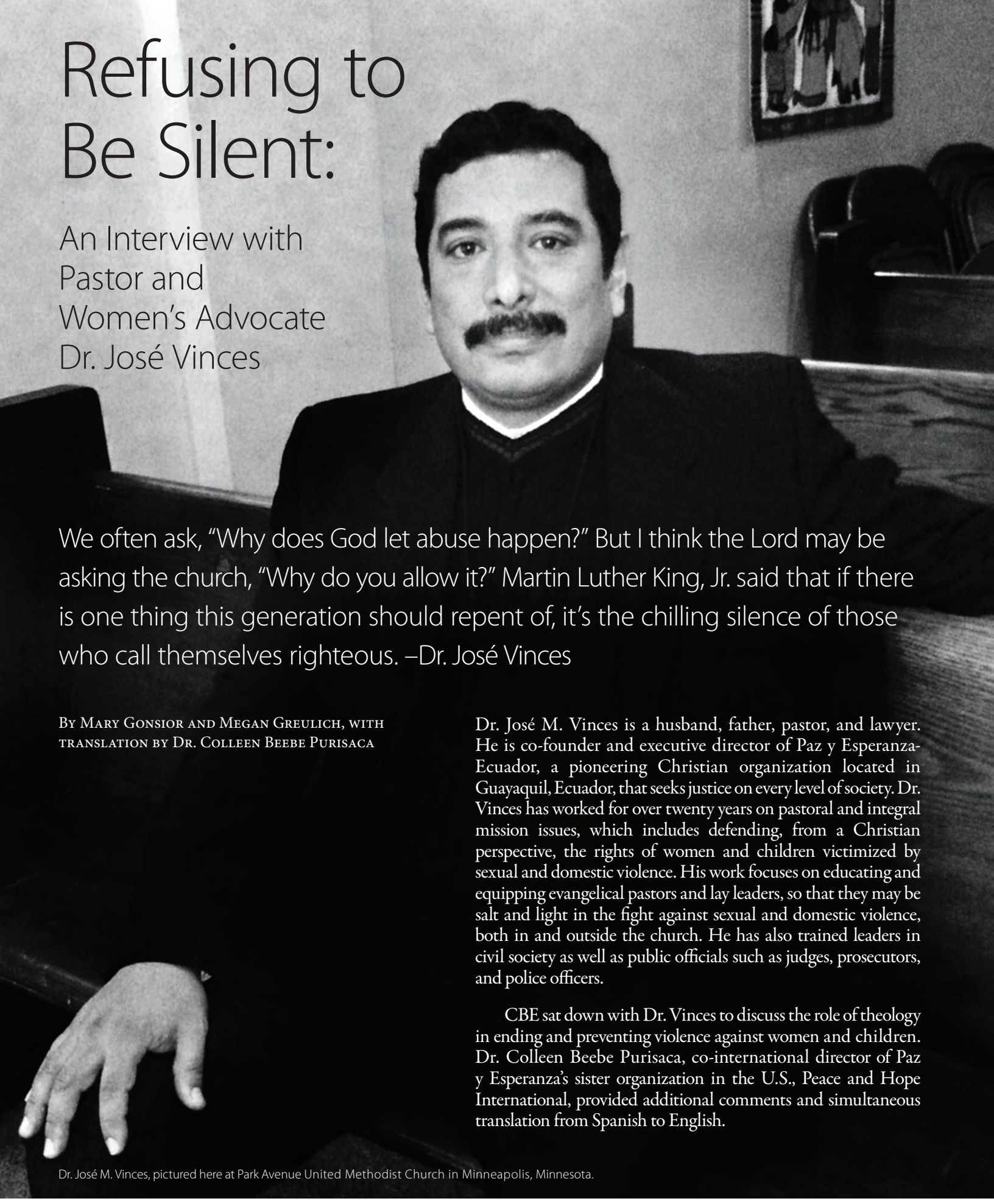
Refusing to Be Silent:

An Interview with Pastor and Women's Advocate Dr. José Vinces



We often ask, "Why does God let abuse happen?" But I think the Lord may be asking the church, "Why do you allow it?" Martin Luther King, Jr. said that if there is one thing this generation should repent of, it's the chilling silence of those who call themselves righteous. –Dr. José Vinces

By Mary Gonsior and Megan Greulich, with translation by Dr. Colleen Beebe Purisaca

Dr. José M. Vinces is a husband, father, pastor, and lawyer. He is co-founder and executive director of Paz y Esperanza-Ecuador, a pioneering Christian organization located in Guayaquil, Ecuador, that seeks justice on every level of society. Dr. Vinces has worked for over twenty years on pastoral and integral mission issues, which includes defending, from a Christian perspective, the rights of women and children victimized by sexual and domestic violence. His work focuses on educating and equipping evangelical pastors and lay leaders, so that they may be salt and light in the fight against sexual and domestic violence, both in and outside the church. He has also trained leaders in civil society as well as public officials such as judges, prosecutors, and police officers.

CBE sat down with Dr. Vinces to discuss the role of theology in ending and preventing violence against women and children. Dr. Colleen Beebe Purisaca, co-international director of Paz y Esperanza's sister organization in the U.S., Peace and Hope International, provided additional comments and simultaneous translation from Spanish to English.

Dr. José M. Vinces, pictured here at Park Avenue United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

CBE: How did you get involved with your ministry to end domestic violence?

JV: The starting point for me was studying what we in the church call "holistic mission," learning that men and women have the same dignity. I come from Peru, where I grew up in a situation of conflict. Many women at that time—many strong women—became the heads of their households because they were widowed. These women contributed greatly to the peace-building in our country. So it was from that very experience of growing up in a community of violence, and reinforced by a theological perspective that is grounded in equality, [that I began my work].

As a holistic mission organization in Peru, initially we started working with innocents who were unjustly put into prison. And then we started getting into other areas of work [such as] providing services for victims of sexual and domestic violence, and defending their rights. But also, in terms of education, we learned that it is important to have some programs directed to church leaders and pastors, both women and men.

CBE: What kinds of programs do you offer?

JV: In my work in Ecuador, we have had two graduating classes from a training program which has been accredited by a seminary. Our purpose has been to incorporate our curriculum into seminaries. In Latin America, we have very strong cultural traditions of patriarchy, and some theologies actually contribute to the problem. In Latin American seminaries, we are taught that women should submit. The Bible is used to justify much abuse. So we are experimenting with these training programs, to give another perspective to the traditional theological perspective. It's the same thing CBE works on. The content of the program includes the context of how people have been in situations of violence, and the biblical perspective—we talk about Genesis, Ephesians, Galatians, etc.—and the inadequate patterns of behavior and the causes and consequences of violence.

We also talk about legal information. In Ecuador, we have laws that protect women, but there's a lot of misinformation about those laws. So we train people to come alongside women who have been abused. We've trained leaders to lead public campaigns and accompany victims. They know the law, how to identify victims, and how to work with [public officials]. We also train prosecutors, judges, and police on how to work on these issues within the legal system because, unfortunately, there's a lot of blaming of victims. So our intention is to give tools about international laws and how to monitor the enforcement of the laws. Then we try to talk to churches about how they can get involved. We think the church is co-responsible. And we're thankful and happy to see that there's a kind of awakening among our sisters in Christ. They are saying, "We have never heard this in church before."

In Peru, we have a program called Women without Violence, Women in Development [in which we lead women's workshops]. The first question we ask out of the gate is, "Who do you think has more value—women or men?" And 99% of these women say, "Men." So then we talk about their rights. There's just a radical change when women learn about their rights. [As part of the program], we established formal networks between these women, and they started doing advocacy. They go and sit at police stations and monitor how police treat women there. Or they accompany women to the police station to help them make their complaints. So then the authorities have accountability and are forced to take action.

In all of our work, we have a circular model of services to solve this problem of abuse, with four main components: psychological assistance, legal help, pastoral care, and material aid. But both prayer and public advocacy have to be in every step of that. We have to approach the problem from a holistic perspective. And in Latin America at least, working on issues of peace building and justice is much easier to work for in secular society than it is within the church.

…we try to talk to churches about how they can get involved. We think the church is co-responsible. And we're thankful and happy to see that there's a kind of awakening among our sisters in Christ. They are saying, "We have never heard this in church before."

CBE: Why is it easier to address injustice in secular society than in the chuch?

JV: Sometimes when we have an inadequate knowledge of what the Scriptures say—such as when we think the "head" is the authority figure—then the Bible can be used to mistreat, rather than free, women. So the churches are not going to do anything about injustice. That's the foundational problem. In our office, 80% of our cases of domestic violence come from *within* the church. This is why we are very concerned with educating the church, and especially pastors, on the theology of these issues.

We have spoken with women who have been married twenty-five years, who break down and say, "I need help. What can I do? I talked to my pastor and he's told me, 'Keep praying, keep praying. One day he will change.'" We say, "Do you think that is right? What do you think?" And they respond with, "But if I leave him or if I report him, wouldn't I be going against God's will?" So we know violence exists within the church. But sadly, the church remains silent about it.

"But My Pastor Said..."

Too often pastors and church leaders encourage women to remain in abusive situations. Women who come to Paz y Esperanza have reported hearing the following from their pastors:

"God has given you your husband, you should accept him the way he is."

"This is a test from God. You should forgive him."

"If you report him or divorce him, what kind of testimony will that be?"

"If you denounce him, he won't come back to the Lord."

"He's your husband, you should forgive him."

"Even though he hit you, you're not as bad off as you could be."

"Children of God should not go to the worldly authorities, go to trial, or use the legal system."

"Wait on God, pray, and God will change things. Keep praying."

"You're shaming the father of your children."

"These are the consequences of getting pregnant and marrying a man who isn't a believer."

"The husband is the head of the household, you have to obey him."

"God gives the man power over your body."

"[As a pastor], if I report him, then my ministry will be ruined."

CBE: What is that breaking point when women realize that they don't have to accept the abuse?

JV: At least in Latin America, there's an economic dependence on husbands, in that they ask themselves, "If he leaves me, what will I do? I have four children, I have to give them food." We have had very sad cases when women haven't done anything about the abuse. They have preferred to defend their husbands who have sexually abused their children rather than leaving and reporting them because, "If your dad goes to prison, what are we going to do?" But we have seen cases where women have been educated that they are valuable as human beings and that it's not God's will that they be abused. And there's a spark that goes off. We have a testimony where a woman realized [her worth and rights] and she said to her husband, "If you hit me again, [I will take action]." And her husband never touched her again.

You know better than I do that abuse is a vicious cycle. We have seen cases where, as a consequence of the beatings, a sister from a church who had been married for maybe thirty years had to go to a psychiatric treatment center. There's an extreme point when a woman doesn't have her own will anymore, when she doesn't have a choice anymore. Sometimes we think, "Why don't you just leave him? God's will is to protect you. Leave him! And don't wait until he harms you more or even kills you!" But there's just a strong mentality that is so hard for them to break. Someone who has been beaten over the span of twenty years is not going to change overnight. Our work is to be patient. And our spiritual/pastoral care is so important to help break down [those incorrect theologies]. Women have to be able to incarnate the truth that God doesn't tolerate violence. Only then are they able to take the legal steps and report their husbands. This is why we have to talk about the biblical theology along with the legal aspects. [When these are taught together], we have seen an awakening in the church.

CBE: What other factors contribute to the prevalence of abuse in Peru and Ecuador?

[Comment from Colleen Beebe Purisaca] In Peru, there was a twenty-year civil war, and rape and sexual abuse were actually used as weapons of war. In fact, the World Health Organization says Peru is one of the most dangerous countries for women, and 40% of women in Peru say they have been raped. The effects of the decades of violence linger, and the result is heightened incidences of domestic and sexual violence. Also, in certain cultures, incest is more acceptable. People simply don't talk about it, and victims are blamed.

Corrupt or ineffective legal systems contribute to the problem, too. These are systems where the police don't get paid enough, or don't know how to do their job, or are bribed not to do their job. The same problem exists with the prosecutors, and the medical forensics people, and the judges. So you have these systems on top of a total disregard for people who are poor. It's hard enough to get access to justice when you have money. If you don't have any money at all, then it's impossible. In Ecuador, for example, out of every 1,000 crimes reported, only five actually get convictions and sentencing. It's outrageous.

JV: Cultural jokes are also very common. A common phrase in Peru is, "The more he hits me, the more he loves me." People celebrate that and laugh at it. And people in the church will say this, too. The church does nothing to stop it. In Ecuador, they say, "A husband who kills is a husband."

Femicide, or the murder of women by men, is a huge problem. For example, a neighbor of ours killed his wife. She had filed a complaint against him that morning, but before they could come pick her up, he strangled her. And he killed his five-year-old daughter with a hammer. He was a professional man—this happens in all classes. It is a very difficult issue.

CBE: What triggers this type of tragedy? Are alcohol or drugs involved? Is it simply rage-induced?

JV: These are not justifications. We believe that all violence, whether sexual, physical, etc., has to do with an abuse of power. And there is no justification for it, no matter the extenuating circumstances.

Sometimes people criticize, "What are you doing with the husbands?" We acknowledge that we need to be working with husbands. However, we are working in the context of a system where even the government gives defense lawyers to the aggressors but the victims have no one to defend them. So we prefer to help those who have nothing, to help them understand their rights and achieve justice. And we *want* the church to be a part of this, to do its job.

CBE: It sounds like perpetrators are more likely to have financial power and other kinds of power over their victims.

JV: Yes, that's true. One kind of their power is economic. But they also have cultural power, such as the widespread beliefs that the man is more valuable than the woman, that the man is dominant and macho, and that the woman has to subject herself to the man. These ideas are rooted in Latin American culture. And they are reinforced by this incorrect theology of male headship.

CBE: But what does a father do when his daughter is abused?

JV: Well, 80% of the cases we see come from within the family—the abusers are brothers, uncles, or fathers. But, I remember a case of a little girl from a rural area who had been abused, and the perpetrator came to the family and wanted to negotiate. He brought bags of potatoes to the father of the girl who had been raped, to negotiate so that he wouldn't report the crime.

CBE: So the daughter was seen as less valuable than bags of potatoes?

JV: Yes, that's it. We've had cases that have caused us extreme indignation. Parents have come to report the rape [of their child] to us, but only because the negotiations with the aggressor failed.

But there are very good parents too, who suffer a lot and do all they can do to make sure their children are defended. For example, there was a horrible case where an eight-year-old girl was raped and murdered by two men. Everyone knew who they were. The police investigated, and the evidence disappeared because the police were paid off. But the mom went to court, she held protests, she led an international campaign. She was the one really going to bat for her daughter, and she advocated on her behalf for years.

I think the challenge we have as Christians is how to learn from the networks of evil. Satan and his minions organize. They plan. Why don't we as Christians unite and organize and plan against evil? Why don't we create our own network of good? Sometimes working on issues of justice is to be a stone in a shoe of someone. And we have had to face some perpetrators who have a lot of economic and physical power. They have been authorities and officials, and even owners of radio stations who have threatened us with death. But nonetheless, that's where we see God's hand at work.

CBE: What would this Christian network of good look like?

