

# Priscilla



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

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## *Tertius . . .*

Thomas Jefferson. Napoléon Bonaparte. Ludwig van Beethoven. Jane Austin. Darwin and Dickens. Wordsworth and Whitman. Lincoln and Lee. Crazy Horse and Custer. Karl and Groucho. By now you have discerned the topic—the nineteenth century. The War of 1812.

The American Civil War. The Crimean War. The Industrial Revolution. The Victorian Era. The Gilded Age. First-Wave Feminism. The list could go on indefinitely. Sacagawea. Marie Curie. Clara Barton. Adoniram and Ann Judson. Indeed, someone should write a nineteenth-century companion to Billy Joel's rapid-fire summary of the twentieth century, "We Didn't Start the Fire."

This issue of *Priscilla Papers* assesses the contributions of a handful of nineteenth-century leaders. We begin with Josephine Butler, an English political activist, social reformer, and feminist. Author Asa James Swan demonstrates that Butler, like many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist leaders, was a devout Christian who drew upon faith as her main source of inspiration and strength.

Next we turn to a study of Alexander Campbell by Lesly Massey. This Christian leader from the Second Great Awakening is a case study in ambivalence. As he anticipated Christ's millennial kingdom, he promoted women as "the great agent in this grandest of all human enterprises . . . an effort to advance society to the access of its most glorious destiny on earth." Yet he forbade women from various positions of church leadership.

Our third article, by Hannah Nation, won the 2016 CBE student paper competition and, as a result, was part of CBE's conference in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September. The article lays bare certain motives of the nineteenth-century missionary movement and urges us to be driven by the liberating power of the Bible rather than by cultural imperialism.

CBE president Mimi Haddad has contributed a review of the book, *A New Gospel for Women: Katharine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism*, by Kristin Kobes Du Mez of Calvin College (Oxford University Press, 2015). Mimi is herself an expert on Bushnell and is thus well-suited to write this important review. Bushnell's book, *God's Word to Women*, began as a series of essays which were first bound together in 1916. Thus this review serves as a recognition of the centennial of her especially influential scholarship.

Though focused on the nineteenth century, this issue begins and ends in the twentieth. Two reviews close the issue. The first is by Kevin Giles, who earnestly recommends Elaine Storkey's book, *Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming Violence Against Women* (SPCK, 2015). The second, by Acadia Divinity College student Taylor James Murray, considers Nate Pyle's book, *Man Enough: How Jesus Redefines Manhood* (Zondervan, 2015). Finally, as you may have noticed already, across the page from this editorial you will find a tribute to Alvera Mickelsen, a founder of CBE and a prominent egalitarian leader for much of the twentieth century.

My work on this issue of *Priscilla Papers* has been a humbling reminder that we too will be evaluated by future generations. May the same be true for you.

*. . . greet you in the Lord.*

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# A Tribute to Alvera Mickelsen

MIMI HADDAD

On Tuesday, July 12, 2016, Alvera Mickelsen was welcomed into the loving arms of Jesus. Our beloved leader, mentor, mother, and friend died at the age of ninety-seven. A founder of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), she was CBE's first board chair in 1987, worked with grassroots CBE chapters, and served for years as a CBE board member. She authored accessible books that remain bestsellers not only in CBE's community, but around the world.

Alvera and her husband, Dr. Berkeley Mickelsen, a Bible scholar, were among the founders of CBE. They devoted much of their efforts to teaching, writing, and participating in public debates on biblical gender equality.

A gifted teacher, writer, and editor, Alvera attributed her skills to her own mother who taught Bible at their Swedish Baptist church in Indiana. The daughter of Swedish immigrant farmers, Alvera was the first person in her family to earn a college degree, and later, a master's degree in journalism from Northwestern University. Alvera taught journalism at Wheaton College and Bethel University, and began publishing her work as early as the 1980s.

Disturbed by the shallow reading of scripture used by many Christians to marginalize women's gifts, Alvera frequently wrote for and edited CBE publications, and spoke at CBE events and those of her denomination—the Baptist General Conference.

A key visionary within CBE and a tough debater, Alvera was intensely gracious to all she engaged. She was a sought-after mentor for younger egalitarians, writers, scholars, and leaders. She was in constant contact with her students, and served as a faithful guide to many aspiring movers and shakers.

Early in the egalitarian movement, Alvera contributed vital books like *Women in Ministry: Four Views* and the now-classic, *Woman, Authority & the Bible*, published by IVP in 1986. *Woman, Authority & the Bible* remains in print today. She also contributed to *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*. She served as editor of the Lausanne Occasional Paper: *Empowering Men and Women to Use their Gifts Together in Advancing the Gospel*.

Her practical wisdom, biblical knowledge, and experience with challenging people problems made her the ideal "Egalitarian Bible Answer Lady," as we often called her. CBE archived her responses to often-asked questions in a folder called, "Alvera Answers Difficult Questions." On a regular basis, we receive questions about egalitarianism that she eloquently answered, and we continue to reply with her thoughts. In this way, her wisdom lives on!

Years ago, Alvera and two other women—all in their eighties—came to volunteer in CBE's office. They soon discovered that all three of them attended evangelical churches in the greater Chicago area. All three were raised by evangelical parents. All three went to Wheaton College, and all three could remember hearing the female evangelistic team, Stockton

and Gould, preach on prominent evangelical platforms in the Chicago area. Alvera finally burst out with laughter and said, "You, know, it wasn't until 1950 that women preachers were considered liberal. Before that, no one thought twice about women preaching the Gospel."

As a result of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, women's preaching was considered liberal after the 1950s. These three women, because of their age and life-long commitment to evangelical ideals, were all too aware of today's evangelical retrenchment on women's leadership as preachers, evangelists, and scholars. For this reason, Alvera frequently reminded us of the true history of evangelicals as one that supported women's leadership.

I refer to this as the "Alvera Hypothesis," which I often use to explain the vast number of women leaders who were prominent in early evangelical denominations and at the evangelical Bible institutes which grew to become Wheaton College, University of Northwestern, Biola University, Vanguard University, and others. Sure enough, prior to 1950, these schools seemed proud of their female preachers and gospel-workers—something we long to see happen again.

As she aged ever so gracefully, she often expressed gratitude for each day God had given her. Alvera often said that we are all on this earth to help others. She brought enormous encouragement, love, joy, and laughter to many within CBE and beyond. Above all else, she aimed to please Christ.

The last day I was able to speak with her was several weeks ago. For much of my visit, she seemed unable to talk and unaware of my presence. Regardless, I sat next to her as I did every Sunday I was in town, reading scripture and praying beside her. Though she seemed unresponsive through much of my prayer, she lifted her head slightly when I said "Amen," and echoed, with some power, "Amen!"

We love our Alvera more than words can express! We remembered her life and service to Christ in a memorial celebration on Saturday, July 23, 2016, at Gracepoint Church in New Brighton, Minnesota. Alvera identified two organizations as recipients of gifts in her honor: Christians for Biblical Equality and the Salvation Army.



**MIMI HADDAD**, PhD, is president of Christians for Biblical Equality. She has contributed to nine books, has authored more than one hundred articles and blog posts, and speaks frequently on issues related to faith and gender. She is an adjunct assistant professor at Bethel University and an adjunct professor at North Park Theological Seminary and Fuller Theological Seminary

# MUTUAL BY DESIGN



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so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. ”*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:11-12

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# A Life of Study, Prayer, and Action: the Feminist Christianity of Josephine Butler

ASA JAMES SWAN

Since the beginning of the feminist movement over a century ago, historians have debated the role religion played in the lives of the great British women's rights leaders. Olive Anderson dismissed any agency religious experience gave to these women, contending that it "contributed nothing to the spread of feminist ideas."<sup>1</sup> Gail Malmgreen described their spirituality as a "central paradox" that historians struggle to keep in context while discussing their subjects' lives and work.<sup>2</sup> She went on to point out that religion is a neglected part of feminist history, yet historically there is a direct connection between faith and political activism within the feminist movement.<sup>3</sup> In response to these works and others, Helen Mathers made a simple yet profound point: many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist leaders were devout Christians who drew upon faith as their main source of inspiration and strength, so a study of their beliefs is crucial to understanding their lives.<sup>4</sup> Josephine Butler was one of these leaders.

Josephine Butler was born in 1828, the daughter of Anglican parents who sympathized with the evangelical movement. Her passionate faith in God birthed her political activism; she entered the world of national politics by advocating for greater educational opportunities for all women and more property rights for married women in particular.<sup>5</sup> In 1869, she began campaigning against the Contagious Diseases Acts and remained to fight for greater equality and social justice for women until her death in 1906.<sup>6</sup> The support of her husband and her intimate relationship with Jesus Christ sustained her during these hard years of struggle, relationships that have proven difficult for modern historians to grasp when considering her political beliefs.

Helen Mathers summarizes the "minefield" that surrounds Josephine Butler, where "there is still no consensus among historians about [her] religion." Historians like Moberly Bell, Nancy Boyd, and Jane Jordan have documented the details of Josephine's life in their biographies, but they either avoid a concise description of her religious convictions or misinterpret her feminist Christianity, struggling to portray accurately her belief system. Like many of her Christian contemporaries, Josephine's faith compelled her to activism, but what specific beliefs about God did she hold? In other words, what did her personal form of Christianity look like? And building upon this, why did Josephine's faith lead her to action, and how did she interpret this action as what we would now call feminism?

Historians misunderstand Josephine due to their failure to consider the complex personal dynamic of her life: despite her

feminism, religious fervor, and (seemingly) evangelical beliefs, she adhered to no set denominational theology and rejected the contemporary interpretation of the Apostle Paul's submission passages in the NT. Even assigning her the label "evangelical" is debatable, largely due to the ongoing transformation of the Church of England and other denominations during this time as a result of the Nonconformist movement. Being unable to categorize her, historians struggle to make sense of her theology, personality, and politics because they lack the proper context in which to study her.<sup>7</sup>

In order to define this context better, several questions must be asked. What spiritual legacy did she inherit from her parents, and how did it shape her? What experiences led her to find a call from God to fight for women's rights? How did Josephine's husband support her in her quest? How did she interpret the Bible, especially when it seemed to contradict her beliefs, and what religious beliefs did she embrace? And finally, as she led the repeal fight, to what extent were her personal efforts a part of either nondenominational or multi-denominational movements?