JV: In Ecuador, we have started an evangelical network with the prerequisite that whatever we do goes on beyond the church—it must also affect the community. The context of violence in which we live in Ecuador, is a *holistic* problem and the church has huge responsibility. As Christians we should be the ones people are looking at to work against corruption. But we're not doing that. So what we try to do is visit leaders and directors of seminaries and we say, "Look. Every day, newspapers show killings, murders, rapes. Do we think this is the kind of life God wants for his children? Don't you think that if we're called to promote life then we should do something? We don't really know what we want to do, but we need to be concerned together about what is going on around us." These conversations have led to conferences on the role of seminaries in working to end injustice and seminary curriculum that incorporates issues that have to do with daily life. And students have started writing theses on relevant topics. For example, there's a seminary student who has been trained by us, and his thesis is on how the church can help children who have been sexually abused. So the institutions that form a part of this network can send their future pastors to our institutions to be trained on how respond to these issues. What happens when someone comes to a church who has been abused, or who has HIV, for example? Through the training and the network, we can refer them to specialized services.

We visit directors of seminaries and say, "Look. Every day, newspapers show killings, murders, rapes. Do we think this is the kind of life God wants for his children? Don't you think that if we're called to promote life then we should do something?"

CBE: This is obviously exhausting and sometimes discouraging work. Are there certain Scripture verses that you hold onto, that encourage you? What kind of support do you have to keep working on this?

JV: There's a great blessing from the Lord for all of us who thirst and hunger for justice because justice is profoundly rooted in God's heart. When God looks over the earth, he sees men and women and governments who do evil and injustice, and his heart becomes indignant. He detests the abuse of power and evil. But that's not where it ends. He intervenes. And he uses us. It is a privilege. And I think our job as men and women is to imitate a God who loves justice. So when all types of evil come against you, it's a paradox, because it is also a joyful and blessed thing to suffer for what is right. We must remember the Lord's ministry. He freed the chains of the oppressed. He consoled and restored. He healed the pain of the people, of all the people. This is tiring work, and we may not always see change, but in the long run, the Lord responds. He has it all in his hands. He has our backs. And he consoles us in our tears of indignation, of impotence. They become tears of joy and of gratefulness to the Lord. Because he allows us to see that change is possible. It *is* possible. We need to show this to the world.

We must remember the Lord's ministry. He freed the chains of the oppressed. He consoled and restored. He healed the pain of the people, of all the people.

"Refusing to Be Silent" was originally published in *Mutuality*, Volume 18, Issue 2 (Summer 2011).

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MEN AND WOMEN IN CHRIST:
IDENTITY AND MINISTRY

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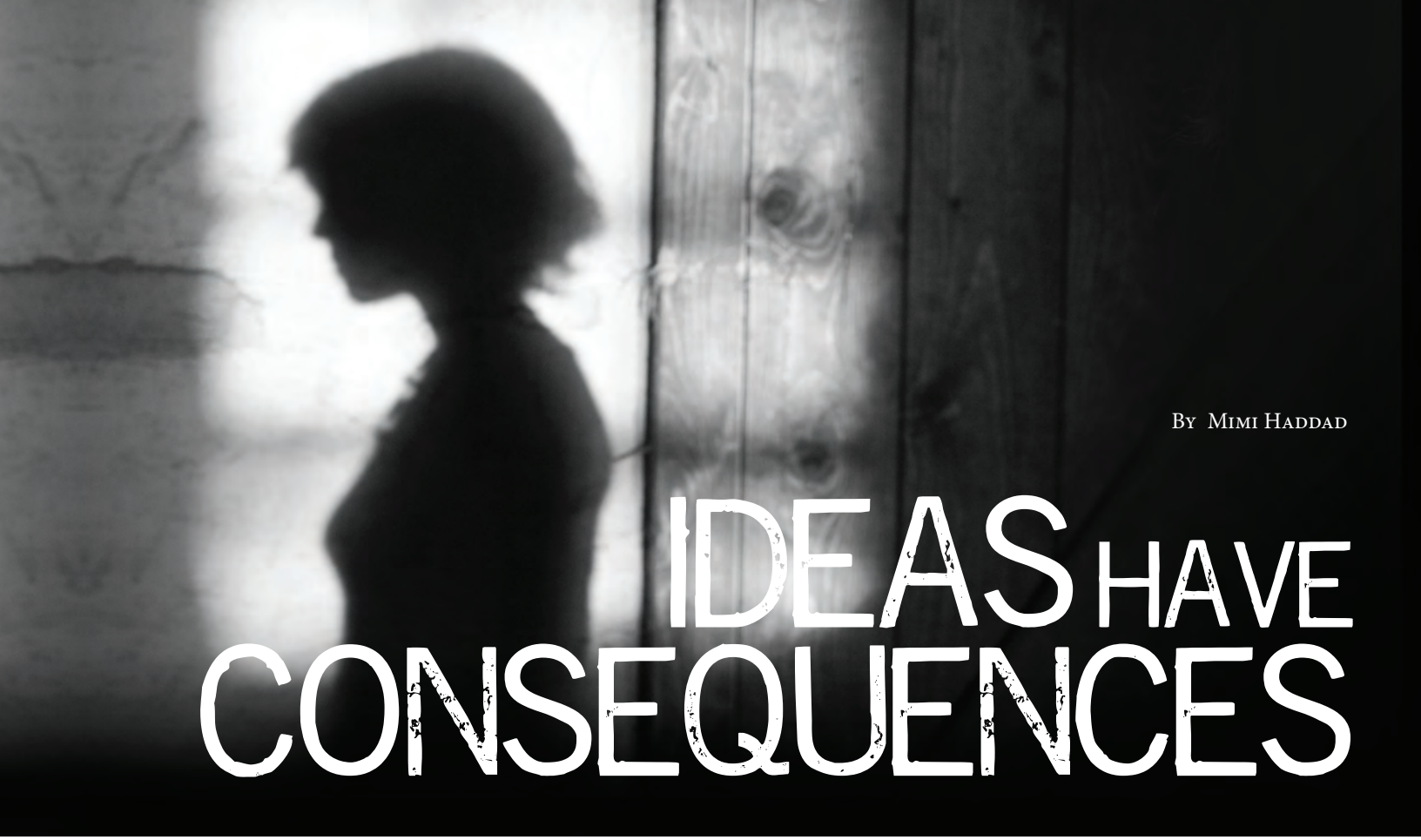


By Mimi Haddad

IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Plato said *ideas* rule the world. All action begins with an idea. Paul said, "Take every thought captive to Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). Why? Because ideas have consequences.

The most important indicator of whether a fetus will be aborted; a girl will be enslaved in a brothel; a wife will be abused in her marriage or family; or a woman will be denied a place of decision making in her family or community is not based on her gender, but on the value we assign to gender.[1] In study after study, research suggests that when a culture values females as much as males, girls are more likely to survive to adulthood. For this reason, gender justice begins with an idea—that males and females are of equal worth.

For every devaluation made of the female gender, there are practical outcomes or consequences in the daily lives of females. When communities value females equally and extend females equal authority and resources to develop their potential, not only are levels of abuse reduced, but economic stability also increases within families and communities. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) call this *the girl effect*.[2] Christians might call this phenomenon *the ezer effect* because *ezer* is the Hebrew word God used to describe the strong help females provide (Gen 2:18). *Ezer* is found twenty-one times in the Old Testament, and, of these, fourteen describe God's help. According to R. David Freedman, *ezer* arises from two Hebrew roots that mean "to rescue, to save" and "to be strong."[3] Perhaps the most common use of the word is found in Psalm 121:1–2, where *ezer* is used for God's rescue of Israel: "I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." What stronger help is there apart from God's rescue?

Whereas Scripture teaches that females were created to provide a strong rescue, and while economists and NGOs recognize that investing in the education and businesses of females brings substantial economic growth to their communities,[4] religious traditions around the world continue to diminish the worth of females. This article will explore how a devaluation of females—that is, seeing them as inferior with respect to their being—is linked to their marginalization and abuse. We shall then consider how the early evangelicals were not only the first to observe this link. They were also the first to develop a systematic biblical basis for the equal value and service of males and females. Finally, we will explore abolition and egalitarianism as reform movements within the Church, which as part of their agenda, critiqued interpretative methods that devalued individuals because of their gender or ethnicity, ideas that supported slavery and the subjugation of women.

Ontological assumptions have daily consequences

To subjugate one people group under another logically implies the moral supremacy of one group over another, which is to say that birth or ontology shapes destiny or supremacy. What do we mean by ontology? Ontology, from the Greek word *ontos*, is the study of "being," nature or essence, necessarily evaluated through comparisons. To suggest the ontological superiority of a group or category of individuals is to assert that their being, nature, or essence is distinct and superior to another category of individuals. For example, it has often been assumed that the being of males is more godlike than females because men are presumed to be more rational and morally able. Therefore, it follows that men should hold positions of authority over women because their

innate, being (*ontos*) is superior. It was once believed that royalty were ontologically superior to commoners, and that whites were ontologically superior to people of color.

The devaluation of people groups, based on a fixed and unchangeable condition of being (gender or ethnicity), is noted throughout history. Observe the ontological assumptions the Greeks made of women. Aristotle (384–322 BC) said, "The relationship between the male and the female is by nature such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled."[5] Plato (427–347 BC) concluded that "[woman's] native disposition is inferior to man's."[6] These ideas have consequences.

The daily lives of females reflect their ontological status. In Roman culture, patriarchy dominated gender relations. The value given to males is noted in the vast number of girl babies exposed to the elements and left to die after birth; the lack of women's participation in philosophy and politics; the absence of women in social gatherings with males; and the male-prerogative in selecting sexual partners with their wives and also slaves, prostitutes and boys/men. Marriage was to ensure a man's legitimate heirs.[7]

Gender and ontology in the early church

In contrast to the patriarchy in the ancient world, Christians in the early church rescued abandoned girl babies. Christian women participated in the *agapē* meals. They served beside men as teachers (Acts 18:26); evangelists (Mark 7:2-30, John 4:42, John 20:17, Acts 16: 13-15, 1 Cor 1:1, 1 Cor 16:19 Col 4:15, Philemon 1:2); Missionaries (Rom 16:7), apostles (Rom 16:7); deacons (Rom 13:1-3); prophets (Rom 16:1-3); and coworkers with Paul (Rom 16:3, 12, 1 Cor 15:9-11). By doing so, they engaged with men in social and theological spheres. Women were also martyred beside men for advancing the gospel with equal influence.[8] Christian marriages were monogamous (1 Tim 3:2,12), and Paul asks both husbands and wives to submit to and obey one another (Eph 5:21; 1 Cor 7:3–5). Marriage is viewed as a one-flesh relationship for the purposes of love and intimacy (Eph 5:21-31).

Males in the early church shared leadership with females, as Scripture and archaeological evidence indicate. Unfortunately, the ontological and functional equality of male and female believers was short-lived.

The Apostle Paul reflects the early church's movement away from cultural patriarchy. Prior to his conversions, Paul, as a Jewish male, would have prayed daily, "Thank you [God] for not making me a Gentile, a woman, and a slave,"[9] a prayer that represents an ontological devaluation of females which excluded them from the study of Torah or participating equally beside males in worship. Paul's Galatians 3:28 represents a shift in valuation of men and women, Jews and Gentiles, and slaves and free: "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" This statement reveals how the gospel restores all people to equality in being and function, both before God and in service to the world.[10] Men and women, slaves and free, Greek and Jew constitute one body—the church. Christ's New Covenant community which, though diverse in ethnicity, gender, and class, yet functions without a hierarchy of authority based on these attributes.[11] Thus, males in the early church shared leadership with females, as Scripture and archaeological evidence indicate.[12] Unfortunately, the ontological and functional equality of male and female believers was short-lived.

Philosophical views close doors for women in many cultures

Early church fathers—trained in Greek philosophy—retained the belief that women are inferior in their being and should therefore be excluded from authority and positions of leadership. As a result, the church no longer provided a counterpoint to the cultural devaluation of females. In this respect, the gender bias of these early church fathers resembles the cultural devaluation of females also noted in the teachings of Brahman and Muslim scholars.

Manu, a Brahman social commentator, argued that woman possesses a temper or nature that is "mutable" (inconstant) and since "women are destitute of strength and also of knowledge [they] are as impure as falsehood itself [and] that is a fixed rule. . . ."[13] Ideas have consequences. Given such teachings, females were held under the authority of males: their father, husband, sons, and grandsons.[14] Due to their presumed innate inferiority, in Brahman culture, women "were forbidden to read the sacred Scriptures," having "no right to pronounce a single syllable."[15] The ancient gods were rarely evoked at the birth of girls. For years, it was possible for a wife to be replaced if she did not give birth to a son after the eleventh year of marriage. In more recent times, the Indian government has tried to limit access to ultrasounds in selecting for gender. The devaluation of females is evident in the large number of girls taken to Hindu temples as prostitutes, *Devi Dasi* or the devil's whores, a problem persisting to this day. The subordination of women within Brahmanism has also led to a brutal patrilineal culture in which a female becomes part of her husband's household, where she is often isolated and easily devalued and abused. Notice how Christian Scriptures such as Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31 oppose the practice of subjecting a female to the authority of her husband's family.

Islam also insists on the inferiority of females at the level of their being. The Qur'an reads: "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other. . . ."[16] Islamic tradition teaches that "the character of women is likened to a rib, crooked. . . . This crookedness then is inherent and incurable."[17] Ahmad Zaky Tuffaha adds, ". . . the woman is not equal to the man . . . for how can the commanding and the commanded, the great and the small, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the sane and the mad, the unjust and the just, the honorable and the insignificant, the able and the unable, the working and the lazy, the strong and the weak be equal?"[18]

Do these ideas have consequences? In their chapter "Is Islam Mysogynistic?" in *Half the Sky*,[19] Sheryl WuDunn and Nicholas Kristof make what they admit is a politically incorrect statement: "Of the countries where women are held back and subjected

to systematic abuses such as honor killings and genital cutting, a very large proportion are predominantly Muslim."[20] Most Muslims worldwide, they write, "don't believe in such practices, and some Christians do—but the fact remains that the countries where girls are cut, killed for honor, or kept out of school or the workplace typically have large Muslim populations."[21]

Perils of devaluation

A devaluation of individuals based on their being is noted throughout human history. For example, not long ago, Nazi Germany mounted an extensive campaign to devalue Jews at the level of being. Before they were able to convince Germans to round up Jews and send them to death camps, the Nazis first had to insist upon their innate and unchangeable inferiority. Triumphantly, Nazis noted their great success in "reeducating" Germans:

> . . . there are only a few people left in Germany who are not clear about the fact that the Jew is not, as previously thought, distinct from "Christians," "Protestants," or "Catholics" only in that he is of another religion, and is therefore a German like all of the rest of us, but rather that he belongs to a different race than we do. The Jew belongs to a different race; that is what is decisive.[22]

By suggesting that Jews comprised a different race, the Nazis were able to construct a distinct and inferior ontological category for Jews. The genocide of the Jews was made plausible by first positing that the Aryan Germans were the superior race and by showing that the Jews had no share in their blood line.

In a similar manner, the American institution of slavery was based on a perceived inferiority of ethnicity at the level of being. The French scholar Compte A. de Gasparin said that slavery was centered on "a native and indestructible inferiority" of those of African descent.[23] This so-called innate inferiority was rooted not in one's moral choices, but in one's ancestry, and was, therefore, an unchangeable condition. It was African ethnicity, noted in skin color, that placed Africans under the permanent domination of those said to be their superiors—whites. The reason the Civil War failed to redress ethnic prejudice is that the so-called inferiority was associated not with slavery, but with ethnicity, which is an unchangeable condition. Slavery was the consequence of an idea: that Africans were inferior. Slavery was not the root cause; an ethnic devaluation was. One can amend the United States Constitution and free the slaves, but new forms of ethnic abuse will emerge because the root problem—ethnic prejudice—has not been addressed.

Historian Mark Noll said it would take more than guns and blood to overcome the devaluation of African Americans, of which slavery was only *one manifestation*.[24] In fact, it would take many *years* before the United States even became conscious of its own philosophical constructs that fueled prejudice and oppression based on ethnicity. Recently, an article appeared in the *Baptist News* that illustrates this point. It reads:

> Ethicsdaily.com has reported a social shift that may represent a larger leap than our recent election of an African-American president. Bob Jones University, perhaps the most fundamentalist and segregated Baptist school in the world,[25] has issued an apology for its practices and policies of racial segregation.
>
> In 1986, a member of the Bible department [at Bob Jones] had articulated the school's position. Separation of the races, this faculty member wrote, was God's design. The school was submitting to the authority of Scripture in its policies, it said.
>
> Now the school says something other than "biblical obedience" shaped its racial practices. The statement reports that policies were "characterized by the segregationist ethos of American Culture. Consequently, for far too long, we allowed institutional policies regarding race to be shaped more directly by that ethos than by the principles and precepts of the Scriptures. We conformed to the culture rather than provide a clear Christian counterpoint to it. In so doing, we failed to accurately represent the Lord and to fulfill the commandments to love others as ourselves. For these failures we are profoundly sorry."[26]

It was the inability to regard African Americans as equal members of the human family that made it possible for slavery advocates to ignore the profound ways in which slavery transgressed biblical values such as the sacredness of marriage and families, sexual purity, knowing and loving God through Scripture, and using one's spiritual gifts in advancing Christ's kingdom. Mark Noll observes, "So seriously fixed in the minds of white Americans, including most abolitionists, was the certainty of black racial inferiority that it overwhelmed biblical testimony about race, even though most Protestant Americans claimed that Scripture was in fact their supreme authority in adjudicating such matters."[27] Prejudice muddied their biblical clarity. Many individuals did not perceive their racial prejudice as an obstacle to interpreting Scripture consistently. There were prominent exceptions, however.

Missionaries working in Africa were vocal in denying the presumed inferiority of Africans upon which the system of slavery was defended. According to Noll, one missionary wrote that nowhere in his experience had he observed evidence of the so called "native inferiority which many good and learned men suppose to exist."[28] In fact, the deplorable ignorance ascribed to African culture was a myth created by the slave trade. If one can control for opportunity, one can also control for ability, because no group is, in their being, innately inferior to another group.

Like slavery, gender hierarchy is dependent upon an ontological devaluation of females. Therefore, the subjugation of women is made plausible by insisting that males are innately superior. There can be no question that Christians have advanced, perhaps uncritically, the inferiority of females as a whole. Here are a few examples:

So seriously fixed in the minds of white Americans, including most abolitionists, was the certainty of black racial inferiority that it overwhelmed biblical testimony about race, even though most Protestant Americans claimed that Scripture was in fact their supreme authority in adjudicating such matters.

Influential Female Teachers, Preachers, and Theologians of the 19th and 20th Centuries Include:

Katharine Bushnell
Amanda Berry Smith
Maria Woodworth Etter
Carrie Judd Montgomery
Catherine Booth
Aimee Semple McPherson
Kathryn Kuhlman
Florence Crawford
Pandita Ramabai
. . . and many more!

To learn more, look for the following resources at cbebookstore.org:

Estrelda Alexander, "In the Name of the Gospel: Holiness and Pentecostal Women Who Transformed the World for Christ" *Mutuality*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 2009), 8-10.

Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*

Jennifer Dunham, *Carrying on the Great Tradition: Rediscovering Strong Women of History*

Roger E. Hedlund, Sebastian Kim, and Rajkumar Boaz Johnson, eds., *Indian and Christian: The Life and Legacy of Pandita Ramabai*

- Irenaeus (AD 130–202): "Both *nature* and the law place the woman in a subordinate condition to the man."[29]
- Augustine (AD 354–430): "Nor can it be doubted, that it is more consonant with the order of *nature* that men should bear rule over women, than women over men."[30]
- Chrysostom (AD 347–407): "The woman taught once, and ruined all. On this account . . . let her not teach . . . for *the sex is weak and fickle*. . . ."[31]
- John Calvin (1509–1564), in his commentary on 1 Timothy, wrote that women are "*not to assume authority over the man*;
  . . . it is not permitted by their *condition*."[32]
- John Knox (1514–1572) said, "*Nature*, I say, does paint [women] forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish; and experience has declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel. . . . Since flesh is subordinate to spirit, a woman's place is beneath man's."[33]

Even today, Mark Driscoll, the popular pastor of a megachurch, writes:

> . . . when it comes to leading in the church, women are unfit because they are more gullible and easier to deceive than men. . . . [W]omen who fail to trust [Paul's] instruction . . . are much like their mother Eve. . . . Before you *get all emotional like a woman* in hearing this, please consider the content of the women's magazines at your local grocery store that encourage liberated women in our day to watch porno with their boyfriends, master oral sex for men who have no intention of marrying them . . . and ask yourself if it doesn't look like the Serpent is still trolling the garden and that *the daughters of Eve aren't gullible* in pronouncing progress, liberation, and equality.[34]

Women lead the modern missionary movement

Despite such disparaging assumptions made by Christians, females as a whole have not performed according to the devaluations made of them. In fact, throughout church history, we observe women providing enormous moral, spiritual, and intellectual leadership within the church even without official authority. This was never more the case than during the modern missionary movement, when women outnumbered men on mission fields around the world two to one. Their leadership combined evangelism with humanitarian service, and their work gave rise to new centers of spiritual vitality throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas—so much so that their leadership shifted the density of Christian faith from the West to broadly scattered locations in the global South and the East, as Dana Roberts of Boston University notes.[35] Without the vote, without a legal voice, and without the World Wide Web, these women established highly productive and just mission organizations, and they occupied all levels of service and leadership. Their leadership in organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the American Antislavery Society, and the Salvation Army gave enormous momentum to suffrage, abolition, and temperance because their humanitarian work was inseparable from their commitment to evangelism. Moreover, as the early evangelicals worked to free females from sexual slavery, they also discovered a link between female abuse and a deprecation of females at the level of being. Consider the following examples.

Working in India among brothels established by the British government to attract and retain soldiers and officers, Katharine Bushnell (1856–1946), a medical doctor, infiltrated British garrisons to learn firsthand the abuses female prostitutes suffered. According to her findings, these abuses were justified not only to satisfy the sexual needs of the British military, but also because females were viewed as innately inferior. Bushnell eventually realized that the global abuse of women was inseparable from a devaluation of females as a whole. In response, Bushnell wrote *God's Word to Women*, one hundred lessons on scriptural teaching about gender to provide a whole-Bible approach to show that Scripture values males and females equally and therefore extends women equal leadership and authority. Ideas have consequences.[36] Her painstaking research on Greek and Hebrew words, archaeology, and ancient history is a death-blow to what philosophers call *ascriptivism*, a system that ascribes value, dignity, and worth to groups based on attributes such as gender, ethnicity, or class. Bushnell's arguments added momentum to the first wave of feminism—a deeply biblical movement that advanced suffrage, abolition, and the spiritual leadership of women in church work. Bushnell was joined by other early evangelicals such as Sojourner Truth, Catherine Booth, Fredrik Franson, Frances Willard, Amanda Smith,

A. J. Gordon, Josephine Butler, and others who together published more than forty biblical treatises supporting the ontological and functional equality of women and slaves.[37]

Consider Adoniram Judson Gordon, perhaps the most prominent Baptist pastor of his day, after whom Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary are named. Gordon was an outspoken advocate of missions, abolition, and women in ministry. Advancing a whole-Bible hermeneutic when considering gender and service, Gordon believed that Pentecost was the "*Magna Charta* of the Christian Church,"[38] as it demonstrated that women, as well as all ethnic groups, share equally in Christ's New Covenant community.[39] Under the New Covenant, those who had once been viewed as inferior by natural birth (their being and nature) attain a new spiritual status through the power of the Holy Spirit. For God's gifting no longer rests on a "favored few, but upon the many, without regard to race, or age, or sex."[40]

Yet, the earliest and most extensive challenge to women's ontological inferiority was published by Katharine Bushnell, who engaged the whole of Scripture, particularly the early chapters of Genesis, to demonstrate how Scripture teaches the equal value of both males and females. She concluded that, according to Scripture, Adam and Eve were both created in the image of God;[41] that both were called to be fruitful and to exercise a shared dominion in Eden;[42] a dominion that did not place Adam over Eve. Eve was not the source of sin,[43] and God does not curse women because of Eve.[44] Rather, it was Satan, not God, who inspired the domination of men over women.[45] God bestows leadership on those who do what is right in God's sight regardless of their gender, birth order, nationality, or class.[46]

Bushnell located women's ontological status not in the fall, but in Christ's completed work on Calvary. Therefore, a consistent interpretation of Scripture as it relates to women's value should be determined in the same manner as men's value, based on the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Bushnell located women's ontological status not in the fall, but in Christ's completed work on Calvary. Therefore, a consistent interpretation of Scripture as it relates to women's value[47] should be determined in the same manner as men's value, based on the atonement of Jesus Christ. "[We] cannot, for women, put the 'new wine' of the Gospel into the old wine-skins of 'condemnation.'"[48] Bushnell condemned the prejudice noted throughout church history which routinely aligned women's status with Eve's sin rather than through their full redemption and inheritance in Christ.

Katharine Bushnell recognized that female subjugation and abuse was often linked to poor methods of biblical interpretation—failing to differentiate what is descriptive in Scripture from that which is prescriptive. While patriarchy is part of the cultures depicted in the Bible, patriarchy does not constitute the moral teachings of Scripture. After years of working to free females from sex slavery around the world, Bushnell observed that the global abuse of women was inseparable from a devaluation of females promoted by religious and philosophical teachings justifying and codifying male dominance and female subservience. 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] Bushnell wrote:

> [W]e 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]

Bushnell's work among abused women compelled her to challenge the ideas that drove the sex industry, and her work, as well as that of others, provides the first whole-Bible approach to gender equality at an ontological level, challenging the erroneous view that women are more gullible and inferior, and, therefore, in need of male authority.

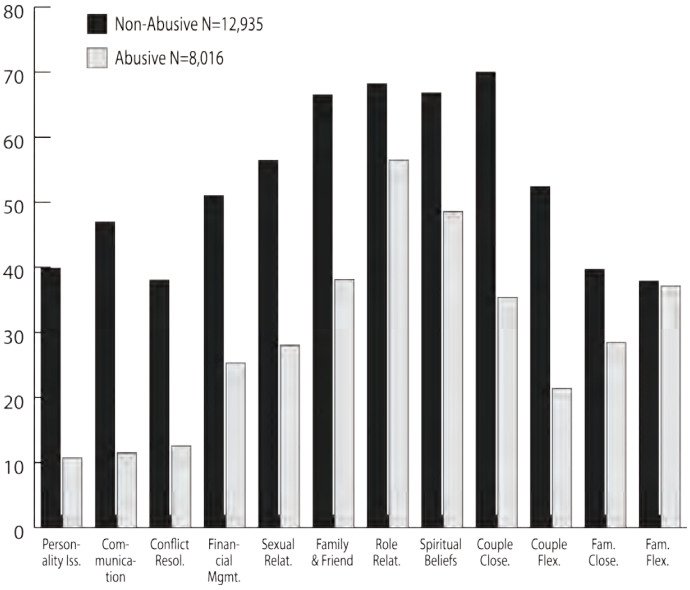
Egalitarian views gain strength

By the 1800s, two views on gender and ontology were circulated. First, the patriarchal perspective views women as unequal in being and unequal in authority. This was the dominant view until the 1800s. Second, the egalitarian view sees women as equal in being and equal in authority. This view gained prominence in the 1800s. In the 1980s, a third view emerged depicting women as equal in being, but unequal in function or authority.

As the egalitarian position gained acceptance, suffrage was instituted, and immediate, rich social consequences ensued. For example, in the United States, maternal and child mortality decreased dramatically after women gained the vote. Prior to suffrage, more women died giving birth than did all men in United States wars combined to that date. Further, child mortality dropped by 72 percent.[51]

Not only have we observed greater health for women and children as American culture has become more egalitarian, but we also find that when authority is shared, marriage relationships are less abusive. Couples who share decision making are less likely to experience abuse, according to research by the Prepare and Enrich Premarital

Inventory—one of the most widely used population samples in the world. While other factors contribute to couple wellbeing, as this graph suggests, role relationships or gender role equality is one of the most significant elements determining abuse.[52] Couples with the highest levels of abuse are those where one partner is dominant, most often the male, and the other avoidant or submissive. Research by Prepare and Enrich also shows a statistical association between violence and unequal power in decision making.[53]



Similarly, studies by NGOs suggest that, when communities are more egalitarian, there is less gender abuse. Amartya Sen, a Nobel Prize–winning economist, documented a correlation between a culture's devaluation of females and steep drops in their numbers.[54] By contrast, in those communities where gender equality is valued, the ratio of females to males resembles gender ratios in the United States.[55]

South Korea, for example, has turned the tide on male preference. In the 1990s, the nation had a gender ratio almost as skewed as China's. Now, it is heading toward normality, "because the culture changed. Female education, antidiscrimination suits, and equal rights rulings made son preference seem old-fashioned and unnecessary."[56]

Clearly, gains have been made as culture has become more egalitarian, yet there is still much work to be done. For example, women have not yet attained equal leadership politically or professionally. Though outnumbering men in medical school, law school, and many graduate programs, women lag behind men in income and in holding top positions in corporations, political parties, and organizations, because, in part, society has not dealt completely with the root problem—an idea—that women are not as able as men. The idea that God does not give women positions of leadership is also taught as a biblical principle by Christians around the world. There remains much work to do, and yet many significant strategies can be learned from reform movements throughout history, particularly abolition.

Slavery and gender: a church under reform[57]

Abolition represents a significant social reform in the US, and it deeply divided American Christians.[58] As Christians bitterly debated slavery, the Holy Spirit "cleaned house," allowing the church to become a more authentic witness to Christ, more perfectly reflecting God's love and mission in the world. In this way, the church changed its mind on a key issue.

Reform movements are often led by prophetic individuals who challenge indifference, ignorance, and theological and moral failings. Such reformers are often people who have been deeply renewed themselves. Imagining an alternative future not yet realized, reformers are often driven by a deep intellectual, moral, and spiritual life that sustains their arduous work. For these reasons, reformers often possess an indomitable energy that comes from a spiritual source. Reformers and reform movements often share a number of similarities. These include:

1. *Reformers appeal to reason and Scripture*: A scholarly exchange of ideas takes place among reformers. Reformers see, in profound ways, a biblical truth that has gone unnoticed, and they begin to write passionately about it. Their scholarship appears initially odd, though their logic eventually garners respect. Ultimately, their call to the entire body of Christ is, "Come, let's reason together."

2. *Reformers are deeply reformed themselves*: Their vibrant intellectual life is often shaped by a deep spiritual life. Through prayer, they unite themselves to God and God's reforming work in their world.

3. *Popularization of abstract ideas*: After an intellectual basis is developed, artists, musicians, and writers make intellectual arguments not only popular, but compelling. Artists are able to infuse reformist ideas into hearts and lives. They help the average person feel the injustice that the reform addresses. A popularization of intellectual ideas was noted in such great literary works as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and the diaries of slaves such as Sojourner Truth. These masterpieces enable non-slaves to feel the injustice of slavery, helping the church to "cry with those who cry." Ultimately, the creative community imparts vision, passion, and the will to reform.