Fortunately for the modern reader, Josephine was a prolific writer, and a thorough review of her letters, speeches, and published works provides answers to these questions. These writings show that four main factors shaped her worldview: the legacy of evangelicalism and political activism she inherited from her family, her mystical religious experiences, the unequivocal support of her husband

George, and the example and teaching of Jesus Christ that guided her life. All of these factors empowered her to become the national leader she believed God called her to be. This article will show how, because she refused membership in any particular denomination throughout her life, this internal set of beliefs shaped her individually and, as a consequence, guided her life of social justice and feminist action.

## Family Legacy

Josephine Elizabeth Grey was born to John and Hannah Annett Grey at their estate of Milfield Hill in Glendale, Northumberland, on the border of Scotland.<sup>8</sup> Josephine was the seventh of nine surviving children, and she entered a loving family with a rich heritage.<sup>9</sup> Of her family members, her father had the greatest influence on her life, followed by her mother and her sister Harriet.

Like his daughter, John Grey was a product of Glendale. Born in 1785, his father passed away when John was eight, yet his mother Mary Grey cheerfully raised all four children by herself and ran the Grey estate until she handed over management to John when

**Many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminist leaders were devout Christians who drew upon faith as their main source of inspiration and strength.**

he turned eighteen.<sup>10</sup> His sister Margaretta told a young Josephine in the 1840s that women needed to fully participate in society, saying, "It is time to rise out of this, and for women of principles and natural parts to find themselves something to do."<sup>11</sup> In the years before the House of Commons opened up a Ladies' Gallery, Margaretta also disguised herself as a boy and snuck in to listen to their debates.<sup>12</sup> Needless to say, John grew up in a household of strong women, and Josephine always remembered the confident, outspoken, and large presences of her grandmother and aunt.<sup>13</sup>

Next to his family, John possessed two great loves in life: political activism and Christianity. As a loyal Liberal for most of his adult life, his political beliefs flowed from deep within his being. Josephine wrote of him, "God made him a Liberal," with a devout belief in the individual rights of all mankind and an opposition to oppression in all its forms.<sup>14</sup> She further explained, "In the cause of any maltreated or neglected creature he was uncompromising to the last, and when brought into opposition with the perpetrators of any injustice he became an enemy to be feared."<sup>15</sup> His cousin Earl Grey served as prime minister under William IV, and Lord Grey relied on John to rally support from northern England, where he was already known throughout the region as a fervent abolitionist who actively campaigned against slavery.<sup>16</sup> John's involvement with the anti-slavery movement, the Reform Bill, and free trade piqued Josephine's interest in political matters at a young age.<sup>17</sup> She vividly remembered the horror she felt at hearing about the sexual wrongs committed against female slaves by their male masters, as well as the family's celebration upon receiving news of abolition's passage in 1833 by Grey's administration.<sup>18</sup>

As much as Josephine drew upon her father's love of politics, his faith had an even greater impact upon her. It seems that both Mary and John fell gravely ill around the time he was eighteen, and they turned to the Bible to soothe their souls. After both miraculously recovered, John determined to hold household prayers with the entire family every night, and this continued until his death.<sup>19</sup> On Sunday nights, he would read the Bible to his family, focusing on his most cherished passages, of which the book of Isaiah was his favorite due to its verses about setting the captives free.<sup>20</sup> Josephine believed that her father's devotion to God made him into the kind, gentle, and loving man she treasured, and she wanted to be just like him.<sup>21</sup>

Hannah Annett Grey came from a long line of Protestants. Her maternal grandparents were forced to leave France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and upon arriving in England, "they were in the habit of opening their hospitable doors to everyone in the form of a religious teacher, of whatever sect, who happened to pass that way." The Annetts practiced charity toward followers of all forms of Christianity, including Catholics, but as the Nonconformist movement spread across the country, they joined in the evangelical revivals. A treasured Annett story that Josephine told her entire life involves her mother sitting in John Wesley's lap and having him pray a blessing over her.<sup>22</sup> We know now that this

is a myth because Wesley died three years before Hannah's birth in 1794,<sup>23</sup> but it reflects the Annetts' denominational affinity with the Dissenters and explains biographer Glen Petrie's description of Hannah's youth as including a "strict Evangelical upbringing."<sup>24</sup>

Josephine described Hannah as a strong yet gentle mother who taught her children by example. She possessed a sharp intelligence and quick wit, and since John's work required him to travel around the region, Hannah saw it as her responsibility to instruct the children.<sup>25</sup> The Greys agreed that all of their children should learn how to read and write, play music, and practice oratory. Growing up in a rural area where most families saw no need to educate their daughters, this was quite extraordinary. Each morning during the week, Hannah would arrange for them to study a book of some sort and read it aloud. This was followed by practicing their music and spending time outdoors. In later years, Josephine credited her drive for excellence to her mother, who taught her children to pursue every goal with determination and "moral discipline."<sup>26</sup>

The final Grey family member to have a lasting effect upon Josephine's life was her sister Harriet. "Hattie" was Josephine's favorite and closest family member; they were a "pair" among the nine siblings.<sup>27</sup> As best friends until Hattie's death in 1901,<sup>28</sup> they shared a lasting camaraderie and solidarity.<sup>29</sup> As the years passed, Josephine often wrote more openly in her letters to her sister than to her own husband.<sup>30</sup> This relationship provided each sister with a loving friend throughout their lives, and it foretold of the affinity and allegiance Josephine would feel towards other women, especially those in need of help.

Growing up in the Grey family in Glendale prepared Josephine for the years of struggle ahead, and each of the three family members discussed above contributed elements to her unique individuality and worldview. In adulthood, she became like her father in personality and character. As Nancy Boyd points out, he is the one who taught her about the God of Christianity, a God of love and mercy for the repentant sinner.<sup>31</sup> Despite living in a Dissenting neighborhood full of Methodists and Presbyterians, John took his family to Saint Andrew's Anglican Church while practicing religious toleration in all of his friendships.<sup>32</sup> John purposefully discussed all areas of social and political life with his daughters,<sup>33</sup> encouraging them to become active in public life and influencing Josephine to embrace social justice by leading the effort to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts, "prov[ing] herself her father's daughter."<sup>34</sup> During a speech to 700 working-class men in April 1870, she told the raucous crowd that her work was simply an extension of the Liberal Party reformist legacy of her father.<sup>35</sup>

Through the daily example of both of her parents, and to a lesser extent her Aunt Margaretta, she learned how to become a strong, spiritual woman who retained her femininity while striving for excellence. This spiritual excellence included a hatred of injustice and the confidence to speak out against evil. In John and Hannah, Josephine saw the God of Christianity, a loving

being who actively worked in the daily lives of humankind to defeat evil and effect transformational change. Their “religious beliefs provided the basis for social action and the language in which affection was expressed in the Grey family.”<sup>36</sup> They were Anglicans, yet they held firm evangelical leanings and practiced hospitality to Christians from all denominations, including Catholicism.<sup>37</sup> Josephine also witnessed a healthy marriage where both partners supported each other in their political beliefs, and this birthed in her a desire to find a like-minded mate of her own.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, their love for their children, including Josephine, manifested itself in part as valuing all of their children’s gifts and abilities equally.<sup>39</sup> Finally, Josephine found strong allies in her mother, her aunt, and her sister Hattie, who served as a part of her support network for the rest of her life by encouraging her to fight for greater rights for women.<sup>40</sup>

### Developing A Faith of Her Own

Josephine’s early religious experiences while growing up in the Grey family laid a solid spiritual foundation for her Christian faith later in life. She thanked God for her father’s insistence on attending church every Sunday, but the pastor’s limited knowledge of God left her wanting to know more.<sup>41</sup> This led her to attend local Methodist chapel services as a teenager, where she witnessed a revival that emerged during the visit of a circuit-riding Wesleyan evangelist. It was during one of these meetings that she felt the power of God fall upon her for the first time.<sup>42</sup> Yet despite this religious encounter, she still felt that the world was “out of joint,” and she continued to be haunted by its injustices, the “cruelties practiced by man on man, by man on woman.”<sup>43</sup> Why were women so oppressed in their supposedly liberal society? How could “Christian England” justify its maltreatment of the Irish and other subject peoples, and why were the local clergymen unable to answer her hard questions about God?<sup>44</sup> This inner turmoil consumed Josephine at age seventeen when she entered into an experience reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas’s “dark night of the soul.”<sup>45</sup> For an entire year, she asked God to explain why his creation had become so evil. She wanted God to reveal himself to her, telling her of his heart for the world and giving her direction and peace. Finally, she wanted to know her position in him.<sup>46</sup>

Josephine later compared her spiritual crisis to Jacob wrestling with an angel.<sup>47</sup> In the end, after listening to this “child wrestler” for an entire year, Josephine believed that God visited her, making her keenly aware of his “overwhelming presence” and flooding her soul with peace and reassurance. Josephine now felt safe in him, and her heart for the world changed as well.<sup>48</sup> Josephine wrote, “He did not deny me the request of His own heart’s love for sinners, and when He makes this revelation He does more; He makes the enquiring soul a partaker of His own heart’s love for the world.”<sup>49</sup> She emerged from this experience with a renewed faith and a compassion for those in need; her God was One of love and justice, and she never doubted this about him again.<sup>50</sup>

Now secure in her relationship with God, she began to look for an earthly partner, and she found one in George Butler.