4. *Global dialogue among likeminded leaders*: Reformist ideas spread widely, engaging the body of Christ across the world in praying, writing, thinking, and discussing reform as a global church community. What began as a local dialogue becomes a global conversation among Christians from many different traditions and on many continents.

5. *A backpedaling of the position under critique*: Slavery advocates seek to correct abuses of slavery while retaining the institution. Within the gender reform movement, "soft male hierarchal complementarians" challenge gender abuse without abandoning male authority, favoring "headship with a heart"[59] or servant leadership, thus retaining male authority over females.

6. *The church reforms its theology (ideas) and its practices*: Ultimately, reform movements bring needed change to theology and also practice.

Theological foundations of slavery and gender reform[60]

There are several critical similarities between the abolitionist and gender reform movements. For example, both challenge a shallow reading of Scripture. Both insist upon taking into account the

historical and cultural background of biblical passages for a consistent interpretation. Both focus on the moral teachings of Scripture rather than particularities of the cultures depicted in the Bible. From the intense debate over slavery and women's subordination emerged principles of biblical interpretation that advanced abolition and gender reforms. These include:[61]

1. *A plain reading of the Bible must include the historical and cultural context*. Too often, the proslavery camp, like those opposed to women's leadership, relied upon a "plain reading" of Scripture without understanding the original author's intent and audience. To avoid abusing Scripture for personal gain (after all, slaves and women provided an unpaid social service industry), passages that are said to deny authority to individuals—in this case, slaves and women—must be read within their historical and cultural contexts.

2. *The full testimony of Scripture must be considered*. The obscure portions of Scripture must be interpreted by those which are obvious. In considering the passages on Abraham, for example, the point is not that he had servants, possibly slaves, but that he trusted God's promise. Similarly, the point of 1 Timothy 2:11–15 is not that Paul subjugates all women to silence and male authority, but that those who teach should be educated and should not domineer over others or usurp authority.

3. *A portion of Scripture should be viewed for its primary emphasis, not for its "attendant or cultural features."* Slavery and patriarchy are part of Bible culture. These are attendant or cultural features which do not constitute the moral teachings of Scripture.

4. *Be scrupulous in assessing selfish motives when reading the Bible (Matt 20:25–28)*.

Forged through the pain of slavery and gender subjugation, reformers equipped the church with better methods of interpretation that offered biblical value, dignity, and equality to those who once had been viewed as ontologically inferior. It was a new idea with wholesome consequences. We can see how these ideas empowered the work of individuals such as former slave Amanda Smith.

A freed American slave who became one of the most successful missionaries of her day, Amanda Smith, while speaking at a revival in England in 1882, located her true identity in her relationship to God. She said: "You may not know it, but I am a princess in disguise. I am a child of the King."[62] Smith realized that, "if she was God's child, she was also an heir of God!"[63] Embracing her full inheritance in Christ, Smith declared herself an heir—despite her gender, ethnicity, or class—with full privileges to advance Christ's kingdom by fanning into flame the gift within her. What was the result? Many on the mission field recognized her as a leader. One man told her that he had learned more about Christian leadership from observing her lead than from any other life example. She recognized that her truest identity rested not in her gender, but in her union with Christ.

Embracing their identity in Christ, leaders such as Amanda Smith allowed the fullest teachings of Scripture to inform more obscure passages like Paul's letters to Timothy. Rather than reading all of Scripture through the lens of 1 Timothy 2:11–15, the early evangelicals began to read 1 Timothy 2:11–15 through the whole of Scripture, particularly Paul's work with women. In doing so, they noticed that Paul built the church working beside women such as Phoebe, Junia, Lydia, Chloe, and Priscilla. The experiences of combating slavery and female subjugation enabled the early evangelicals to push past shallow interpretations to perceive, embrace, and celebrate those liberating messages of Scripture where the moral principles of the Bible prevail over the slavery and patriarchy that were part of the Bible's cultural milieu. Slaves and women were among the first to notice these liberating moments in Scripture, such as Paul's conversion—an experience so powerful that he abandons and opposes the ethnic and gender segregation of the Jewish priesthood to replace it with the priesthood of all believers.

Jesus

Katharine Bushnell observed that Jesus never devalued women. Christ assumed that women were fully human and equal to men, and he was strangely and authentically comfortable in their presence. He approached them as he did men, in public, regardless of cultural taboos. He commissioned women to build God's kingdom (John 20:17–18), just as he commissioned men. He consistently challenged the cultural devaluation of women's bodies. Christ healed a hemorrhaging woman in public, fully understanding the cultural assumption that, if he touched her, he too would be unclean. He overturned this belief by allowing her to touch him in public, declaring that she had been healed of her disease. She was not unclean, but ill. Women were the first to notice the liberating message for women in Christ's words and deeds.

Jesus spoke with women unselfconsciously, in broad daylight, despite the disapproval of his disciples (John 4:4–42). Unlike the rabbis of his day, Jesus allowed women to sit at his feet and study his teachings (Luke 10:38–42), preparing them for service as disciples,

Lay preacher Amanda Berry Smith addressed white camp meeting congregations as often as those within her own black community. In the late 1800s, Smith traveled to England and preached throughout the United Kingdom. After this, she spent two years in India, followed by almost eight years (1881–1889) in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The famous Methodist missionary William Taylor insisted that she "had done more for the cause of missions and temperance in Africa than the combined efforts of all missionaries before her."

To learn more, see "In the Name of the Gospel," *Mutuality*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 2009), 8-10.

evangelists, and teachers. In all ways, the equality of women was self-evident, implicit, and, most importantly, consistently part of Christ's teachings and practice.

When a woman called out to Jesus, saying, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," Jesus responded, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:27–28). For Jesus, a woman's value resides not in her cultural roles, but in her response to God's revelation in her life. This becomes the standard for every member of Christ's New Covenant—male and female. Women are now daughters of Abraham (Luke 13:16), a phrase first used by Jesus to welcome God's daughters as heirs and full members of Christ's body, the church. The life and teachings of Jesus shattered the patriarchy of his culture by challenging these and other cultural and religious taboos related to gender.

Pentecost

Consider Pentecost—the birthday of the church (Acts 2:1–18)—mediated no longer through an elite group of Jewish males, but through God's Spirit poured out on many tribes and nations, on both men and women. Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17–18). There is no gender, ethnic, or age preference noted in the birth of the church or in the gifts expressed at Pentecost.

Baptism

In the New Covenant, baptism rather than circumcision became the outer expression of our union with Christ, and baptism was open to male and female, Jew, Greek, slave, and free. The significance of Christian baptism is cited in Galatians 3:28, a verse etched into early baptismal fonts celebrating the inclusivity of Christian faith. To be united with Christ in his death and resurrection is a rebirth that redefines our value with respect to God, and our mutuality with respect to other Christians.[64] Because Christ established satisfaction and reconciliation between sinners and God, we receive newness of life and power from the Holy Spirit to work for mutuality and reconciliation among the members of Christ's body—the church. To state it another way, our soteriology (our doctrine of salvation) shapes our ecclesiology (our doctrine of the church).[65]

The notion that Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, male and female are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28) was an affront to a culture where identity, value, and influence was established through class, gender, and ethnicity. Remember, more than half of the population were slaves and women in Paul's day. To this culture, Paul suggests that to be clothed in Christ is to be heirs of Christ's kingdom; what we inherit through our earthly parents cannot compare to our heritage through Christ. Galatians 3:28 redefines the ontological status of females, slaves, and ethnic minorities, an idea with daily consequences.

Paul continually places the ethos of the New Covenant above the gender and cultural norms of his day. For example, Paul asks Philemon to welcome Onesimus as a Christian brother (Philem 16). With these words, Paul allows kingdom values to take precedence over cultural expectations for slaves, pointing to the fact that the cross changes everything (1 Cor 2:6, 7:31). It is believed that, ultimately, Onesimus became bishop of Ephesus.[66]

Ephesians 5

In the same way, husbands and wives are called to submit to one another in marriage (1 Cor 7:3–4) just as all Christians submit to one another (Eph 5:21). Interestingly, Paul asks those with cultural authority—husbands—to love their wives as they love themselves, even to the point of death. Certainly, this request would have been radical to first-century husbands. As men and husbands held ultimate authority over their wives, Paul asks husbands to sacrifice themselves for their wives as Christ sacrificed himself for the church. This is a complete reframing of gender and authority in marriage. Christian authority in marriage reflects authority in ministry—it is the call to serve without self-regard: to lay down one's life for another.

Paul realized that God was building a new creation—the church—with each member born of the Spirit and joined equally to Jesus as head. The new wine of Jesus would require a new wineskin where slaves and women can serve equally in accomplishing the purposes for which God had called and gifted them. That is why Paul did not hesitate to celebrate the woman Junia as an apostle. Nor was he reluctant to require respect for Phoebe as a deacon and *prostatēs*—that is, a leader in the church of Cenchreae. Nor do Paul and the other apostles shy away from celebrating the leadership of women teachers such as Priscilla and house church leaders such as Lydia, Chloe, Nympha, and Apphia. The new wine of Jesus' liberation would require a new wineskin where slaves and women leaders could participate equally in accomplishing the purposes for which God had created, called, and gifted them.

Spiritual gifts

Slaves and women were quick to notice that spiritual gifts are not given along ethnic, class, or gender lines. Spiritual gifts are first and foremost an equipping for service, and all believers are called to serve. In referring to the spiritual gifts, Paul reminds Christians in Rome not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, but with sober judgment to count others as better than themselves, remembering that, though each person receives spiritual gifts, the gifts are for serving, and each of us is dependent upon the gifts we receive from other believers. For, as Paul said, "each member belongs to all the others" (Rom 12:5b). Likewise, Paul tells the Christians at Corinth that they are mutually dependent upon one another, for, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" (1 Cor 12:21). The eye needs the hands, just as the head needs the feet. The parts of the body are not divided from one another, but function best when they have equal concern for, and mutual submission toward, one another.

Service is not determined by gender or class, but arises from God's gifting and is established by one's character, moral choices, and intimacy with God. Here, Scripture deals a deathblow to any notion of ontological superiority presumed by one's gender or ethnicity or class. Here are just two examples:

Notice that, in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul limits women at Ephesus from teaching, not as a consequence of gender, but because of the type of authority these women exercised. While this passage is frequently used to limit women's authority as a whole, notice that Paul's intent is quite different. What is often missed by those unfamiliar with Greek is that Paul selects an unusual Greek word when speaking of authority in verse 12. Rather than using the most common Greek terms for healthy or proper authority or oversight (*exousia*), Paul selects the term *authentein*—a word that would have caught the attention of first-century readers!

Authentein implied a domineering, misappropriated, or usurped authority. *Authentein* can also mean to behave in violent ways. It can even imply murder! *Authentein* appears only once in Scripture, here in 1 Timothy 2:12, and it was used by Paul as well as extrabiblical authors to connote authority that was destructive. For this reason, various translations of Scripture rendered the special sense of this word as follows:

- Vulgate (fourth to fifth century AD) as, "I permit not a woman to teach, neither to *domineer* over a man."
- The Geneva Bible (1560 edition) as, "I permit not a woman to teach, neither to *usurp authority* over the man."
- King James Version (1611) as, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor *usurp authority* over a man."
- The New English Bible (1961) as, "I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman *domineer over* man."[67]

in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul limits women at Ephesus from teaching, not as a consequence of gender, but because of the type of authority these women exercised.

This unusual Greek verb makes it clear that what Paul is objecting to in 1 Timothy 2:11–12 is an ungodly, domineering usurpation of authority.

Clearly, leadership concerns character. Thus, in determining who may or may not serve as an elder, overseer, deacon, pastor, or church board member, it is not gender, ethnicity, education, wealth, age, experience, or a person's capacity to influence others that Scripture celebrates. Rather, it is one's moral choices tied clearly to one's intimacy with Christ. The following table shows the character qualities required in elders, overseers, deacons, and widows—who also served as leaders. These qualities are, interestingly, very similar to the fruit of the Spirit.

Gifts of the Spirit

Biblical leadership is established not through gender, but through character and one's capacity to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. In contrast, those who display the fruit of the flesh (e.g., fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, etc. [Gal 5:19–21]) have disqualified themselves from leadership regardless of their gender, class, or ethnicity.

Elders/ Overseers (1 Tim 3:2–3)	Temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money
Deacons (1 Tim 3:8)	Serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money
Widows (1 Tim 3:11)	Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things
Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–26)	Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

To follow the teachings of Scripture, our choice of leaders, deacons, pastors, elders, and teachers should be from individuals who best exhibit the fruits of the Spirit, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

Through our rebirth in Christ, all people, including slaves and women, inherit a new identity—not of shame, marginalization, or abuse, but of dignity, equality, and shared authority and service because they too are born of the Spirit. Ethnicity, gender, or class do not devalue a person and therefore do not limit one's potential or service in Christ. As those who had once been subjugated by culture began to read and interpret Scripture consistently, they brought a wealth of insight to the world, expanding our understanding of Scripture and our gratitude for Christ, through whom all people receive their truest empowerment and identity, regardless of the circumstances of our birth.

Notes

1. Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2009), reviewed in *Priscilla Papers* 26.1.

2. The term the girl effect is used by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in *Half the Sky*. See also www.girleffect.org.

3. R. David Freedman, "Woman, a Power Equal to a Man," *Archaeology Review* 9 (1983): 56–58.

4. Stephan Klasen, "Low Schooling for Girls, Slower Growth for All? Cross-Country Evidence on the Effect of Gender Inequality in Education on Economic Development" *The World Bank Economic Review*, 16.3 (2002), 345-373. See also http://darp.lse.ac.uk/frankweb/courses/EC501/DG.pdf

5. Aristotle, *Politica* 1.5.B4v, trans. Bejamin Jowett, vol. 10 in *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English under the Editorship of W. D. Ross* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921).

6. Plato, *Laws* 6.781a, b, trans. A. E. Taylor, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, Bollingen Series LXXI, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 1356.

7. See Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York, NY: Schocken, 1995), 79ff.

8. Brent Shaw, "The Passion of Perpetua," *Past and Present* No. 139 (May 1993), 3-45, JSTOR.org: www. http://www.jstor.org/stable/651089, accessed November 2, 2012.

9. Menahoth 43b–44a; Talmud; Shabbath 86a–86b.

10. Gordon Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text* (Grand Rapids,

MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 58ff.

11. See Gordon Fee, *Commentary on Galatians* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2007) and Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

12. See *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon Fee (Carol Stream, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), and also Dorothy Irvin, *The Archaeology of Women's Traditional Ministries in the Church*, available through Christians for Biblical Equality's bookstore, http://equalitydepot.com/reboundcalendars2003-2007.aspx.

13. Manu IX:15–17. See the writings of Manu at http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/hinduism/dharma/manusmriti.asp, accessed June 2010.

14. Manu IX:2–3.

15. Manu IX:18. See also Pandita Ramabai, *The High Caste Hindu Woman* (New York, NY: Revell, 1902), 81ff.

16. *The Koran*, with notes by N. J. Dawood (London: Penguin, 1990), 64.

17. *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Arabic-English translation, vol. 7, Hadith 113–14.

18. Ahmad Zaky Tuffaha, *Al-Mar'ah wal-Islam*, 1st ed., Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Beirut, 1985, 37.

19. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 149–60.

20. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 149.

21. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 149.

22. "Our Battle against Judah," German Propaganda Archive, Calvin College Web site, http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/rim3.htm.

23. Comte Agenor de Gasparin, *The Uprising of a Great People*, trans. Mary Booth (New York, NY: Scribners, 1862), 103–04.

24. See Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 159ff.

25. Bob Jones University did not permit interracial dating.

26. Robert Parham, "Bob Jones University Apologizes for Racial Policies," Nov. 4, 2008, Ethics Daily Web site, http://www.ethicsdaily.com/news.php?viewStory=13489, accessed June 1, 2010.

27. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 73.

28. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, 118.

29. Irenaeus, fragment 32, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 1:573. Emphasis mine.

30. Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.10, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series* 1, ed. Philip Schaff [hereafter *NPNF*] (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1886), 5:267. Emphasis mine.

31. John Chrysostom, "Homily IX," in *Homilies on 1 Timothy*, *NPNF* 13:436. Emphasis mine.

32. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, in *Calvin's Commentaries*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1856), 37. Emphasis mine.

33. John Knox, "The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women 1558," in *The Political Writings of John Knox*, ed. Marvin A. Breslow (Cranbury, NY: Associate University Presses, 1985), 43. Emphasis mine.

34. Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill Church, Seattle, WA. Quoted at http://www.dennyburk.com/mark-driscoll-on-women-in-ministry-2, accessed March 24, 2010.

35. Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon: GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), ix.

36. Katharine Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine Bushnell: A Brief Sketch of Her Life Work* (Hertford, UK: Rose and Sons, Salisbury Square, 1930).

37. Charles O. Knowles, *Let Her Be: Right Relationships and the Southern Baptist Conundrum over Woman's Role* (Columbia, MO: KnoWell Publishing, 2002), 85.

38. A. J. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," *The Missionary Review of the World* 17 (1894): 911, http://xythos.gordon.edu/Archives/Gordon_Herritage/Ministry%20of%20Women.pdf.

39. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," 911.

40. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," 912.

41. Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: One Hundred Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Church and Home* (Minneapolis, MN: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2003), 9ff.

42. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 10.

43. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 39ff.

44. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 43ff.

45. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 43ff.

46. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 66ff.

47. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 169.

48. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 169.

49. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine Bushnell*, 13.

50. Bushnell, *Dr. Katharine Bushnell*, 13–14.

51. Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 198.

52. Shuji G. Asai and David H. Olson, "Spouse Abuse and Marital System Based on ENRICH," University of Minnesota, https://www.prepare-enrich.com/pe_main_site_content/pdf/research/abuse.pdf.

53. Asai and Olson, "Spouse Abuse," 3–4, 11.

54. Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, xiv–xv.

55. Kristoff and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, xiv–xv.

56. "Gendercide," *The Economist*, March 2010, 13.

57. For a complete discussion on gender equality as a reform movement, see chapter 1 in *Global Voices on Biblical Equality: Women and Men Serving Together in the Church*, ed. Aída Besançon Spencer, William David Spencer, and Mimi Haddad (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

58. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.

59. See Steven Tracy, *Christianity Today*, "Headship with a Heart: How Biblical Patriarchy Actually Prevents Abuse." February 2003. http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2003/february/5.50.html, accessed April 18, 2008.

60. Much of what follows in this section can be found in Willard Swartley's excellent book, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983).

61. The interpretive methods provided here are carefully noted in Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, 58ff.

62. W. B. Sloan, *These Sixty Years: The Story of the Keswick Convention* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1935), 91.

63. Sloan, *These Sixty Years*, 91.

64. See Mimi Haddad's chapter, "Reading the Apostle Paul through Galatians 3:28," in *Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity*, ed. Curtiss Paul DeYoung (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2009), 73–93.

65. Fee, *Listening to the Spirit in the Text*, 59.

66. In a second-century document, Ignatius of Antioch cites Onesimus, a bishop of Ephesus, who offered him hospitality. See chapter 1, Praise of the Ephesians, at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0104.htm, accessed Jan. 5, 2012.

67. Linda Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Ronald Pierce, and Gordon Fee (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 205–24.

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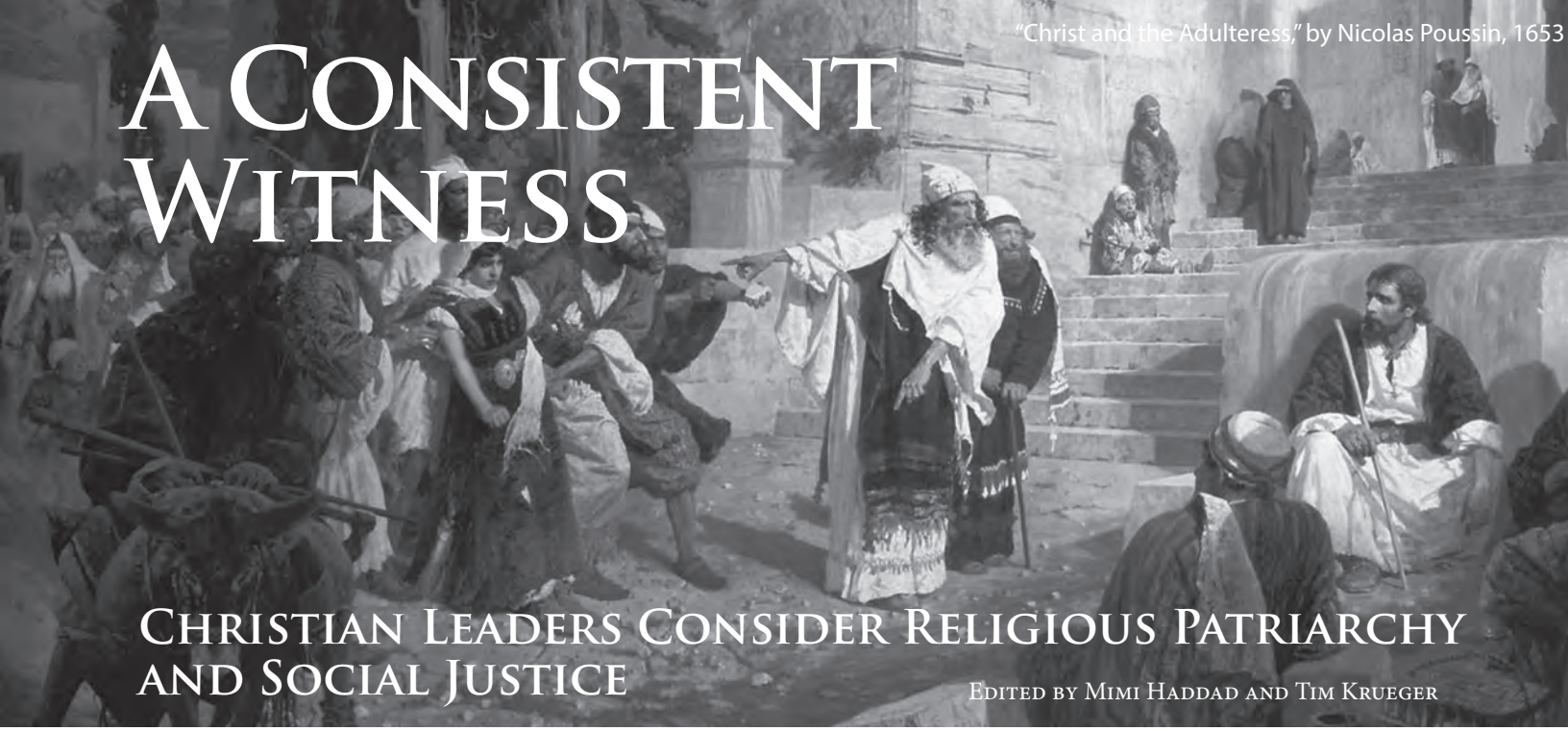

"Christ and the Adulteress," by Nicolas Poussin, 1653

A Consistent Witness

Christian Leaders Consider Religious Patriarchy and Social Justice

Edited by Mimi Haddad and Tim Krueger

Do religious teachings create and reinforce a culture in which injustice is inevitable? In 2011, a dozen Christians working to end sex-based abuse attended CBE's conference in Seattle, and together we explored this question. We discussed the cultural and religious devaluation of females across the world. Delegates came from several different organizations, each searching for ways to end the global sex industry.

Together we asked, "What is the idea driving this madness?" Does this crime against humanity occur in communities or cultures where the devaluation of females is taken as a self-evident maxim? Do Christians working within these communities deal only with the symptoms, while neglecting the root cause—an idea (often understood as having divine origins) that females are inferior, an idea that often justifies their abuse? Worse than simply being blind to the root ideas that underpin the sex industry, are Christians actively (though unknowingly) teaching and perpetuating them in the name of Christ? With the permission of the delegates, we summarize their assessment of the root causes in their respective nations and cultures.

Cambodia

In Cambodia, where sex trafficking has become a problem of monstrous proportions, Christian workers note a cultural ethos of male superiority. Statements such as "Men are as pure gold; women are white cloth" are commonplace. The culture as a whole values males over females, and evangelical churches in Cambodia tend to support male-only models of leadership. The question is, does this value assigned to gender shape daily life? The clear answer is yes. Cambodian women rarely have freedom to work outside the home, and are marginalized even within Christian circles. When females leave the sex industry, they are seen as permanently tainted and often feel very unwelcome and marginalized in evangelical churches—the one place where women should find healing and forgiveness.

Kenya and Uganda

Our friends from Kenya and Uganda tell us that religion has been used in their countries to uphold and even reinforce a patriarchal culture that views males as innately superior and more valuable than females. In traditional African tribal religions, creation stories underline the superiority of men, and women are punished to keep them in submission to men. Among Christians, Genesis is believed to show male preference because Adam was created first. Churches teach that male authority is necessary because like Eve, females are easily deceived. This is upheld by an interpretation of headship in the New Testament to mean authority. Women therefore wear head coverings, which serves as a constant reminder of their innate inferiority.

We see the consequences of these teachings in many ways throughout Kenya and Uganda. When a boy is born, there is much celebration. Boys are given priority over girls in education and nutrition. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced because it is believed that women are innately promiscuous and need to be controlled because of their immoral nature. In many places in Africa, women are not allowed to own property. While Kenya has changed its constitution to give women property rights, the legal protections are not always enforced. To the contrary, women themselves are seen as property. In fact, in many African cultures, there is no term for "domestic violence!" Rather, people speak of men as "disciplining" females, a term that means nothing less than to exert violence over them. It rests on the assumption that men are superior and women need men's correction.

China

Our colleagues from China observe that at points in history, Chinese leaders sought ways to release the gifts of women because they comprise half the population. Yet, today, even in this country where women are believed to hold up half the sky, male superiority is ingrained in culture, even across religions. In Buddhism, a woman can never become Buddha unless she is reincarnated as a man. In Christianity, male superiority is taken for granted and viewed as God-

ordained. Genesis 2:18 is interpreted as saying that woman was created to be a helper, meaning she is inferior like a servant in the house. First Peter 3:7 is used to emphasize woman as the weaker vessel. The value of women is even encoded in the Chinese language itself, in which many characters associate bad luck and evil with the female gender.

Negative ideas about women have grave consequences. Under the one-child policy, Chinese parents prefer boys to girls, resulting in the abortion of many baby girls. In churches, the picture is not much brighter. Abuse and sexual harassment are not taken seriously. One delegate noted that there are times when women start a Christian organization, but men take the credit for it in their autobiographies. "Now we understand why there are so few women in church history," another leader noted in response. In many churches, where women outnumber men, and in organizations that were founded and run by women, women still feel like "spare tires."

Leadership in Chinese churches, especially in the United States, is based on gender. Men are often placed in leadership even if they lack maturity or the necessary gifts. Many women from China are accustomed to equal treatment, but once they come to the United States, hear the gospel, and accept Christ, they are shocked by the "inequality of gender" in teaching and practice. As a result of this inequality, many women are leaving the church and working elsewhere.

India

Indian leaders point out that Hinduism teaches, "There is nothing else that is more sinful than women. Verily, women are the root of all faults."[1] The common Hindi phrase, "*Dhol, gawar, shudra, pashu, nari, ye sab tadan ke adhikari*" suggests that animals, illiterates, lower castes, and women should be subject to beating. It is no surprise that in this environment, a woman waits on her husband as if he is a god, and surrenders her own will completely to him, her lord.[2] Women are told they are impure during menstruation. Their voices are not to be heard—they should not even laugh in public. Childlessness is believed to be the woman's fault and is viewed as a curse. It is assumed that widows bring bad luck, and therefore they are not to attend engagement services, marriages, or christenings, and they are rarely remarried. Most Indian churches do not approve of egalitarian marriages, and all oppose divorce, even in the case of abuse. Divorce is believed to be the woman's fault because she failed to keep her husband happy. In India, it is extremely rare for Christian organizations to have female CEOs. A very few Christian organizations are headed by women. As a result, they are less effective in combating gender abuse.

Conclusion

It was noted in our discussion that Christian mission organizations that hold male-only models of leadership do less in addressing injustices and abuses of females. Compared to egalitarian organizations, those with male-only leadership models seem to have less opportunity to understand or empathize with female issues. Egalitarian organizations, on the other hand, are usually at the forefront of combating abuse toward women, because they understand that, as one evangelical who has worked with sex crime victims for nearly twenty years has stated, "When one type of human being is deemed lesser, it provides license to treat them as less. No matter how subtle, dehumanizing ideas of people leads to dehumanizing actions."[3]

The greatest challenge to gender justice comes when the subordination of woman to man is taught within the body of Christians; advocacy goes hand in hand with biblical interpretation. An American evangelical humanitarian describes his journey to this realization as follows:[4]

> . . . no matter how I tried to slice it, spin it, or soften it; at the end of the day, however much the gap was minimized... By making the husband the default tie-breaker within the home, even in the best of marriages, there is still the subtle message that the wisdom of a woman is less than that of a man. By making the position of leadership within spiritual community inacceptable based solely on gender, a glass ceiling is imposed that speaks volumes to the souls of women and where they stand in social order, and even perhaps before God. . . . Ideas do have consequences, and . . . holding this theological position became a problem of injustice for me.
>
> Years ago my vocation began taking me to various parts of the globe dealing with issues of injustice. Time and again I encountered cultural practices that subjugated and subverted women, most always justified through long standing traditional or religious values and mores. Whether through a process or an abrupt change, it was not until those values were challenged and replaced that breakthroughs for women were realized. I began challenging my own beliefs.

At the outset of our discussion, we raised a series of questions. Does the devaluation of women in a culture enable injustices? Do religious teachings form a basis for a culture's devaluation of women? And, do Christian organizations not only fail to recognize this, but unwittingly perpetuate the problem by modeling and advocating male-only authority structures, thus undermining their own mission to combat injustice? In the experience of each of these evangelical leaders, the answer to this set of questions is, unfortunately, "yes." The marginalization and abuse of females is inseparable from their devaluation, and this is often perpetuated by religious authorities and organizations that embrace male-dominated leadership. As Alan Myatt demonstrates in his article, "On the Compatibility of Ontological Equality, Hierarchy and Functional Distinctions," a worldview that retains hierarchy at the level of being is incompatible with functional equality and justice. Churches and organizations that embrace such a model will inevitably fail at delivering justice. Perhaps this is why the apostle Paul reminds us that our minds must be renewed (Rom 12:12), made captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Righteousness and justice will follow.