### Christian Brother, Soulmate, and Friend

George Butler was born in Harron on June 11, 1819, the oldest of ten siblings.<sup>51</sup> The Butlers were not an aristocratic family, but they were educated and well-respected.<sup>52</sup> His father served in the ministry and wanted his son George to follow in his footsteps, but despite going through ordination, George felt no calling from God to do so at that time.<sup>53</sup> His mother Sarah, a Quaker, raised him to support equality for men and women.<sup>54</sup> Josephine met George in 1848 during his tutorship at the University of Durham.<sup>55</sup> During his time in college, he avoided bad company and, much to Josephine’s relief, remained chaste.<sup>56</sup> Most important for her, he loved Jesus Christ and spoke openly of his faith. His faith informed the most striking feature of his personality, his integrity. Out of this flowed all of his other commendable traits: devout loyalty to those he loved, his gentle spirit and mercy, and a passion for excellence and truth.<sup>57</sup>

Probably due to the nine-year gap in their ages, Josephine’s early letters suggest a reverence for George as a father figure, but he quickly rebuffed this and encouraged her to view him as her equal partner. He refused to make decisions for her: she must allow God to guide her choices, clinging to Jesus Christ and his promises for her life.<sup>58</sup> During their engagement, George wrote his beloved frequently. These letters reveal a consistent theme of thankfulness for her, affirmation of her independent spirit, and the incredible gifts he believed God gave her. In one letter, George even wrote that she would be able to succeed without him.<sup>59</sup> He anticipated their marriage to be “a perfectly equal union, with absolute freedom on both sides for personal initiative in thought and action and for individual development.”<sup>60</sup> They were married at Dilston on January 8, 1852.<sup>61</sup>

The Butlers were indeed well-matched. They loved each other dearly; all of their correspondence repeatedly expresses this devotion. They delighted in each other’s company, and near the end of her life, Josephine reminisced about the long carriage rides they often took during their first two years of marriage.<sup>62</sup> Uncharacteristically of this era, George agreed with his wife’s feminist goals; they were “instinctive to him,” especially equality for all humankind.<sup>63</sup> Early on, he saw his role as supporting her and cheering her up in bad times, and this included the “united work of bringing up our children.”<sup>64</sup> He was even willing to let his wife become the leader and public face of the repeal movement, while he performed a quieter role. For this she thanked him, writing in an 1869 New Year’s Eve letter, “I feel deeply how good it is of you, dearest, to lend me to this work.”<sup>65</sup> In a letter to Josephine several months before their marriage, George encouraged her to depend on his physical strength at all times, but added “in other matters I think you are more capable of giving me aid than of borrowing it.”<sup>66</sup> This loving, supportive role came at a cost, however: Josephine’s political activities

prevented George's promotion in the Anglican Church during his later years, but he refused to let it bother him.<sup>67</sup> He also never complained about her many absences, so she felt that the least she could do was to help nurse George in his ill health during his last sickly years.<sup>68</sup> At the time of his death in 1890, he remained the "light of [her] life."<sup>69</sup>

George Butler's unequivocal support for Josephine was one of the primary factors in her success, and its importance cannot be overstated. "She could trust him utterly to sympathize with and support her," for George firmly believed that justice would eventually prevail, and sometimes in her darkest hours, Josephine needed to lean on this optimism for encouragement.<sup>70</sup> She told Millicent Fawcett that she would not have been able to lead her crusade "if I had not had such a man as my fellow worker and supporter." The story of her decision to enter the world of politics highlights this statement. During the fall of 1869, Josephine wrestled with the question of how to proceed regarding the Contagious Diseases Acts: was God calling her to lead the fight for their repeal? Fearing George would try to stop her due to his concern for her personal wellbeing and the inevitable attacks she would suffer, Josephine wrote him a note telling him of her conviction that this was God's will for her life. He spent a few days contemplating this course of action, not sharing any of his thoughts about it. Finally, on the third day, he communicated his decision with the words: "Go! and God be with you!"<sup>71</sup> With George's support secure, she needed the strength to challenge the Acts, and she found it in her relationship with God.<sup>72</sup>

The last crucial area of harmony between the Butlers involved their mutual faith. George and Josephine shared nearly identical theological opinions.<sup>73</sup> They agreed on the truth of Christ's teachings; his "actions and sayings were . . . revolutionary."<sup>74</sup> Josephine described George and herself as "rebels for God's holy laws."<sup>75</sup> They placed special emphasis on the cross and Christ's sacrifice there, referring to it as "the most real of all realities."<sup>76</sup> They loved to read the Bible together and discuss the meaning of Gospel stories.<sup>77</sup> Josephine's relationship with George molded and strengthened her religious zeal throughout the years, and the spiritual lessons learned and conclusions she formulated over time occurred in this context. It was a personal faith they built together.

### Later Formative Religious Experiences

Three remaining events that molded Josephine's Christianity later in life must be described before we delve into a more concrete description of her religious beliefs. During the first years of her marriage to George, who was now part of the Oxford faculty, Josephine chafed at the misogynist sentiments of the vast majority of his colleagues in the Oxford community. She often found herself as the only woman in a group of intellectuals; it was difficult for her to remain silent when George's colleagues discussed issues on which she held strong opinions.<sup>78</sup> Josephine wrote that silence seemed to be their charge to women, even when confronted by injustice;<sup>79</sup> "every instinct of womanhood

within me was already in revolt against certain accepted theories in society, and I suffered as only God and my faithful companion could ever know."<sup>80</sup> Josephine took this lesson away from her trial in the masculine world of Oxford: "to speak little with men, but much with God."<sup>81</sup>

A second defining moment involved her five-year-old daughter Eva's tragic death in 1864. Upon returning home one evening from a night out, the Butlers were walking into their foyer when their four children ran to the top of the stairs, and little Eva tripped and fell over the banister, plummeting to her death.<sup>82</sup> Josephine described her only daughter's fatal accident as the first major test of her faith since her "dark night of the soul" at age seventeen.<sup>83</sup> Despite this cruel misfortune, Josephine emerged with a deeper trust in God's love and provision; she credited her strengthened faith to feeling his close comfort throughout her grief.<sup>84</sup>

Just over a year later, hoping to put her faith in action by ministering to those who had suffered as she had since Eva's death, Josephine visited the Brownlow Hill Workhouse for the first time.<sup>85</sup> This final life-changing experience brought her face-to-face with over 200 of Liverpool's outcasts, all of them women; she wrote that her heart broke for them. Josephine immediately joined in their oakum-picking work, which required hardened hands that she, as a middle class lady, did not have. After laughing at Josephine's inability to keep up with the rest of women (she laughed too), they began to tell her their stories, and Josephine began to share the Gospel with them as they opened up to her. At the end of her visit, she promised to return and encouraged them to memorize scripture so that they might discuss it. Her second visit witnessed a young women's recitation of John 14; as she spoke, the entire room quieted to listen. Upon finishing, Josephine entreated all of them to ask God for forgiveness of their sins, and the entire group fell onto its knees in supplication, praying and weeping as they called out to God. Josephine later wrote that their cries reached "to the heart of God."<sup>86</sup> Catherine Lynch, a former prostitute, thanked Josephine for ministering to her and said, "you wants to make us love God as you do yourself."<sup>87</sup> Josephine's encounter at Brownlow Hill strengthened two related areas: her confidence in her ability to reach out to other women, and her resolve to fight for the betterment of their lives. She had finally realized the elusive call of God for her future.

Despite its complexity and evolution as her life continued, the Christian faith Josephine practiced with such whole-hearted devotion can be divided into three main components: study, prayer, and action. As a lifelong student of the Bible, she spent countless hours reading her favorite stories and the lessons that accompanied them. Anyone in Josephine's presence quickly learned that she was familiar with all of scripture,<sup>88</sup> with a particular love for the Gospels.<sup>89</sup> From these Gospels she studied the life of her mentor and friend, Jesus of Nazareth, whom she wrote about extensively. The biblical texts also compelled her to pray, and this prayer life became one of her main outlets for dealing with problems, pain, and suffering. Finally, she interpreted the

teachings of Jesus Christ as a call to action, living a life of service on behalf of social justice for the poor and powerless in society, especially women. For Josephine, Jesus was the perfect man, and his interactions with men, women, and children set an example for all to follow.

### Study, Prayer, and Action

One of the frequent themes of Josephine's writings was her love and reverence for Jesus Christ. In him, she found a personal savior, teacher, and liberator: "He is Very God, and that He was, in human form, the Exponent of the mind of God to the world."<sup>90</sup> She listed several reasons for this love: Jesus was born of a woman only; he was respectful and loving of women; he healed their feminine maladies; and he forgave even the most grievous of their sins.<sup>91</sup> Also, Mary of Bethany was arguably his closest friend. Josephine and George both regarded Christ's crucifixion and resurrection as the central event in world history, setting an example of selfless sacrifice on behalf of others.<sup>92</sup> This death and resurrection empowered sinners to throw off the bondage of sin by seeking God's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice and being freed of their evil ways. When asked by a committee member how she would endeavor to get more people to join her cause against the Contagious Diseases Acts, she told the Royal Commission in 1871, "By showing them the example of Christ."<sup>93</sup> This example included her favorite characteristic of Jesus: his liberation of women.

Because Jesus shared some of his greatest thoughts and most intimate moments with women,<sup>94</sup> Josephine opened her treatise *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, written in 1869, with these words: "Among the great typical acts of Christ, which were evidently and intentionally for the announcement of a principle for the guidance of society, none were more markedly so than His acts towards women."<sup>95</sup> Later in her introduction, she listed three specific examples of stories from the Gospels that dealt with the liberation of women. All of them involved his reaching out to women, even when it was socially unacceptable. The love he showed them empowered the women to live fuller lives and told the world that God saw equal worth in women as well as men.<sup>96</sup>

For Josephine, Jesus Christ affirmed "the principle of perfect equality . . . as the basis of social philosophy," in the way he treated all of those around him.<sup>97</sup> By rejecting the misogynistic social norms of his time, Jesus's "acts towards women" all involved raising their status in society and giving them love, hope, and purpose.<sup>98</sup> This transformation of women should have altered "men's treatment of women from that time forward," but instead, men refused to follow Christ's example and misapplied his teaching in order to protect their paternalistic order.<sup>99</sup> The example Jesus set in his interactions with women was one reason she considered it a joy to serve him, and her feminism was born from her desire to emulate this example.<sup>100</sup> Another joy was her love of spending time with him in prayer.