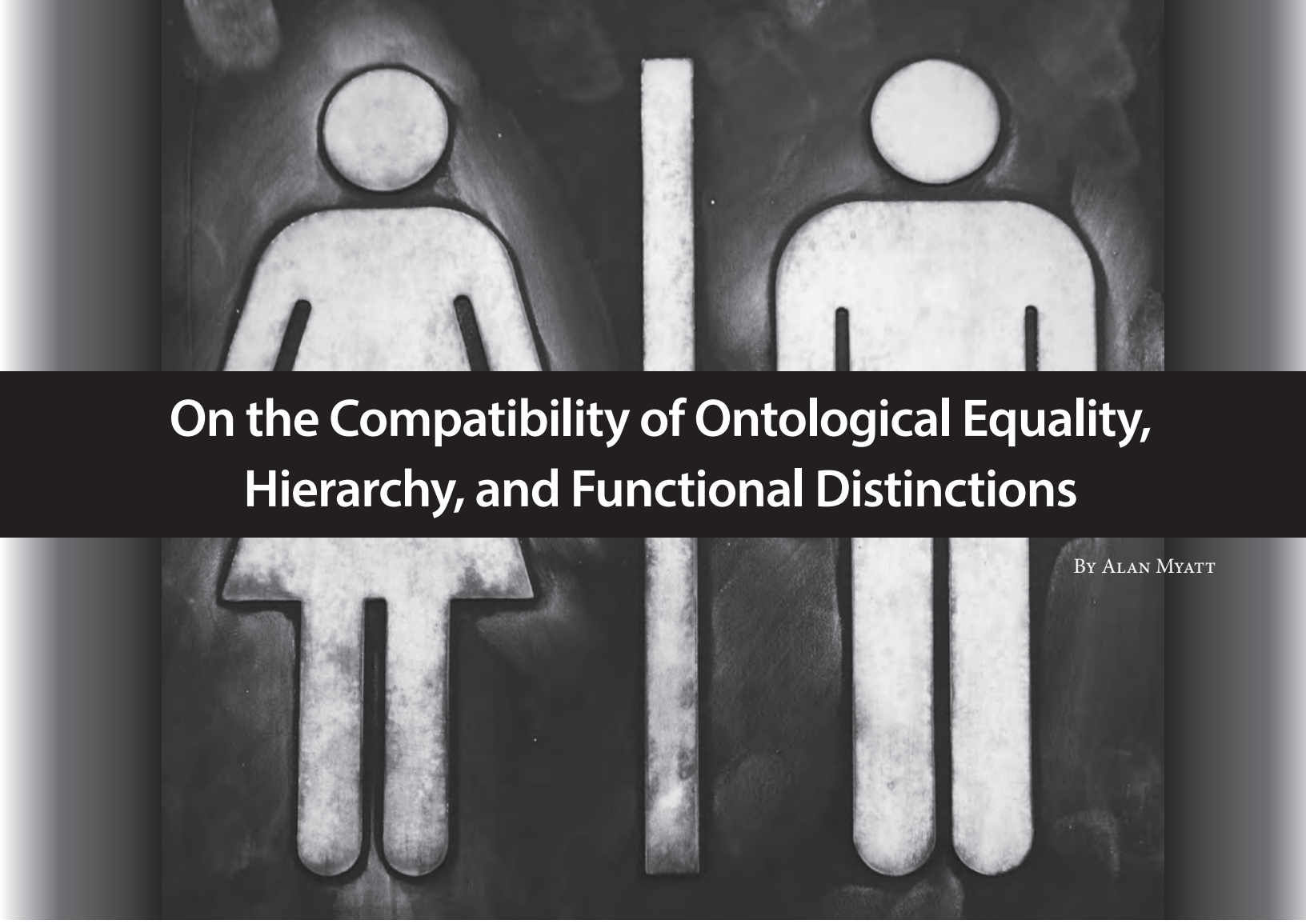
Notes

1. Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Section XXXVIII, Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli. The same text appears also in Sri Shiva Mahapurana Uma Samhita, ch 24.

2. Mahabhatara, Anusasana Parva CXLVI, Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli.

3. This individual has granted permission to be quoted but has requested to remain anonymous.

4. Robinson, Lance. "A Matter of Justice: My Journey Towards Gender Equality." *Arise* E-Newsletter, Christians for Biblical Equality, October 6, 2011. Available at http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/2011-10-06-matter-justice-my-journey-towards-gender-equality-arise-e-newsletter. Accessed November 2, 2012.



On the Compatibility of Ontological Equality, Hierarchy, and Functional Distinctions

By Alan Myatt

It has become evident in the recent debate over the nature of the Son's subordination to the Father in the Trinity that important issues are involved. Most recently the claim has been made that this doctrine has implications for how Christians may pray. Dr. Bruce Ware has encouraged us not to pray directly to Jesus, but rather to pray only to the Father, through Jesus, in the Spirit.[1] If he is correct, then many of us will need to change how we approach God in the most intimate areas of our devotional life. This is not an arcane discussion of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. It goes to the core doctrines of our faith. It defines the nature of the God we serve. Significant practical issues of prayer and worship are involved.

My purpose in this article is to examine the notion of hierarchy, ontological equality, and functional subordination from the standpoint of worldview. By this I mean to do three things; first, to raise the question as to how this issue may or may not be coherent from the perspective of developing a consistent worldview; second, to evaluate the presuppositions and worldview issues that seem to underlie notions of hierarchy; and finally, to ask whether or not these points are consistent with a biblical view of God and creation.

Hierarchy and worldview

All worldviews either include or imply the answers to questions in four distinct areas of discourse; knowledge (epistemology), being (ontology or metaphysics), value (ethics) and purpose (teleology). The question of functional subordination arising out of ontological equality touches especially the areas of ontology and ethics, the theories of being and action. But exactly how are these to be related to one another?

The organic unity of worldviews

A worldview is like a mobile. It hangs from a support, its foundational presuppositions, connecting its parts in a delicate balance. Unless we adhere to some type of irrationalism, it is difficult to deny the interdependence of the parts as they balance each against the others to maintain a cognitive and emotional equilibrium. Like any system, when we jiggle one section, the others move as well. If we remove a weight on one side, the system attempts to adjust in order to maintain the balance of consistency. This is a psychological as well as an intellectual truism.

Psychologists speak of the notion of *cognitive dissonance*; that all things being equal, people will tend to alleviate feelings of discomfort caused as a result of holding mutually exclusive ideas through such

strategies as modifying one of them, adding additional ideas that appear to reconcile the two, changing relevant behaviors and so forth.[2] David K. Clark has pointed out that the internal arguments which people tend to generate to achieve cognitive consistency are the ones they find the most powerful.[3] While such arguments may actually lead toward more consistency, it is clear that this does not *necessarily* eliminate contradictions within one's beliefs. It does imply either becoming more consistent or devising a means of convincing oneself that no inconsistency exists.

This inherent drive toward at least perceived, if not true, consistency in worldview is instinctive. It is reasonable to assume that since consistency is itself a virtue reflecting the rational character of the mind of God, then God has created this drive as an essential part of our noetic structure. The doctrine of creation indicates that there is a correspondence between our minds and the structure of the created order. If one looks at an elephant one sees an elephant, not a giraffe or a banana. It is plausible, therefore, to conclude that the unity of the worldview categories of ontology, epistemology, ethics and teleology is not merely a human construction. Rather, this unity reflects the necessary coherence of the created order itself.

The necessary unity of ontology and ethics is a well-known and useful tool in our apologetics. We refuse to allow our atheist neighbors the fantasy of imagining that a rational ethic can be derived from the cosmology of Richard Dawkins or Bertrand Russell. Atheists can certainly *be* decent, law-abiding folks. They just have no intellectually defensible reason for being so. All they have, in the end, is mere personal preference. We insist on pressing this point because we are convinced of the unity of worldview; that there is no disjunction between ontology and ethics. Decisions made in each of the four worldview areas determine the structure and content of the others. There is a necessary logical and psychological connection that pursues this type of unity, just as a mobile maintains its balance by adjusting itself back to equilibrium when one side is poked or modified.

Is it rational to separate ontology from teleology and ethics? Can there be a disjunction between ontology, the essence of an entity, and its ethical relationships with other entities? No, the theory of action and value is necessarily linked to ontology. Therefore, a necessary hierarchy in one area logically implies a necessary hierarchy in the other. A hierarchy of function necessarily points to a hierarchy of being. Given the coherence of worldviews, an eternally necessary functional hierarchy would be incompatible with ontological equality between the members of the hierarchy.[4]

The coherence of ontology and function in the Trinity

This brings us to the case of the claims being currently made in favor of just such an eternal hierarchy in the ordering of the Persons of the Trinity. Is it possible to make sense of such a notion? Is it coherent, either in its logic or practice? Or does it involve an inner dissonance that causes it to be permanently out of balance, in spite of the best efforts of its proponents?

Bruce Ware offers two reasons why there is no conflict between ontological equality and functional subordination in male and female relationships. The first is the analogy of that between parents and children. "But is it not also clear that parental authority does not make parents superior to their children or children inferior to their parents? Both parents and children are fully human, fully made in the image of God, and fully deserving of the dignity and rights accorded to all human beings."[5]

The second reason offered by Ware is simply a restatement of the assertion that "authority and subordination do not compromise the complete equality of the Triune Persons of the Godhead."[6] Therefore, the same must be true in human relations as well. Since he thinks his view is taught in Scripture, the question of its coherence is assumed but never demonstrated.

Rebecca Groothuis has responded to this type of discourse in her discussions of how complementarians ground gender role distinctions in the nature of masculinity and femininity.[7] Reviewing complementarian sources, she shows that the logic of the hierarchical view requires that the difference be in the *nature* or *being* of each as male and female.[8] This is the case since the woman's subordination is both necessary and permanent. She then asks whether the relationship between being and role as defended by complementarians is logically possible. Though the doctrine of the Trinity is not the focus of her discussion, the logical problem she highlights is the same. If one's eternal and necessary unequal role entails one's unequal being, then this would obtain in the case of the Father and Son as in any other relationship.

Indeed this seems to be the case. The English suffix "-ness" denotes the condition or state of being of a thing.[9] If the basic "-ness" of a thing, i.e. its "femaleness" or its "sonship" (or "sonness") is the sufficient condition of its subordination, then this subordination is unavoidably a function of its being. It is grounded in its nature as female or son. If this were not the case, then there simply would be no *reason* why any such a distinction should be both necessary and permanent.

That such an understanding applies to recent arguments of some complementarians concerning the Trinity is to be confirmed by Ware's insistence that the roles in the economic Trinity are not

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ad hoc. The Son's submission is not for the purpose of carrying out the process of redemption. Rather it is a fundamental expression of his "sonship." The Son is not the Son unless he is eternally submissive to the Father and this relationship is grounded in God himself. It is difficult to see what this groundedness could be if it is not an aspect of God's being. Therefore, it follows that something in the being of the Son suits him for a subordinate role while the being of the Father suits him for supremacy.[10]

Wayne Grudem agrees. Headship and submission are eternal realities rooted in the nature of God the Trinity. However, it is not based on any distinction in competencies between the three Persons. "It is just there," he writes.[11] The Father has authority just because he *is* the Father and this is most likely *the* fundamental difference between the Persons of the Trinity. However, he states that, "They don't differ in any attributes, but only in how they relate to each other."[12]

The problem here is to understand what it could mean for each to be suited for one role or another, by virtue of what they are as Father and Son, if it is the case that their natures are identical, which they must be if they share the one unique divine nature. How can it be that they do not differ in attributes and competencies, if their roles are necessarily related to who they are? If this fitness for authority entails the supremacy of one party, then it necessarily entails the inferiority of the other party. How, then, is this not due to a difference in nature? Their roles are necessarily linked to the being of each. If the roles are unrelated to any distinction in attributes, as Grudem affirms, then why exactly is the authority-submission relationship both necessary and one-way? To say that the Father is in authority because he is the Father, and that it is his authority that makes him the Father is circular. It does not explain why or how, much less prove, that this is the case.

Millard Erickson has noted that if authority and submission are essential and not accidental attributes of the Father and Son, then the essence of the Father and the essence of the Son are different. This "is equivalent to saying that they are not *homoousious* with one another" and so he concludes that there seems to be an internal contradiction in their formulation of this doctrine.[13]

It is important to note that Grudem admits that authority is related to the being of God. "Within the being of God, you have both equality and authority," he says. Since this is the case, he believes that egalitarians should just agree that such relations are possible.[14] But why should egalitarians admit to any such thing? His use of the term "being" to describe the locus of both equality and subordination in God is a sign of the very incoherence that egalitarians are complaining about. This becomes even clearer as we look at Ware's analogies offered in defense of this view.

Parents and children are equal in dignity, Ware writes. Yet parents properly have authority over their children. However, he fails to note that, in fact, children are inferior to their parents in respect to the characteristics that make their submission necessary. Children lack the wisdom, experience and physical capability that parents possess to make their own decisions and survive. This is why the law recognizes that children do not share fully in the rights of adult humans until they reach the age of majority. They do not have the right to decide not to go to school, to live on their own, to enter into contracts and to do many other things that adults do. It is for their protection and well-being that children must submit to their parents because they lack, by virtue of their being, the competence to fully care for themselves. In this respect they are *not* equal to their parents, although it is certainly the case that they are equally in God's image and thus of equal value and dignity. Once they become adults, and are thus judged responsible for themselves, then it is not necessary they submit to their parents. The crucial point here is that if there were no difference in attributes and being regarding the ability to care for one's self, there would be no reason for the submission. The analogy appears to actually support the incoherence of the hierarchical view.

When subordination follows necessarily and justifiably from the subordinate person's unalterable nature, the subordinate is inferior in at least some aspect of her being; in this case, the scope and duration of the person's subordination will reflect the extent and significance of the inferiority.

In the case of children, subordination is clearly not related to any defect in their humanness, but rather the changing state of their maturity. However, as Groothuis contends, "When subordination follows *necessarily and justifiably* from the subordinate person's unalterable nature, the subordinate *is* inferior in at least some aspect of her being; in this case, the scope and duration of the person's subordination will reflect the extent and significance of the inferiority."[15] More specifically, she argues that if the subordination is "permanent, comprehensive and ontologically grounded," then the subordinate person is inferior.[16]

In a recent article, Steven B. Cowan attempts to refute Groothuis and establish the coherency of the complementarian position. Can he save ontological equality and functional hierarchy from its apparent inherent irrationalism? I do not believe so. Space does not allow a full scale discussion, but a few remarks, are in order.

Cowan frames the issue between the two sides as a dispute over "whether the property of *being equal in value and dignity to X* can be had by an individual who also has the property *having a subordinate role to X*."[17] However, the point at issue is not necessarily a question of value, per se, though egalitarians tend to believe that this is implied. Rather it is a question of ontological inferiority in respect to the qualities that make one fit for authority or leadership. The only coherent reason for one to have necessary authority, leadership, teaching and decision-making primacy is that one is better fitted for such tasks by one's nature. The subordinate may be equally valued as properly

fulfilling a necessary role, but this is not the same thing as being ontologically equal. Ontological inferiority persists regardless of complementarian efforts to make it go away. [18]

The result is that the subordinate party is viewed as inferior in the sense of being less suited for carrying out the functions and responsibilities of authority. Cowan uses an unusual illustration that actually reinforces this point. He speaks of a hypothetical alien creature with two independent faculties enabling it to live both in water and on land. Its fitness for each environment is related to ontological factors appropriate to each. He supposes that women could likewise have qualities that suit them for subordination in the present that would not be expressed in the future new heavens and earth.[19] These would be qualities of their being. Now if we apply this reasoning to the Trinity it would seem that the Son is subordinate to the Father because in his nature, he is less fit for supreme authority. The clear implication is that the Son has a different nature, inferior in at least some respects to that of the Father.