Prayer served as the foundation of Josephine's Christianity.<sup>101</sup> It was "direct converse with God."<sup>102</sup> As a joyful "communion

with a Friend,"<sup>103</sup> Josephine emphasized spending time with God in prayer, especially during her later years, and believed in God's power to guide, protect, and grow her through these times of meditation.<sup>104</sup> Prayer revealed God's will, and once his divine purpose was imparted, she felt empowered to perform his work.<sup>105</sup> This revelation also gave her greater compassion for those who were suffering and in need, writing, "He makes the enquiring soul a partaker in His own heart's love for the world."<sup>106</sup> Three years before her death, Josephine told her friend Fanny Forsaith in a 1904 letter that the Holy Spirit guided her in prayer, quoting from Rom 8 and asserting that "all my life . . . I have found the only teaching to be that of the Spirit of God."<sup>107</sup>

The importance of prayer in her life was emphasized by her biography of Catherine of Siena, the fourteenth-century Italian saint. A reader of this work will quickly realize that Josephine loved Catherine because they shared so many similar qualities and passions. Catherine urged Pope Gregory to join her crusade to reform a corrupt church failing to live as Christ commanded.<sup>108</sup> She rejected the social stigma of ministering to prostitutes, encouraging them to reject their old, sinful ways and be transformed by returning to "the wounded side of the Son of God."<sup>109</sup> Finally, Catherine and Josephine shared a love of prayer. Josephine told her friends that Catherine's secret was "the constant converse of her soul with God," and the biography



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contains numerous prayers that Catherine lifted up to God, ones that are, at times, strikingly similar to Josephine's own.<sup>110</sup> When confronted with criticisms about Catherine of Siena's messages from God, Josephine encouraged skeptics to devote their lives to prayer as she did, writing that God would speak to them in the same manner as he did with Catherine.<sup>111</sup>

Josephine strove to practice what she preached about prayer both in private and in public. One night in the fall of 1887, when George was ill and Josephine thought his life would end soon, she went into the next room and turned to God for solace. She asked him to spare her husband's life for another season of being together. She wrote that God's promises suddenly began to go through her mind, and she soon felt peace return to her soul, responding in the darkness, "Lord, I believe." George's condition improved dramatically overnight, and she celebrated this with thanksgiving, believing his better health to be a miracle.<sup>112</sup> Due to her constant battles with sickness, there were many similar instances throughout her life.

In Josephine's mind, prayer played a crucial part in her crusade against the Contagious Diseases Acts. The crusade began with "a series of devotional meetings,"<sup>113</sup> and it soon led to regular prayer meetings held on behalf of the repeal cause.<sup>114</sup> Before she appeared in front of the Royal Commission in 1871, she prayed that God would distract the members who favored the Acts and confuse their deliberations in order to strengthen her comments before them.<sup>115</sup> After Josephine's appearance, Mr. Peter Rylands, a Commissioner, wrote to a friend about her testimony: "I am not accustomed to religious phraseology, but I cannot give you any idea of the effect produced except by saying that the influence of the Spirit of God was there."<sup>116</sup> During the House of Commons debate on the repeal of forced examinations in April 1883, Josephine set up continuous prayer services led by clergy from all denominations,<sup>117</sup> and after the repeal passed, she credited their faithful prayers as one of the main reasons God gave them the victory.<sup>118</sup>

Josephine's habitual devotions of study and prayer spurred her to action. After the Acts were extended to eighteen towns across England in 1869 and it became clear that the government was determined to continue enforcing this "great wickedness," she asked God to give her an eternal hatred of "injustice, tyranny, and cruelty," accompanied by "divine compassion . . . for the love of souls."<sup>119</sup> She needed these attributes because she saw her calling as "descend[ing] into the darkness."<sup>120</sup> Josephine believed that the devil worked against her personally as the leader of the National Association, but she took this as affirmation that she was, indeed, in God's will.<sup>121</sup> This action specifically focused on improving the lives of the most shunned and destitute women in England, the prostitutes.

During Josephine's testimony to the 1871 Royal Commission, a committee member asked her how she viewed the women under

her protection at her House of Rest, and Josephine replied, "As my friends."<sup>122</sup> In her corner of God's kingdom, the lowly female prostitute was equally valuable to the respected male defender of England.<sup>123</sup> Even before they joined the fight against the Contagious Diseases Acts, Josephine and George opened their first House of Rest in 1867, not long after her experience at the Brownlow Hill Workhouse, with thirteen beds available for the

"outcasts."<sup>124</sup> They refused to discuss the "sinful" pasts of the women, many of them victims of neglect or abuse, and focused on the love of God as the only means of redemption and transformation in their

lives. Both of the Butlers took care of their charges physically, emotionally, and spiritually, looking for opportunities to share the Gospel message.<sup>125</sup> Their firm belief was that the state could never achieve the goal of changing the behavior of humankind. Only God could do that, thus their united call to turn to Christianity for transformation.<sup>126</sup>

For the Butlers, the Contagious Diseases Acts highlighted the dire need for change in the hearts of all English men and women. Josephine, especially, saw the Acts as the government's capitulation to the sex trade. By regulating prostitution and vice instead of combating them, the state implicitly offered its support.<sup>127</sup> Most offensive to Josephine and millions of others were the forced examinations of women suspected of prostitution; men received no such treatment. In Josephine's opinion, the Acts represented a sexist double standard emblematic of the lesser status of women in English society. Unable to work outside the home, poor women were forced to turn to prostitution to provide for themselves and their families.<sup>128</sup> She also opposed the Acts because the regulation system imposed by the legislation "hardened women," denigrating them to a life of prostitution with no hope of improving their status and having the opposite spiritual effect she desired for them: the opening of their hearts to a relationship with God.<sup>129</sup> For Josephine, "religion and social justice were one," and it is clear that her "feminism and radical politics in general were driven by her Christian faith," specifically the lessons taught by Jesus Christ.<sup>130</sup>

### Feminist Christianity

Feminism calls for a "rebalancing between women and men of the social, economic, and political power within a given society, on behalf of both sexes in the name of their common humanity, but with respect for their differences."<sup>131</sup> This perfectly describes Josephine's desire for modern society. She rejected the common belief of "women as 'relative creatures,' who were defined by familial relationships with men," and advocated autonomy for women in both the public and private sphere.<sup>132</sup> "Josephine as a Christian feminist held that men and women were equals," and this flowed from the spiritual principles she gleaned from her biblical knowledge and prayer experiences.<sup>133</sup>

As we have already seen, her main source of inspiration and empowerment was the life of Jesus Christ; she believed he called

her to improve the lives of women worldwide by fighting for greater socio-political freedoms. And all of this helps explain the “minefield” of confusion about her religion<sup>134</sup> because Josephine modeled her life’s work after Christ’s, interpreting his example of ministering directly to women in need and empowering them with equal worth as a direct command to her personally for a life of feminist action. Her Christocentric faith disproves Olive Anderson’s contention about religion playing no major part in the feminist movement. As Josephine wrote in her introduction to *Woman’s Work and Woman’s Culture*, “I appeal to Christ, and to Him alone” for the foundational truths upon which collective society and individual lives should be built.”<sup>135</sup> But not all scripture seems to empower women as strongly as Josephine believed, especially several of the Pauline passages in the NT, so how did she reconcile these disparate verses with her Christian feminism?

Josephine repeatedly used scripture to defend her cause, quoting extensively not only from the Gospels, but also from the book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles of Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians. Considering that Ephesians contains the strongest submission passages in the NT, this might seem surprising, but Josephine saw no misogyny or sexism in the words of the Apostle Paul, only liberation. In fact, she loved Paul and related to his suffering on behalf of a higher purpose. “Like Paul before Nero,” Josephine felt God’s power as she testified before Parliament regarding the Acts.<sup>136</sup> When her letter-writing increased as her aging body became less fit for activity, she told her grandson in 1905 that Saint Paul’s example encouraged her. Just as Paul wrote her favorite NT letters of Ephesians, Philippians, and two to Timothy from prison, so her health imprisoned her to bedrest while she continued her fight for women’s rights, such as repealing the Contagious Diseases Acts in India and supporting women’s suffrage, through letter-writing.<sup>137</sup> She believed that God made her strong “like Saint Paul” so that she might pursue her crusade, counting it an honor to be used by God just as he used Paul.<sup>138</sup>

Contrary to Helen Mathers’s claim that “Josephine magisterially dismissed St Paul’s claims to be the authority on women’s position in the church,” Josephine also loved Paul because he agreed with Christ’s teachings that women deserved equality.<sup>139</sup> Both men and women could serve in leadership in the church, so Paul gave instructions for prophetesses on how to behave and clothe themselves.<sup>140</sup> He told husbands and wives to submit to one another in the verses preceding the Ephesians language about submission of women to their husbands, and he wrote to the Galatians that there is neither “male nor female, Jew nor Greek” in God’s kingdom. Josephine argued that Paul’s words built upon a legacy of female empowerment throughout Judeo-Christianity. In the OT, the prophet Joel wrote that both sons and daughters would prophesy, and both servants and handmaidens would receive God’s Spirit. On Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit fell on both men and women, and the Apostle Peter quoted the

Joel passage in his address to the multitude in Jerusalem that saw 3000 people become Christians.<sup>141</sup>

### Problems with the Established Church

For Josephine, “all things were possible” with God, including equality between the sexes and the end of vice in society, but this brings us to an obvious question for her: why the discrepancy in the church and “Christian” society at large between men and women over the centuries?<sup>142</sup> Her letters and journal entries indicate that she would argue the following: the problem was one of application and misunderstanding by the leadership of the church since the fourth century. The church ever since has purposefully glossed over the empowerment verses and subjugated women to a lesser place than what Jesus Christ and the early church intended by taking the submission passages out of context. Paul was referring to marital roles and responsibilities, not a person’s societal status or inherent worth. The overall message of Christ’s teachings and the letters of Paul liberated women from second-class status and empowered them to live in the fullness of life. This perceived failure to implement the purposes of God for women, and society as a whole, by the church leads us into a discussion of the role the church as an institution played in Josephine’s crusade.

Despite being the wife of an Anglican Canon, Josephine infrequently attended Anglican church services. She held “no concept of religious discipline,” at least in the formal sense. She refused to become a member of any church, relying instead on her strong personal connection with God for spiritual guidance.<sup>143</sup> In fact, she had no desire to hear God’s voice being spoken through other Christians. She wanted to hear his voice personally, and by earnestly seeking him, she often found the instruction she was seeking.<sup>144</sup>

Josephine also expressed profound disappointment in the church’s failure to meet the needs of the poor and hurting. During the last six years of her life in Cheltenham, from 1900 to 1906, she lived in a house where a prostitute rented the downstairs room. Josephine longed to share God’s love with this woman, but her sickness prevented her from reaching out. This led her to write to Fanny Forsaith about her anger at “Evangelical Protestants” for not wanting to know about the dark side of their own culture, and by insisting on ignorance, refusing to heed Christ’s call to help the lowest in society. Josephine even described the churches in Cheltenham as being “a nightmare” due to their deadness and hypocrisy.<sup>145</sup>

Despite her frustration with the Established Church in England, Josephine still looked to the Christian community to be her biggest supporters, hoping for unity in their opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts. Josephine wrote, “My great hope is from the Christian Churches, setting aside all differences and combining against a moral heresy which threatens the foundation of religion and virtue.”<sup>146</sup> She cultivated her relationships with multiple denominations and movements through her wide

range of friendships with leaders from each of these Christians sects, including Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army and Cardinal Henry Manning, the Archbishop of Westminster.<sup>147</sup> In 1883, Josephine wrote about the characteristics she cherished of each group: the Quakers with their silence and peace; the reverence of the Anglicans, along with their beautiful worship services and liturgy; the passionate prayer and praise songs of the Free Churches; and the Salvation Army's fighting spirit and determination to save the lost.<sup>148</sup> This appreciation formed a "charity . . . broad enough to embrace Catholic, Calvinist, Latitudinarian, Quaker, or Jew as her brother in God. She was completely undogmatic, almost undoctrinal, and her Christian witness was her own life and compassion."<sup>149</sup>

Josephine's determination to unify the various threads of English Christianity were ultimately successful. Early on, the Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, United Methodists, and Wesleyans joined her cause. Within a few years, the Baptists and Congregationalists also came on board. The last holdouts were the Scottish Churches and Anglicans.<sup>150</sup> Scottish church leaders were not fond of Josephine; she said they saw her as a "wild mad enthusiast who only did the cause harm," but she persisted in entreating them for support.<sup>151</sup> By 1873, the Free Church of Scotland, 700 Wesleyan clergy, and 1500 ministers from the Church of England had all signed petitions for repeal.<sup>152</sup>

For over a decade, Josephine and her National Association allies maintained their fragile coalition. The movement overcame a scare when, after Josephine had set up a committee of leaders to support the National Association's work and continue lobbying Parliament in November 1882, she called for a day of prayer and fasting in 1883, hoping to bring all denominations together in the unity of common prayer. The Unitarians and Anglicans balked at the inclusion of the Quakers and Evangelicals, some even refusing to participate due to the presence of these religious undesirables. This also bothered the committed atheists in her movement.<sup>153</sup> But despite this opposition, the February event proceeded, and the movement celebrated its first major victory two months later on April 20, 1883, when the bill to repeal the forced examinations of women passed, severely weakening the Acts.<sup>154</sup> They were later fully repealed on April 15, 1886.<sup>155</sup> In typical fashion, Josephine gave God credit for the victory of her great crusade.<sup>156</sup>

### **Evolutionary Christianity: Evangelicalism and the Church**

So how shall we describe the Christianity of Josephine Butler? Before an in-depth analysis can occur, we must review the religious context of her age. Throughout her life, we find the ongoing transformation of English Protestantism. The Evangelical movement, led by John Wesley and his fellow Dissenters more than a century before, went through a "metamorphosis" during the 1830s and 1840s as it adapted to the increasingly industrial culture.<sup>157</sup> Wesley's call for a return to the fundamental teachings of Christ, ones Evangelicals believed the eighteenth-century Church of England had largely forgotten, had been accepted by

most Christians.<sup>158</sup> The Evangelical Nonconformists continued to emphasize the conversion experience, while giving greater importance to justification by faith (forgiveness of sins) and "new birth" (renewal from the fallen nature).<sup>159</sup>

This "popular religious movement" appealed to the "aspirations" of the working class, so the Anglican Church felt the need to respond.<sup>160</sup> By the late 1830s, it had finally begun to reform itself, recognizing that religion was increasingly "becoming an entirely voluntary act of social behavior."<sup>161</sup> A huge shift was occurring, away from the universal church, where everyone attended worship services on Sunday, to the denominational church, where Britons were free to choose which form of Christianity they preferred (if they even chose one at all).<sup>162</sup> Theologically, there were large gulfs between the various denominations, but in daily practice, the local laymen noticed no major differences between Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Josephine grew up during this period, and as the populace began to move away from its Christian faith, she felt the need to call it back to its foundational roots in the teachings of Christ.

Keeping this context in mind, we can see four main characteristics of Josephine's Christian faith, and the first was her mysticism. A Christian mystic receives instruction directly from God and tends to belong to a sect of similar-minded people. Josephine was "not a member of a sect . . . but [she was] undoubtedly a mystic."<sup>163</sup> Her grandson wrote that her faith "was not a manifestation of a less cynical age; nor did it grow from my grandmother's powerful imagination and exceeding mental strength." Her "gift of faith was extraneous," one of those gifts given to only the "most favoured Christians of any period."<sup>164</sup> As we have already witnessed through her stories of numerous, and often fantastical, religious experiences, she possessed a deep, intimate connection with God, but not with the church; her descriptions of Jesus Christ exemplify this dynamic.<sup>165</sup> Mysticism was unusual for a nineteenth-century Christian, and it probably explains part of the hesitancy by so many historians to discuss the specifics of Josephine's faith.

Because of the mystical nature of her Christianity, Josephine felt no need for any kind of church intermediary to guide her, making her unusual faith even more atypical. Her non-denominationalism was the second main tenet of her belief system, one that is somewhat complicated due to her openness to all sects of Christianity. She was inclusive without making a private commitment to any of them, personally nondenominational while being multi-denominational in her public crusade. This distinction is crucial to understanding how she led the repeal movement while practicing her unique form of Christianity. The disdain she held for the Established Church and its failures prevented her full participation in an organized Christian community, and it drove her to strengthen her individual relationship with the Lord.

The third quality was Josephine's Protestantism. Even though she welcomed Catholics into her cause, she refused to

adhere to the Catholic faith in her personal life because of the blind papal devotion she saw in many of her Catholic friends.<sup>166</sup> She also agreed with the importance to British nationalism of remaining Protestant, but not in the Anglican Church due to her evangelical leanings.

As a Protestant with an “evangelical upbringing,”<sup>167</sup> Josephine believed in the centrality of faith through personal conversion, humble living, and support for social justice. This evangelicalism, which Nancy Boyd failed to address in her discussion of Josephine’s faith, was the final characteristic of Josephine’s Christianity, and its practical application fits within the four-part description of evangelicalism laid out by David Bebbington: “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and . . . crucicentrism, an emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.”<sup>168</sup> Josephine refused to dwell on the pious duties of the religious, which she called “worldly evangelicals.” She drank wine, attended Sunday church infrequently, refused to criticize the faith of her friends, and remained purposefully ambivalent over contemporary theological issues.<sup>169</sup> Later in life, she was surprised to hear that some of her friends thought she was an Anglican because she went to church there. Her response: I went “out of a feeling of loyalty to my husband,” and then she described herself as a Wesleyan who felt “not much sympathy with the Church.”<sup>170</sup> How should Christians behave and live their daily lives? For both Josephine and George, the early Church provided the way because it adhered to the “simplicity of Christ’s teachings.”<sup>171</sup>

## Conclusion

Josephine Butler’s birth between worlds, on the border of Scotland and England, provided a perfect analogy for her life and the complex personal worldview she developed over time.<sup>172</sup> She took up the spiritually evangelical and politically liberal legacy of her parents, building her personal Christian faith and its mystical connection with God upon their foundation. This intimate relationship, centered on the example and teaching of Jesus Christ, birthed her feminism. Through study, prayer, and action, it empowered her with the purpose and confidence necessary to shake off the social taboos of discussing prostitution and speak out about the need for greater women’s rights and the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.<sup>173</sup> The Christian influence of Josephine’s mission proved that she intended to implement “moral and social transformations.”<sup>174</sup> Her feminist Christianity suggested the ideal of a “‘liberated’ humanity” where a “God of justice and compassion” gave his followers “right thought” that led to “right action” in solving the problems of the world, an ideal she desired for all humankind.<sup>175</sup>

The Christian-based advocacy Josephine employed further empowered the feminist movement by giving women a greater voice in the public realm.<sup>176</sup> Due to the closed workplace for women and lack of political rights during most of the nineteenth century, religion provided many women with a safe place to make

their voices heard and advocate on behalf of their causes.<sup>177</sup> How should men and women interact in modern society? The Butlers suggested that everyone should look to the teachings of “true Christianity” for guidance; true adherence to Christ’s teachings would restore the equality, balance, and mutual respect necessary for a healthy society.<sup>178</sup>

Finally, Josephine enjoyed the complete support of her husband George, who provided love, wise counsel, and a gentle spirit enabling her to lead the repeal movement to victory.<sup>179</sup> Their relationship was a reversal of the Victorian norm: George provided peace and a listening ear at home for his wife without ever losing his masculinity or the respect of his friends.<sup>180</sup> Josephine attributed much of her success to their “mutual dependence.”<sup>181</sup>

History remembers Josephine Butler as “a great founding mother of modern feminism.”<sup>182</sup> As an evangelical, she believed that God equipped her for her life’s calling through the love and attention of her parents, her husband’s unequivocal support, and the experiences she endured. This direct connection flowed out of her feminist Christianity, one where she claimed agency for her own spiritual well-being and power to transform the world, a world where women enjoyed much greater political influence and social status by the time she went home to be with her God.

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# Alexander Campbell and the Status of Women: A Case Study in Ambivalence

LESLY F. MASSEY

Alexander Campbell is arguably the most influential leader in the history of the American Restoration Movement, which emerged from the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century and sought to reunite Christians by rejecting human creeds, breaking ties with denominations, and rediscovering the essential core Christian beliefs and practices in the Bible alone. Some four million people in a handful of Christian groups today find roots in this movement, including the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, the a capella Churches of Christ, and the International Churches of Christ. The earliest major document in this movement was the “Declaration and Address,” written by Alexander’s father, Thomas Campbell.<sup>1</sup> In that work the senior Campbell denounced denominationalism as a great evil which divides the body of Christ. In 1832, the group led by the Campbells merged with a similar movement in Kentucky that began under the leadership of an American-born Presbyterian named Barton W. Stone. Thus the terms Restoration Movement and Stone-Campbell Movement have come to be used interchangeably.

In spite of Stone’s important role, it was Alexander Campbell who gave energy to the movement and defined its doctrines. Educated at the University of Glasgow, he was influenced by English philosopher John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment, and also by James and Robert Haldane of Scotland, who emphasized a return to original Christianity as found in the NT. His hermeneutical method followed the model formulated by Edward Dering in the late sixteenth century, which also was adopted by various groups interested in detailed patterns of church polity.<sup>2</sup> Alexander Campbell was aware of the grammatico-historical approaches to biblical studies applied in Germany and Britain, and he made every attempt to be scientific in his exegetical and hermeneutical methods.<sup>3</sup> He became an iconoclast and reformer in the early years of his ministry and was a progressive thinker on issues such as war, education, and slavery. Unfortunately, however, this article can fairly be subtitled “A Case Study in Ambivalence” because his writings reflect an ardent devotion to biblical literalism which maintained and fortified a theology of women firmly rooted in traditional patriarchy—that is, rooted in male rule in the home, the church, and society.