The influence of Greek hierarchicalism on the doctrine of God is evident in Origen's theory that the Father imparts to the Son his existence and therefore the Son is less than the Father.

It appears that in spite of statements to the contrary, there is a drift in hierarchicalist interpretations of the Trinity toward moving beyond a merely functional subordination to ground the obedience of the Son in the nature, or ontology, of the Persons of the Trinity. This is to be expected if the notion of ontological equality and permanent functional subordination is incoherent, as I believe it to be.

As I argued at the outset, there is both a logical and psychological tendency for worldviews to reach as much consistency as possible. A stable worldview must have equilibrium and consistency between its ontology and its ethics. Action that is eternal and necessary to a thing is logically grounded in its nature. It does what it does because of what it is, and what it is, is a function of its being. The notion of the eternal subordination of the Son introduces an artificial disjunction between the ontology and ethic of the hierarchicalist worldview that is inherently unstable. This element of irrationalism will press for resolution, either by denying eternal subordination or denying ontological equality in the Trinity.

The Great Chain of Being: the ontological basis of hierarchy

Throughout the bulk of Christian history, the hierarchical stratification of human relations extended beyond male-female relationships in the church and home to persons at all levels of society. Scholars have documented the caste system of medieval Christendom and linked it to an underlying worldview known as the Great Chain of Being. The assumptions of the Chain of Being have their roots in the West in Aristotelian and Platonic thought, in which the natural division of society into superiors and subordinates was taken for granted. This perspective was developed into an all-encompassing philosophy and worldview in neo-Platonist thought. As Greek philosophical notions were appropriated by early Christian apologists in their defense of the faith, it eventually became entwined with the theology of the church and set the agenda for its theory of society.[20]

The influence of Greek hierarchicalism on the doctrine of God is evident in Origen's theory that the Father imparts to the Son his existence and therefore the Son is less than the Father.[21] This is very similar to the kind of emanation theories emerging from neo-platonic thought. For Plotinus, all of the diversity in the universe originates in a series of emanations from the being of the One, who is beyond being itself. The resulting Chain of Being forms a hierarchy from the higher spiritual realms to the lower creatures.[22]

Neo-Platonic notions of hierarchy continued to find their way into the church's theology through such writings as those of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. This vision of society became basic to Western thought.[23]

In the Middle Ages, this concept translated into the division of society into "Three Estates," each stratified according to the Chain of Being. The first estate consisted of church officials beginning with the pope, archbishops, bishops, and priests. The second estate included the ruling classes of kings, nobility and knights, while the peasants and merchants made up the lower estate. Any violation of the established authority within each estate was seen as a threat to the creation order and subversive to the state and to the stability of Christian culture. Any attempt to leave one's place in the chain was therefore an act of rebellion. It is critical to note that in the family there was a hierarchical ordering of husband, wife, children and servants.[24] Each was subordinate to the previous due to their immutable places on the Chain of Being.

It is important to understand that the philosophy of the Great Chain of Being is a non-Christian solution to a philosophical problem that arises out of the denial of a biblical worldview. The question as to whether or not reality is ultimately one or many is derived from the assumption that the universe is ultimate, and is thus founded on a denial of the Creator-creature distinction. From a biblical standpoint, only the Triune God is ultimate, and in him both unity and diversity are equally ultimate. The unity of his nature is not prior to the diversity of Persons and neither is the diversity of Persons prior to the unity of his nature. There is an absolute ontological equality, except for their personal consciousness, between the three Persons.[25] Since he is the Creator, God's sovereign plan accounts for both the unity and diversity of the creation. There is no need to posit a hierarchy or Chain of Being to hold everything together. The diversity and unity of the universe finds its resolution in the will and creatorial acts of the One-and-Many Trinity.[26]

The notion of the Chain of Being is, hence, the fruit of an essentially pagan worldview. Yet it is this view that became definitive for defining hierarchical relationships in Western Christendom. Relations of political, ecclesiastical and gender authority were explicitly based on this type of thinking. Its

influence on biblical interpretation can even be seen in the commentaries of Calvin, who argued that the woman

> by nature (that is, by the ordinary law of God) is formed to obey; for . . . (the government of women) has always been regarded by all wise persons as a monstrous thing; and, therefore, so to speak, it will be a mingling of heaven and earth, if women usurp the right to teach. Accordingly, he bids them be "quiet," that is, keep within their own rank.[27]

Elsewhere he argues

> He (Paul) establishes by *two* arguments the pre-eminence, which he had assigned to men above women. The *first* is, that as the woman derives her origin from the man, she is therefore inferior in rank. The *second* is, that as the woman was created for the sake of the man, she is therefore subject to him, as the work ultimately produced is to its cause. That the man is the beginning of the woman and the end for which she was made, is evident from the law.[28]

Notice the language. The woman is inferior in rank. She is formed to obey. This is Chain of Being language, subtly imposed on the biblical text.

The influence of the Chain of Being continued to play a leading role in attempts of 19th century Christians to use the Bible to justify the continuation of slavery. Theories of the lower rank of Africans on the Chain of Being abounded and were used to argue that there was nothing immoral in the arrangements of antebellum slavery in the southern United States.[29] After all, according to the Chain of Being doctrine, each person's role is indispensable to the functioning of society. In a sense, all are of equal value, though, to quote George Orwell, "some are more equal than others."[30] The subordination of some to others appears to be an evil, they admitted, but once it is understood as a necessity of the order of creation (the Great Chain of Being), it is argued that subordination is not an evil at all.[31]

The similarities in the chain of authority in the Trinity and in male-female relations to the non-Christian theory of the Great Chain of Being are no coincidence. Such notions were derived from the infusion of the Chain of Being philosophy into Christian thought, forming the presuppositional lens through which medieval and early modern Christians read their Bibles. The ontology of hierarchy is derived from this presupposition, a metaphysic at odds with the Christian doctrine of creation and the notion of the self-contained Triune God as presented in Scripture. It places the value and limits the function of things according to their position in the hierarchy of Being. Current attempts to define the Trinity as an eternal hierarchy of authority and submission may be understood, then, as examples of reading the Great Chain of Being back into the biblical text. The motive for this seems to be the preservation of an understanding of male-authority in the home and church.[32]

It should be noted that this hierarchical understanding of these relations, indeed of the universe itself, is virtually ubiquitous in non-Christian, pagan thought throughout the world, both ancient and modern. Ancient mystery religions of the Near East, as well as Hindu pantheism among others, show this tendency to structure the universe in a hierarchy of Being, with rigid social structures. In its more pure forms, unimpeded by any biblical influence, the tendency is for some type of cosmic evolution through which humans eventually become divine. Common factors are a hierarchy of divinities and a hierarchy of male over female. Patriarchy has been so universal in human society that it could be said to be the default mode of human existence.[33]

While complementarians persist in accusing egalitarians of yielding to the pressure of non-Christian culture in their handling of Scripture, it appears that just the opposite is true.[34] It is the complementarian position that grows out of non-Christian presuppositions. This has important implications. Traditional hierarchical biblical interpretation has been filtered through the lens of a cultural vision of human relations compromised by a pagan worldview grounded in the Great Chain of Being. This effectively blinded it to the egalitarian implications of the biblical text.

Contrary to being a capitulation to culture, the egalitarian impulse is a historical development running against the tide of these assumptions. It surfaced in Britain and America as the implications of Reformation theology began to saturate the culture in the wake of the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[35] It came into full bloom among evangelicals in the abolition and suffrage movements of the nineteenth century. Under pressure from egalitarian readings of Scripture, the hierarchical vision has been in a steady retreat ever since. The Bible's teachings of the ontological equality of all persons has done away with the rule of kings in favor of democracy, the enslavement of Africans in favor of equal civil rights for all races, and the political and social subordination of women in favor of suffrage and the rights to education and careers.

One place where the Chain of Being still seems to hold power is in the church.[36] It should be a matter of concern that its influence remains entrenched. At the outset of this article, it was noted that at least one prominent proponent of the eternal submission of the Son to the Father has encouraged us to cease praying directly to Jesus. This is because the Father is seen to be supreme.[37] A recent booklet that I received expresses a quite similar sentiment:

> Jesus taught his followers to pray to "our Father in the heavens." (Matthew 6:9). Our prayers, then, must be directed only to Jehovah God. However, Jehovah requires that we acknowledge the position of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ . . . He is appointed High Priest and Judge. (John 5:22; Hebrews 6:20) Hence, the Scriptures direct us to offer our prayers through Jesus. For our prayers to be heard we must pray only to *Jehovah* through his Son.

The notion of the Chain of Being is, hence, the fruit of an essentially pagan worldview. Yet it is this view that became definitive for defining hierarchical relationships in Western Christendom. Relations of political, ecclesiastical and gender authority were explicitly based on this type of thinking.

That this quote, which obviously comes from the Jehovah's Witnesses, sounds so similar is a cause for concern. I am not suggesting that the author mentioned shares their Arianism. This would be an unfair accusation. Nevertheless, it seems that when we are exhorted to pray only to the Father and not to the Son as well, some sort of Rubicon has been crossed. One wonders what the impact of this will be on worship as its implications are worked out. Could it be described as Jesus' lesser glory? The fact is that Jesus taught us to pray to himself as well as to the Father (John 14:14). This is completely appropriate. The perichoretic unity of the Trinity simply does not allow for any type of essential supremacy or subordination amongst the three Persons. They must share one identical divine nature as the Scriptures teach.

Millard Erickson has warned that the hierarchicalist interpretation of the Trinity is a detour in the wrong direction. He contends that this position is unstable. I must agree. If my argument at the beginning of this paper is correct, then this instability will attempt to resolve itself, returning to equilibrium just as a hanging mobile does when it is bumped. The dissonance between equality and subordination will lead to one or the other being given up. In this case, that may very well mean that some will eventually follow the logic of hierarchy toward Arianism. I would like to join Dr. Erickson in a plea for the hierarchicalists to rethink their position and turn back.

Notes

1. Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles and Relevance*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 18.

2. R. L. Timpe, "Cognitive Dissonance," in *The Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling*, 2nd ed., ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 220.

3. See David K. Clark, *Dialogical Apologetics: A Person Centered Approach to Christian Defense*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 160-162. Thanks also to Dr. Maria Boccia of Gordon-Conwell, whose insights helped illuminate this point.

4. I am not arguing that all worldviews are necessarily consistent. That is clearly not the case. One of the primary reasons for rejecting false worldviews is the fact that they do contain logical contradictions that are irreconcilable within the framework of their own presuppositions. However, it does appear that both logic and human psychology tend to push in the direction of consistency. Decisions made in the area of teleology will both be shaped by and shape interpretations of ontology and ethics. The reductionistic empiricism of the new atheists leads inexorably to relativism in ethics. That not all atheists are willing to admit this or embrace it is only evidence of the inherent irrationalism in the worldview itself. The more consistent they are, the more relativistic they become.

5. Ware, 138.

6. Ibid., 139.

7. See Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 41ff.

8. "But notice that in evangelical patriarchy a woman's subordination still follows—necessarily and permanently—from what she necessarily and permanently *is* by nature (namely, female). Her personal being decides and determines her subordinate status . . . The essence of masculinity is a sense of leadership, and the essence of femininity is a disposition to submit to male leadership." Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, "Equal in Being, Unequal in Role," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 302.

9. "-ness," in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

10. Ware is consistent and forthright in asserting the Father's supremacy over the Son and Holy Spirit in the Godhead. Ware, 46ff.

11. Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions*, (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers), 47.

12. Ibid.

13. Millard Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate*, (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 2009), 172.

14. Grudem, 48.

15. Groothuis, "Equal in Being, Unequal in Role," 316.

16. Ibid., 317.

17. Steven B. Cowan, "The Metaphysics of Subordination: A Response to Rebecca Merrill Groothuis," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 14:1 (Spring, 2009), 43.

18. Cowan contends that since female subordination is not permanent in the next life, Groothuis's argument fails (46). However, there is a drift toward eternal female subordination in complementarian thinking, as evidenced by Mark David Walton's defense of such in his article, "Relationships and Role in the New Creation," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 11:1 (Spring 2006). Indeed, the entire push for eternal hierarchy in the Trinity evidences the irresistible logic of this.

19. Cowan, 47.

20. Perhaps the most important book tracing the history of the concept is Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964). See also E. M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 25ff; Letha Scanzoni, "The Great Chain of Being and the Chain of Command," *The Reformed Journal*, 26:8 (October 1976) 14-18; and Robert K. McGregor Wright, "Hierarchicalism Unbiblical," *Journal of Biblical Equality*, 3 (June 1991), 57-66.

21. This is especially evident in this quote, "The God and Father, who holds the universe together, is superior to every being that exists, for he imparts to each one from his own existence that which each one is; the Son, being less than the Father, is superior to rational creatures alone (for he is second to the Father); the Holy Spirit is still less, and dwells within the saints alone. So that in this way the power of the Father is greater than that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and that of the Son is more than that of the Holy Spirit, and in turn the power of the Holy Spirit exceeds that of every other holy being." *Origen on First Principles: Being Koetschau's Text of the De Principiis Translated into English*, tr G. W. Butterworth, (Peter Smith Publishers, 1966), 33-34 (Fragment 9), cited in Edward Moore, "Origen of Alexandria," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/o/origen.htm (accessed Nov. 16, 2009).

22. Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Volume I Greece & Rome Part II* (New York: Doubleday Image Books, 1962), 210ff.

23. Cf. Tillyard, 26-27.

24. Dr. Bruce Magee has a helpful diagram of these relationships in his internet course notes, English Department, Louisiana Tech University, http://www2.latech.edu/~bmagee/201/intro2_medieval/estates&chain_of_being_notes.htm (accessed Oct. 12, 2010).

25. Wayne Grudem's suggestion that unless there is a hierarchy of roles of authority and submission in the Trinity then there is no distinction between the Persons, resulting in modalism, is nonsensical. The distinction between the Persons is perfectly capable of existing without any hint of roles or authority and submission. All that is required is that each Person has his own individual and unique consciousness, distinct from the others. There is no necessary reason why this would require that one be eternally under the authority of the other. The real distinction is that there are three "egos", three distinct individual consciousnesses in an I-thou relation with the others. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Bible Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 251.

26. A very helpful discussion of this may be found in Rousas John Rushdoony, "The One and Many Problem—The Contribution of Van Til" in *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed. E. R. Gehaan, (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), 339-348.

27. *Commentary on 1 Timothy*, 2:12.

28. *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*. 11:8

29. An example of one such text is Josiah Priest, *Bible Defence (sic) of Slavery; and Origins Fortunes, and History of the Negro Race*, 5th ed, (Glasgow, KY: W. S. Brown, 1852), 166ff. More extensive documentation can be found in Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 482ff.

30. George Orwell, *Animal Farm*, (Everyman's Library, 1993), 88.

31. This is the argument of Soame Jenyns, *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*. 4th ed. (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1761), 71-72.