Campbell’s views on women are primarily contained in articles and editorials in a periodical he edited called the *Millennial Harbinger*.<sup>4</sup> His writings display a dramatic tension between progressive and traditional interests. On the one hand he asserts the equality of men and women, in large part because both have been redeemed by Christ. Some of his essays and speeches express a clear recognition that the spirit of the gospel

is opposed to the injustice and degradation suffered by women throughout history.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the principles of social reform and equity were to Campbell important elements of the gospel message, and issues such as slavery and the status of women demanded his attention. As a result, some have touted Campbell as a champion of women’s social equality.<sup>6</sup>

However, his doctrinal position on women in the home, church, and society is unmistakably traditional and stands in stark contrast with the spirit of the gospel represented by modern egalitarianism.<sup>7</sup> His interpretation of relevant biblical passages is similar to that of Calvin, Luther, and the majority of his contemporaries, concluding that God designed woman as the helper of man and that her divinely appointed role is secondary, supportive, and subordinate. As Ray Lindley points out, a constant struggle between Campbell’s literalism and liberalism is especially evident in his attitude toward the place of women in church organization:

In a day when the spirit of democracy had led to movements advocating women’s rights, while Campbell was in the vein of progressive thinking on issues such as education, slavery and war, he was often reactionary regarding the place of woman, not only in society but in the church.<sup>8</sup>

This tug of war between conflicting interests arises out of Campbell’s presuppositions about how best to interpret the Bible. He is devoted to restoring true Christianity by means of biblical literalism.<sup>9</sup> Campbell views the Bible as a blueprint for all matters of Christian life and faith, and the only acceptable basis for unity among believers. Unfortunately, this presupposition prevents Campbell from following through with what appears to be an intuitive sense of female equality and social justice. The biblical literalism in Campbell’s theology became a prescription for the thinking of many of his followers in future generations, the most prominent example being the insistence by some on a cappella worship music on the basis that the NT includes neither command nor example of instruments in worship. Such biblical literalism would become the primary basis for a split in the movement by 1900.<sup>10</sup>

## Female Education and Elevation

Clearly, Campbell supported female education.<sup>11</sup> In the *Harbinger* he often promotes and endorses various academies, colleges and seminaries for women. In a review of several newly established institutions of higher learning he writes: “These are but mere samples of what, as a people, we are doing and (are) about to do, in this greatest of temporal and evangelical interests to the church

and the world.”<sup>12</sup> Campbell regularly published essays and letters submitted by women, and highly respected their views. Sarah H. C. Gardiner, for example, is a frequent correspondent and writer for the *Harbinger*. In one editorial note Campbell commends her for her perspicuity, piety, intelligence, good sense, and force of style, and comments that her essay “commends itself to the perusal of all our female readers as an example of how they might exert a positive influence in both the church and community.”<sup>13</sup> One contributor to the *Harbinger* identified only as Deborah claims to have followed Campbell’s publications and theology since before the days of his earliest periodical, the *Christian Baptist*, and states her conviction that it was always his aim to elevate and exalt female worth and character.<sup>14</sup> Women were also among the most active and generous financial supporters of Bethany College, the educational institution Campbell chartered in 1840, as well as various missions and other special projects undertaken by his followers. In this regard, his wife, Selina Campbell, often submitted notes or letters for publication, either thanking women for their prayers, encouragement, and financial support or generating funds for some new project.<sup>15</sup>

During this period the concept of moral superiority of women emerges in Campbell’s works. The *Harbinger* abounds in submittals, essays, and editorials which extol and venerate the traditional female role, including select biographies that epitomize female dignity and influence on society.<sup>16</sup> For example, a submittal by a certain Judge Hopkinton states:

There cannot be a moral society where they [women] are licentious; there cannot be a refined society where they are neglected or ignorant. Upon them depend the earliest education and first impressions of their children. They regulate or materially influence the principles, opinions, and mannerisms of their husbands and their sons. Thus the sound and healthful state of society depend on them.<sup>17</sup>

In a similar submittal, Judge Story writes:

The chamber of the sick, the pillow of the dying, the vigils of the dead, the altars of religion, never missed the presence or sympathies of woman. Timid though she be, and so delicate that the winds of heaven may not too roughly visit her, on such occasions she loses all sense of danger and assumes a preternatural courage which knows not and fears not consequences. Then she displays that undaunted spirit, which neither courts difficulties nor evades them, that resignation which utters neither murmur nor regret, and that patience in suffering which seems victorious over death itself.<sup>18</sup>

In one issue of the *Harbinger*, Campbell reviews a speech delivered by English Lord Ellesmere for the Mayor of Boston. Campbell writes that he was charmed by the speaker’s “just and appropriate tribute to woman, its felicitous allusions to her moral supremacy

over our species.”<sup>19</sup> And in his own lecture to the young women of Hopkinsville Female Institute in Nashville, Tennessee, Campbell clearly affirms that, while women are perhaps physically weaker than males, they are at the same time stronger morally and in enduring faith. During times of stress, for example, women tend to be more constant and devoted.<sup>20</sup> In 1849 Campbell delivers the opening address at a symposium in Louisville, Kentucky, entitled *On the Amelioration of the Social State*. In that speech he declares that woman is the quickening, animating, and conservative element of society, created from the side of man to sit at his side, not at his feet. He praises woman for her influence in history, naming literally dozens of notable women in history who stand as models for female excellence. And he forcefully declares that, as society moves toward maturity, which no doubt he envisioned in terms of the millennial kingdom of Christ, woman would play a leading role of guidance.

Society is not yet fully civilized. It is only beginning to be. Things are in process to another age, a golden, a millennial, a blissful period in human history.... Woman, I believe, is destined to be the great agent in this grandest of all human enterprises, an effort to advance society to the access of its most glorious destiny on earth.<sup>21</sup>

In that speech, Campbell goes on to focus on female education as a means of assisting women to achieve this noble task. On the surface Campbell appears to lend credence to the trend toward affirming women’s rights, but in reality it is evident that his placating and carefully chosen words speak only of motherhood and childrearing, with no suggestion or support of important aspects of female equality such as suffrage and leadership roles. Patronization by exalting motherhood and female subordination, urging women to take pride in their role as man’s divinely appointed helper, is found throughout Christian history.<sup>22</sup>

### **Patriarchal Conviction**

When confronted with questions and issues addressed by express biblical texts, Campbell stands with tradition, arguing that woman’s place is in the home and that her divinely appointed status is one of subjection to man. In one issue of the *Harbinger*, Campbell reflects on a speech he heard in Indianapolis, Indiana, by Robert Dale Owen, son of Welsh social reformer Robert Owen whom Campbell had met in a celebrated debate on “The Evidences of Christianity.” The subject of the younger Owen’s speech is, in Campbell’s summary, “the quest for a new order of society, adapted to man without religion and its conscience.” Here Owen discusses the rights of women, supporting their equality in society and their equality in marriage. This view Campbell dismisses as “eccentric” and “whimsical,” the “visionary and imaginative aberrations” of men with little understanding of the true will of God for the family or society. Campbell does not deny that women have throughout history suffered indignity and injustice. But he implies that reports of such injustice are

generally exaggerated, and he is cautious about lending support to any notion of true gender equality. He comments concerning the trend to “redress these nameless wrongs by a correct theory of woman’s rights,” which effort he suggests is commendable and leans on the side of virtue, but at the same time is misguided and counterproductive.<sup>23</sup>

In 1848, drawing from *Blackwood’s Magazine*, Campbell denies that woman’s proper place and purpose on earth includes making laws, leading armies and governing enterprises, or to function on an equal plane with males.<sup>24</sup> She is rather a subordinate to the man, designed by God to play a secondary and supportive role in a world where the male is the glory and supreme reflection of the Creator. Campbell finds what he considers the true and correct paradigm for both the home and society in scripture.

We have but one infallible standard on this subject; and indeed, being a subject of such transcendent grandeur and importance, it merits just such an infallible standard as God himself has ordained. Well, the question first to be propounded is, What says God’s grand institute of woman’s rights or wrongs? They are summed up in a few leading particulars. The first great fact is that Adam was first formed, then Eve. Hence the man is not of the woman, but the woman is of the man. He is first and she is second. He is senior and she is junior. They are, therefore, neither equal in rank nor in age.<sup>25</sup>

Campbell’s bondage to biblical literalism is nowhere more evident than in his views of the proper role and status of women. In his writings, both female subjection and ontological inferiority are founded upon numerous NT texts, several of which in turn lean heavily upon the creation narrative in Genesis.<sup>26</sup> Following the perspective of both Jewish and Christian traditions, Campbell believed Adam and Eve to be literal figures, fashioned by God and placed in the Garden of Eden at the beginning of human history. The biblical account, in Campbell’s mind, provides a universal paradigm for social and marital gender stratification. Certain facets of woman’s lot in life are fixed by creation, and others result from Eve’s sin and the fallen state of humanity. But woman’s station as a whole is divinely determined. Woman’s rightful place, by God’s design, is in the home.<sup>27</sup> Campbell states that man’s office is earthwide, but woman’s is housewide.<sup>28</sup> Those occasions where women have ascended to the level of queen, whether in contemporary England or ancient Israel, he considers to be endured by God as a choice of lesser evils in the absence of a suitable king—exceptions rather than a precedent for female ambition. In Campbell’s view woman is constitutionally, legally, and religiously inferior, whose place is to be “modest and retiring in the presence of him whom God made first.”<sup>29</sup>

In the February, 1833, issue of the *Harbinger*, Campbell includes a lengthy dialogue which also clearly presents his own views.<sup>30</sup> Mr. Goodal is a dignified family patriarch living with his family in the village of Newtonfields, Ireland, near Earl Moira’s Castle.

On New Year’s Eve, 1800, he and Mrs. Goodal had a conversation with their guests Mr. and Mrs. Reed. The comments of all four, related to 1 Cor 11:9–10, support the common view of marriage which has been perpetuated throughout mainstream Christian history, namely that the husband is the head of the household, both head and lord over the wife, a hierarchy which traditionally is founded both in logic and scriptural authority. The covering of the woman’s head, they state, is necessary because of the angels.<sup>31</sup> The husband is both a brother and master to the wife. Her veiled head symbolizes her subordination to her husband’s authority, given by angels to Eve and reiterated at Mt. Sinai in the Mosaic Law.<sup>32</sup> The dialogue also suggests that, because of the redemptive work of Christ as well as the impact of his teaching on the world, woman’s lot has been significantly elevated.<sup>33</sup>

In a later issue, Campbell employs a fictional dialogue entitled “Conversations at the Carlton House,” in which he offers instruction on family culture.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Carlton, the father and head of the household, engages his children in a rather formal and awkward conversation about various religious topics, including the origins of certain Christian customs and values. One daughter, Eliza, declares that woman was created second, as a companion for Adam. Another daughter, Mary, adds that Satan, whom she identifies as “the Adversary” and calls “a liar and murderer from the beginning,” entered into the Serpent of Gen 3 as an instrument of his evil interests and deceived “our mother, who believed a lie rather than the truth of God, obeyed her enemy, and included her husband with her in the catastrophe.”<sup>35</sup>

Campbell, however, does not belabor the issue of woman as the root of sin and the cause of the fall, either in this dialogue or elsewhere. On the contrary, in a lecture to young women at Hopkinsville Female Institute in Kentucky, he affirms that each of the characters in the creation story stands alone and bears the consequences of his or her own deeds. Adam is responsible for his own sin, his own condemnation, and his own punishment. Likewise, Eve and the Serpent bear the responsibility for their own choices.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, Campbell clearly opposes female leadership in the church. In 1840 a reader submitted a question to the *Harbinger* concerning whether women, referring to them as sisters, have a right to teach, deliver lectures, exhortations, and prayers in the public assembly of the church of God. Campbell’s reply consists of a quotation of 1 Tim 2:12 and the added comment, “I submit to Paul and teach the same lesson.”<sup>37</sup> In a later issue he quotes segments of *Macaulay’s History* with reference to the Queen, comparing her sacerdotal role in the Church of England to that of the Pope to the Roman Catholic Church: “Well might the dissenters of that age and all reasonable men of this, ask whether it is not monstrous that a woman should be chief Bishop of a church in which an Apostle had forbidden her even to speak.”<sup>38</sup>

A more poignant statement of Campbell’s position is found in an 1854 editorial where he offers a summary of several relevant NT passages:

Nor would an apostle, who commanded and importuned them to be chaste, keepers at home, obedient to their own husbands, to adorn themselves with modest apparel, with good works, with a meek and quiet spirit; who commanded them to marry, to raise and educate children, and to teach the junior women to follow their example in similar pursuits, contradict himself and stultify his own wisdom and discretion, by telling them, at the same time, that they had political and civil rights and duties, incompatible with this, calling them off into the busy circle of the forum, or the battlefield, or the tumultuous cabals and contrivances of men.<sup>39</sup>

Campbell's conclusion is not surprising. If Paul silenced garrulous women, prohibiting them from even asking a curious question in the religious assembly, it is certainly a shame, rather than a right or an honor, for them to speak out, teach, or preach.<sup>40</sup>

What, says he, women, came the word of God out from you, or did it come only to you? Did God send women to illuminate the world by making them depositories of his truths or the oracles of salvation to mankind? If he did not, why should the church send them, and still, less why should they send themselves?<sup>41</sup>

Campbell concludes with a quotation from Mrs. Sigourney, a contemporary Christian poet and author whom he describes as "a distinguished lady," who extols women to avoid contention for power, rather joyfully and gratefully submitting to the traditional role God designed: "a helpmeet, such as was fitting for man to desire, and for woman to become."<sup>42</sup>

In 1856 Campbell addresses a large assembly of young women at Henry Female Seminary in New Castle, Kentucky, and subsequently publishes the entire address in the *Harbinger*.<sup>43</sup> In his characteristic eloquence he contrasts the grandeur and perfection of Lady Eve, the mother of all living whose very name means life,<sup>44</sup> placed in the ambrosial bowers of Eden's Paradise, with Lord Adam for whom she was fashioned as a suitable helper: "Woman was created to be a companion, perfectly suitable to man; hence it is equally her duty, her honor, and her happiness to accomplish herself for this high and dignified position."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Campbell argues that woman is man's better half "in delicacy of thought, in sensitiveness of feeling, in patient endurance, in constancy of affection, in moral courage, and in soul absorbing devotion."<sup>46</sup>

She holds a great and mysterious power to influence the course of history. Every distinctive element of her sex was conferred upon her in order to her accomplishment for the great work of forming and molding human nature in reference to human destiny.<sup>47</sup>

However, this noble task Campbell defines in terms of a divinely ordained hierarchy where woman's purpose and duty is to support

the enterprises of man. While, on the one hand, the dignity and significance of womanhood is apparent in Campbell's thinking, it is nonetheless embraced by the traditional paradigm of male dominance. Woman is clearly a secondary entity in creation whose role is to support man and influence the world for good only through clearly defined maternal and domestic tasks, including ministry to the poor, the sick, the wounded and dying. It has been noted that Campbell favors and promotes female education. However, in his mind the purpose of such education is better to equip women for their maternal and domestic tasks.

She was an extract of man in order to form man; in order to develop, perfect, beautify, and beatify man. And hence these four terms comprehend the whole duty, honor, dignity and happiness of woman; consequently, her education should be equal to her mission.<sup>48</sup>

There is no need, Campbell contends, for women to preach or teach publicly in order to fulfill their purpose and mission. For support he appeals to 1 Cor 11 on the veiling of woman's head and face from "staring sensualists," and "green striplings of pert impertinence" who gaze lustfully at women with ogling glasses. While Campbell did not appear to require head coverings for females in his own congregations, he argues that if Paul required such of women to maintain modesty in the church assembly, he would never have encouraged women to take on authoritative roles in the church nor would he have sent out women as missionaries.<sup>49</sup>

Concerning modest feminine attire, Campbell defers to an essay by famed Baptist missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson, who draws from both 1 Pet 3:3-4 and 1 Tim 2:9-10 to support his traditional posture.<sup>50</sup> Of particular concern to Judson is "the appalling profusion of ornaments" worn by some Western women, both by visitors to Burma and by those he witnessed during brief furloughs at home, which he attributes to a "demon of vanity laying waste the female department."<sup>51</sup> He specifies ankle bracelets, necklaces, earrings, braided hair, rings on the fingers, arm and wrist bracelets, and other such vanities which he declares are strictly forbidden by the NT. Judson states that as a missionary he had refused to even baptize or administer the Lord's Supper to local Karen women unless they abandoned such vain and gaudy adorning, not as if it represented their former religious beliefs but because it violated the specific commands of the apostles.

After the death of Thomas Campbell in 1855, Alexander experiences a decline in mental acumen, and his work as editor of the *Harbinger* suffers.<sup>52</sup> For this reason his son-in-law W. K. Pendleton begins to assume responsibility for the paper. From 1857, material in the *Harbinger* on the subject of women comes largely from Pendleton, but there is little doubt that Pendleton's views reflect the theology of Alexander Campbell.<sup>53</sup>

Addressing the specific question, "Can a Christian wear gold jewelry?" Pendleton states that dress is the outward expression of the inward spirit, and addressing Christian women specifically

he quotes 1 Pet 3:4. On another question, “Do sisters have a right to vote for those who rule over them (elders) in the church?” Pendleton writes that they have as much right as they do to select their own husbands. He adds that in this regard there is neither male nor female.<sup>54</sup>

A more volatile issue gaining momentum at this time is female leadership in the church, suggested in the question submitted by a reader: “Do the Christian Scriptures authorize females to lead in prayer, or to engage in exhortation in the meeting of the church for worship?”<sup>55</sup> Pendleton’s lengthy response is based on 1 Cor 14:33–35 and 1 Tim 2:8–12. First he distinguishes between public worship and small private gatherings, the latter of which he concedes might be an acceptable venue for women praying even if men are present. But on the general topic of women addressing a church assembly he writes:

We cannot see how a prohibition could be more explicit or universal. It is said they must keep silence; that they are not permitted to speak in public; that they may not even so much as publicly ask a question, but must wait and ask it privately at home; that it is disgraceful for them to speak publicly in the congregation; and that they must learn in silence, with entire submission. What could the apostle say more explicit than this?<sup>56</sup>

In his discussion of 1 Cor 11:5 Pendleton argues that Paul addresses custom, but in no way condones women prophesying or praying in the assembly. Instruction on this matter is left until later (1 Cor 14) when Paul forbids public praying and prophesying by women altogether. Pendleton concedes that some women in the Corinthian church possessed gifts of prophecy, but insists that Paul forbade the practice in the assembly. Pendleton rejects all “farfetched arguments” to justify women preaching, and concludes by quoting patristic writers such as Tertullian, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius to say that women were never ordained to offer sacrifice, hold office, teach men or perform any solemn service in the church, and should not be today.<sup>57</sup> In reference to 1 Tim 2 he refers to the grave danger of “self deception in the weaker sex.”<sup>58</sup>

Challenges to Pendleton’s position are submitted by R. Faurot of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and appear in various issues of the *Harbinger* in 1864, but Faurot limits his contentions to women praying in a public assembly, and published rebuttals are brief and reflect little scholastic depth.<sup>59</sup>

## Summary

These materials represent the most significant voice in the Stone-Campbell Movement and briefly precede the debate on ordination of women which took place in 1880 – 1881 and in a second bout from 1891 – 1893, presented largely in two journals, the *Christian-Evangelist* and the *Christian Standard*.<sup>60</sup> Campbell certainly envisions a trend toward increased rights for women in society, and he supports it in terms of education, influence, respect, and dignity. But on the more fundamental subject of female status in

the home, in the church, and in the male hierarchy in the church and home, he remains firmly traditional.

The term “traditional” in this context refers to the fact that, from the earliest written records, it is evident that some form of patriarchy has been deeply embedded in the structure of nearly every human society. Therefore, in addition to Campbell’s theology, it can be presumed that his views concerning the status of women are also influenced to some extent by numerous other factors, such as his own family of origin, his social environment both in Scotland and America, and his education at the University of Glasgow. His theological perspectives, however, are the primary concern and focus of this article.