32. Dr Bruce Ware denies that his view of the eternal subordination of the Son was influenced by a desire to bolster complementarian claims concerning male-female relations. I am willing to take his claims at face value, however, it should be noted that it was complementarians who first brought the Trinity into the discussion to support their views. See Bruce Ware, "A Defense of the Ontological Equality and Functional Authority-Submission Relations among the Three Trinitarian Persons," unpublished paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 20, 2009.

33. Attempts to prove the existence of a primordial matriarchy from which the ancient world fell into patriarchy have not been successful. See Joan Bamberger, "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society," in *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 263-270.

34. "Bruce Ware: First, and most fundamental, the issue at root is this: will Christian individuals, churches, and organizations follow the clear teaching of Scripture on the equality and distinction that mark the nature and roles of men and women, or will they yield to the pressure and values of our culture and so re-cast biblical teaching after the mold of our own age? I'm quite aware that evangelical egalitarians would deny that they are guilty of this charge, but I stand by the charge. What drives contemporary egalitarian biblical interpretation is not the force of the biblical text itself but the culture that presses to modify what that text says." "JBMW Forum," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 12:2 (Fall 2007), 42.

35. The impact of the Great Awakenings on the formation of American and British concepts of liberty, morality and equality are documented in John Wesley Bready, *England Before and After Wesley*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938). Of course, egalitarianism is not entirely novel in history. There is evidence that the early church enjoyed a time of egalitarian practice before the Chain of Being philosophy became dominant. See also Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, published by Christians for Biblical Equality.

36. It also continues to hold sway as the organizing principle of neo-Darwinian theories of evolution, but that is a subject for another study.

37. Ware, 153.

38. *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*, (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2005), 167-168.

39. Erickson, 258.

"On the Compatibility of Ontological Equality, Hierarchy and Functional Distinctions" was first presented as a lecture at the 61st annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, New Orleans, November 20, 2009.

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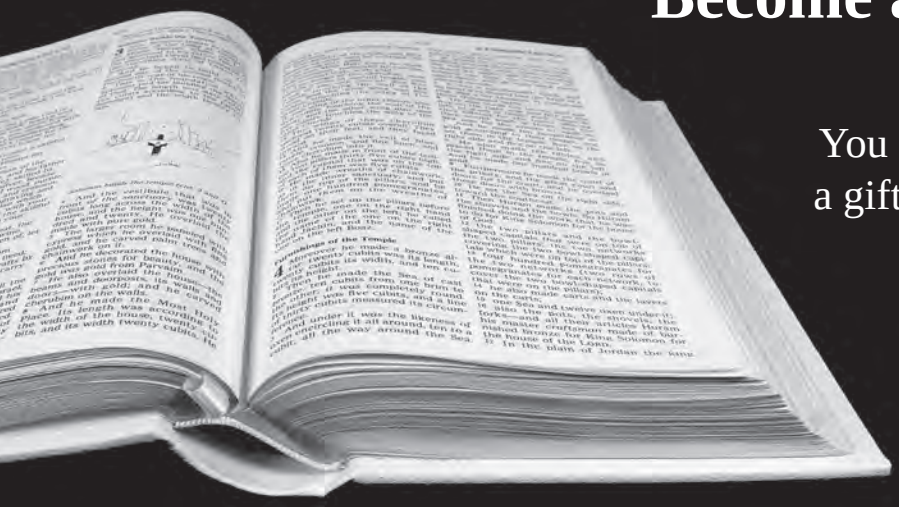

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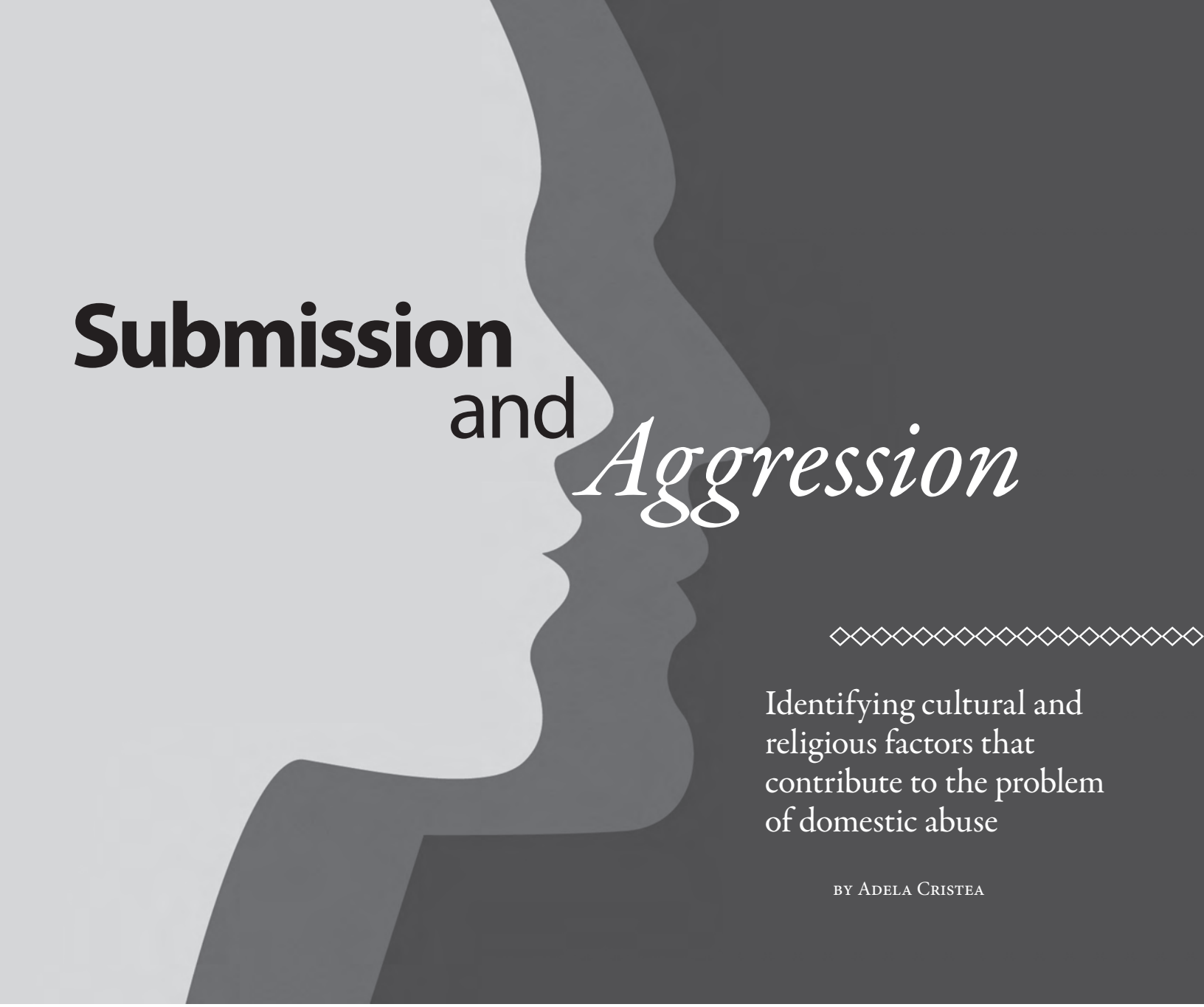

Submission and *Aggression*

Identifying cultural and religious factors that contribute to the problem of domestic abuse

by Adela Cristea

A common saying in Moldova goes, "An unbeaten wife is like an unswept house."

THE PHONE RINGS twice before she answers, after reaching for it in her purse, "Hello?" She was on the bench behind me in a moderately packed van used as public transportation in Moldova. Inevitably, I became witness to a conversation that made my heart go out to this woman. And I wanted to scream, "Ditch that man and never look back!"

From my side of the conversation, I heard: "I picked it up right away." (pause) "No, it didn't ring ten times." (pause) "I did pick it up right away." (pause) "I said I'm on my way to university." (pause) "I'm in a van, that's all." (pause) "Why do you talk to me like this?" (pause) "You don't talk to me like this at home."

This ensued for about ten minutes. My abuse-detecting antennas picked up controlling and manipulative talk, mistrust, repeated accusations, and verbal abuse on the other end of the line. That is the kind of input that generates the kind of response I witnessed from that young woman. I know because I have seen it time and time again. It is commonplace in my culture.

I managed to grab the woman by the hand as she was making her way out of the van, "Run from such a guy and never look back!" I said. She smiled, kind of sheepishly, taken by surprise. She managed a half-mouthed "thank you" and went on her way.

On another occasion, I witnessed a man walking down the street with his young girlfriend. All of a sudden he turned and slapped her. She continued walking with him, her head down.

There was a time when I would see such an encounter and think, "She must have said something to deserve that," or, "This is just how it goes for a couple." Maybe I would have simply ignored the scene, seeing it but dismissing it as normal behavior.

But now, my heart breaks. "What kind of behavior is that," I wonder, "to hit your girlfriend, in the middle of the street? And what kind of response is this—to continue walking with him, as if you deserved it, conveying guilt with your body language?"

It is the behavior of a desensitized nation—a nation where hierarchy deems some people more important than others. It is the behavior of a people who inherited inequality and abuse as a societal norm. It is the kind of behavior reinforced at home, tacitly affirmed by the church, and stemming from deeply ingrained low self-esteem.

In my home country of Moldova, these messages are everywhere. They are not, for the most part, explicitly taught. They are simply the status quo that nobody questions.

CULTURE

One reason a guy can afford to be abusive toward his girlfriend (or his wife) in public is because he knows he can get away with it. Not only that, he will also be looked upon as a man who knows how to be in charge and make his wife "straighten up."

No one seeing this abuse will object because the saying in Moldova goes, "An unbeaten wife is like an unswept house." A police officer will overlook abuse because he is of the same mindset as the perpetrator. A priest will mind his own business because he believes that Scripture teaches a woman must submit and be quiet. Moreover, I know of many cases when policemen and clergy have not only remained silent about abuse but have actually cruelly beaten their wives.

One reason a girl lowers her head and continues to walk beside her boyfriend who just hit her is because she believes she is "just a woman" who must have deserved it. She should have kept her mouth shut and not angered him. Didn't her mom teach her just that? "Be quiet. Don't aggravate him," her mother insisted.

If a girl is to be looked upon favorably and praised as a good candidate for marriage, which is a female's primary purpose in my culture, then she must be a good housewife. She must know how to cook well. She should not be "lazy" and should work hard at cleaning the house, washing the dishes, doing laundry, feeding the animals, and taking care of the kids. And she must give up her freedom in order to meet the needs and desires of her husband and family.

THE CHURCH

For the most part, Christianity is not helping the rampant problem of abuse in Moldova. Regardless of the numerous instances in the Bible that teach all people—both men and women—to "put each other before ourselves," "submit to one another," and "love one another as Christ loves us," the message for men is one of superiority over women. A man is the "head" of the family, churches often teach. Rather than recognizing that the word "head" had a much different definition in the ancient world than what we might assume today, churches teach that it means the one in charge, who gives orders, and who "has a special place." Everyone submits to his authority, and he has the right to do all that he chooses, because his wife and children are his possession.

This sets up a system in which a man can behave as it best suits him or his personality, without accountability. If he prefers to be controlling, he will be controlling toward his family. If he tends to be irresponsible, passive, selfish, or uninvolved, he will be just that toward his family. The system, perpetuated by incorrect theological assumptions, provides no way for men to grow in their love and service to others. This is tragic in itself, but the most dangerous consequences are for the women and children.

For women, submission is the rule. A woman must "know her place" and tolerate any kind of behavior from her husband.

For women, submission is the rule. A woman must "know her place" and tolerate any kind of behavior from her husband. Take, for example, what one Christian survivor of abuse wrote:

> My former husband believed that a wife should submit to everything: [his] psychological abuse, [his] porn [use], the way he reared our son via poor role modeling, his willingness to commit adultery, etc. He didn't believe that he should be held accountable at all, and any disagreement was a sign of disrespect.

FAMILY

It is commonplace in Moldova for a father to assert himself as superior to the rest of his family. He can, and must, be aggressive to teach everyone a lesson about who is in charge. He is there to be pleased. He must not trust a woman, so he will test her by asking probing questions and making accusatory remarks, denoting open distrust. At the dinner table, he receives the biggest and best piece of meat. His wife tiptoes around, trying to appease him if he is upset. The kids must keep quiet and out of his way. He is rarely accessible. If he is in a good mood and wants to play, the children must play by his rules—otherwise they may be dealt with harshly, called names, or made to feel stupid.

He will not be involved in cooking, cleaning, or washing dishes. Men who are involved in these household chores are shamed. A common saying goes, "She put her skirt over his head." He is seen as weak and controlled by a woman.

It is in this kind of culture girls learn at a very young age to accommodate a man, to play the game of making him feel most important. Her mother models this to her, even if she is only doing it for survival.

SELF-IMAGE

It is not surprising, then, that we witness that low self-esteem—the deep-seated feeling of inadequacy, low value, of not being enough—is common among women in my country. A woman's low status, reinforced by the way she sees her mother and other women put down, mistreated, and called names, helps her to believe that she is inadequate. Yet I believe the system encourages low self-esteem in men, too. The pressure on men to be tough can be debilitating. And, because it is not culturally acceptable for men to cry or express emotion, a boy has few options but to hide his true feelings with toughness, arrogance, and aggressiveness.

Because it is not culturally acceptable for men to cry or express emotion, a boy has few options but to hide his true feelings with toughness, arrogance, and aggressiveness.

THESE ARE DEEP-SEATED MESSAGES that play in the background of the lives of Moldovan men and women like a script, constantly powered by the environment around them. So, when a man and woman meet, can you fathom any other outcome?

If we want to change this broken system, we must cut straight to the root of the problem: the persistent belief that women and men are unequal. We must find ways of educating each other about this, so that we can name unhealthy attitudes and behaviors for what they really are. Then, we each must make a resolute decision not to be treated or treat others as less than those made in the image of God.

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Adela Cristea is a counseling student at The College of Theology and Education in Chisinau, Moldova, and is a former CBE intern. She is passionate about working for gender equality in her home country of Moldova, through educating young people about abuse and helping survivors of sexual trafficking.

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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.

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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.

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

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.

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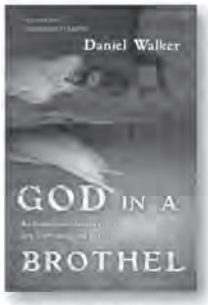

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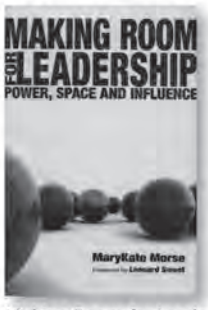

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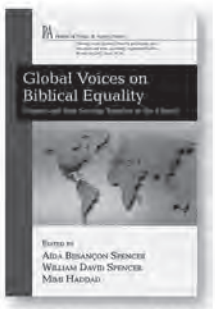

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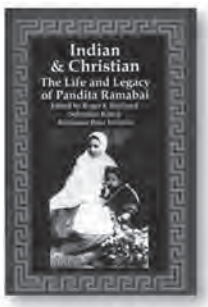

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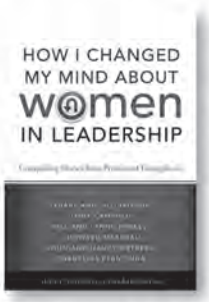

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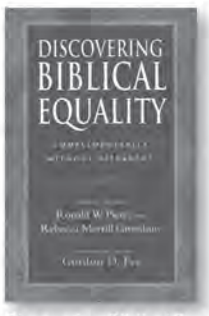

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