It is ironic that the conflict in Campbell’s views of women parallels a similar conflict within Pauline works, which comprise the major “proof texts” for the traditional Christian doctrine on women.<sup>61</sup> Another irony is that both Campbells, Thomas and Alexander, viewed the Old and New Testaments as having different levels of importance in terms of their constitutional authority for Christians. Yet, following his understanding of the Pauline letters, especially 1 Tim 2, Alexander unwittingly rooted his theology of womanhood in a patriarchal understanding of Gen 2–3 and thereby perpetuated among his followers a gender hierarchy inherited from ancient Judaism.<sup>62</sup>

Those in the Stone-Campbell Movement who, in contrast, supported increasing women’s rights in the nineteenth-century were able to do so by rejecting the traditional interpretation of relevant biblical texts such as 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2, and in turn by moving away from a slavish biblical literalism. Conversely, later generations of Campbell’s spiritual descendants who have rejected female equality, and therefore have maintained traditional patriarchy in the home and the church, have followed Campbell in their allegiance to biblical literalism.<sup>63</sup>

## Notes

1. George C. Bedell, Leo Sandon, and Charles T. Wellborn, *Religion in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1982), 463ff.; C. A. Young, ed., *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* (Joplin: College Press, 1985), 71–209.
2. Scottish Presbyterians, English Puritans, and various Reformed and independent churches. See Theodore D. Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1988), 70.
3. Thomas H. Olbricht, “Alexander Campbell in the Context of American Scholarship,” *ResQ* 33 (1991): 13–28.
4. Alexander Campbell, ed., *Millennial Harbinger, 1830–1870* (Joplin: College Press, reprint ed., 1987); hereafter abbreviated *MH* with references to year and page.
5. *MH* 54:204–9, 55:149, 56:314.
6. Lester G. McAllister, ed., *An Alexander Campbell Reader* (St. Louis: CBP, 1988), 109.
7. Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics*, trans. Emilie T. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 32–34.
8. D. Ray Lindley, *Apostle of Freedom* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1957), 173.
9. Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship* (St. Louis: Chalice, 1992), 54–55.

10. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship*, 66, 155.
11. *MH* 38:143.
12. *MH* 52:531.
13. *MH* 39:424–6.
14. *MH* 45:39.
15. Selina Huntington Bakewell was Alexander's second wife. His first wife, Margaret Brown, died in 1827. *MH* 56:119, 57:383, 415, 58:652. See Loretta M. Long, *The Life of Selina Campbell: A Fellow Soldier in the Cause of Restoration* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001).
16. See *MH* 45:283–8 for a lengthy biographical tribute to the Honorable Seliva, Countess of Huntingdon, extolled as a lofty model and example to women for her benevolence, godliness, and mission zeal. She constructed numerous churches and opened a college at Brecknockshire in 1768. See also *MH* 45:349 for a tribute to Princess Elizabeth of the Rhine, eldest daughter of Frederick V of Bohemia in 1620, and Lady Rachel Russell, daughter of the Earl of Southampton in the early 1600s. Nothing in these biographies either supports or refutes the traditional paradigm of female subjection.
17. *MH* 44:237–8. See also *MH* 52:675–7 for a submittal by a certain H. H. on Woman's Mission, in which the writer states that on her "falls the duty of imparting to the child the first religious instruction."
18. *MH* 32:418.
19. *MH* 53:511.
20. *MH* 55:146–54.
21. McAllister, *Alexander Campbell Reader*, 111; quoting Alexander Campbell, *Popular Lectures and Addresses*, 47–72.
22. Debates on the status of women arise early among the church fathers (e.g., Tertullian, John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas) and continue through the Reformation (e.g., Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox).
23. *MH* 51:17.
24. *MH* 48:115.
25. *MH* 54:204.
26. The Adam and Eve story (Gen 2:18–3:24) is the foundation of Judeo-Christian beliefs concerning the origin of humanity and various traditional ideologies concerning the genders. This account also lies at the root of relevant Pauline texts (cf. 1 Cor 11:8–12, Eph 5:31, 1 Tim 2:13–15).
27. Titus 2:5.
28. *MH* 54:204.
29. *MH* 54:205. Campbell appeals to Homer's Hector, who on going to battle begs his wife Andromache to remain and keep order at home.
30. *MH* 33:65–8.
31. The precise meaning of this assertion in 1 Cor 11:10 remains a point of debate among biblical scholars.
32. See also *MH* 54:205 where Campbell understands the Apostle Paul to have taught women to veil their faces in the synagogue and wear long hair for a covering in the Christian assemblies.
33. Neither male nor female in Christ, Gal 3:28. Campbell believed that Christian principles were the impetus for social advancement in general.
34. In January 1840, Campbell prefaces a new series in *MH* with a resolution to promote family education. The two-part didactic series is written in the form of a dialogue and is entitled "Family Culture; Conversations at the Carlton House." The setting is the household of Olympas Carlton and his wife Julia at Carmel Place, and it is likely that Campbell bases this material on his own household. See *MH* 40:3–4, 8–9, 72–6.
35. *MH* 40:76.
36. *MH* 55:150.
37. *MH* 40:521.
38. *MH* 49:337.
39. *MH* 54:205. See 1 Cor 11:3, Eph 5:22–23, Col 3:18, Titus 2:3–5, 1 Pet 3:1.
40. 1 Cor 14:34–37.
41. *MH* 54:206.
42. *MH* 54:206–7.
43. *MH* 56:301–14.
44. A segment of this lecture is published later in the same year; *MH* 56:392. He argues that Adam named Eve "life" because she was the source of all social happiness, joy, pleasure, and a fountain of strength and moral heroism.
45. *MH* 56:305.
46. *MH* 56:308.
47. *MH* 56:312.
48. *MH* 56:312.
49. *MH* 56:314.
50. Adoniram Judson, "Address to Christian Women," *MH* 32:326, 57:495–502. Judson was a Baptist missionary working in Moulmein, Burma. The essay is dated October 1831, and appears in *MH* in part in 1832 and in its entirety in 1857.
51. *MH* 57:495.
52. Other personal tragedies, such as a fire at Bethany College, may have contributed to his decline as well.
53. Transfer of the editorship of the *Harbinger* occurred in January, 1864. See Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker, *Joined in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (St. Louis: CBP, 1989), 146.
54. *MH* 57:459; Gal 3:28.
55. *MH* 64:325–30.
56. *MH* 64:326.
57. *MH* 64:328.
58. *MH* 64:329.
59. *MH* 64:370, 415.
60. David A. Jones, "The Ordination of Women in the Christian Church: An Examination of the Debate, 1880–1893" *Enc* 50, no. 3 (Summer 1989): 205.
61. Elaine Pagels, "Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion," *JAAR* 42, no. 3 (April 1974): 544. The concept presented in Gal 3:23, "neither male nor female" is set in juxtaposition to Pauline doctrine as a whole and to mainstream Christian tradition.
62. Doris Franklin, "Impact of Christianity on the Status of Women from the Socio-cultural Point of View," *RelSoc* 32, no. 2 (June 1985): 46.
63. See M. Eugene Boring, "The Disciples and Higher Criticism: The Crucial Third Generation," in *A Case Study of Mainstream Protestantism: The Disciples' Relation to American Culture, 1880–1989*, ed. D. Newell Williams (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 30–31. See also D. Newell Williams, "Future Prospects of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)," in *Case Study of Mainstream Protestantism*, 563.

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# “Favored as We Are”: Early Protestant Missions, Cultural Imperialism, and the Liberating Power of the Bible

HANNAH NATION

## Two Assumptions in America’s Historic Concern for Women

When the first American missionaries prepared to leave the shores of New England in 1812, Jonathan Allen, a respected minister of the gospel, delivered an exhortation to the women of the company. Speaking to them directly, he reminded the women that they were “now engaged in the best of causes,” specifically, the delivery of women in foreign lands from oppression. Allen proclaimed the call for American women to “enlighten” the minds of their foreign sisters and to “raise their character.” The American women were to “bring them from their cloisters” so that these subjugated foreign women might “enjoy the privileges of the children of God.” Ultimately, the work of American women in missions would teach women in the non-Western world that “they are not an inferior race of creatures; but stand upon a par with men.”<sup>1</sup>

To readers of *Priscilla Papers* concerned about gender-based violence, these words may sound encouraging. We may find ourselves delighting in the knowledge that stopping violence against women has long been integral to the work of Christian missions; after all, the welfare of women has been a central concern from the inception of Protestant Christian missions in the West. This concern has motivated both women and men to participate in the spread of the Christian gospel, the development and institutionalization of education for women, and the public condemnation of and campaign against a wide variety of injustices. The needs and plights of women have been a primary motivating factor and recruitment tool to rally Christians in the West to engage the needs of the world, and herein is an example of this cause at the very inception of American Protestant missions.

However, while we celebrate what is good in this history, it is important to recognize and consider two basic assumptions at the heart of it. First, nineteenth-century American evangelicals believed deeply that American women enjoyed an elevated position in society which needed to be replicated throughout the world. Second, it was assumed that American women enjoyed this elevated position as a result of moral and social progress. The realities of life for women in America were viewed as the results of evangelical Protestant Christianity’s progressively positive influence on society; missions and Christian service became a matter of sharing with the world the blessings Western women enjoyed. These two basic ideas were crucial to the development of American missionary concern for foreign women.

This article aims to remind us of this legacy and to encourage Western women toward self-examination as we engage the important topic of gender-based violence. From the earliest days of missional engagement, Western women have leaned towards relegating issues of violence and oppression to the “other,” holding up their own Western progress, rather than scripture,

as the catalyst for social change elsewhere. Twenty-first-century Western Christians working to combat gender-based violence must hold themselves accountable to reexamine any lurking imperialistic motivations and arguments in their teaching and actions concerning women in foreign contexts.

Have we moved beyond a paradigm and language that elevates liberated Western womanhood in contrast to oppressed womanhood in the majority world as the reason for combatting violence? Or are we still tempted to view our work confronting gender-based violence through the lens of Western progress and non-Western ignorance? In response to the legacy we have inherited, this article offers Phillip Jenkins’s studies of women in world Christianity as examples of the power of God’s Word to speak to the fullness of global womanhood. Jenkins argues that the Bible in the hands of women is the most important tool to initiate change because it enables such change under the guidance of local women and interpreted according to their local context. Though there is not enough space to look at Jenkins’s case studies in full, this paper argues that remembering his basic argument concerning the power of the Word in the hands of women is the right and necessary antidote to the tendency of women in the West to view the issues women face globally through their own Western lenses.

## The Plight of Women as Early Motivation for Mission

The impulse among the first American women to participate in missions was intimately connected to their views of themselves and of women outside the Western context. The nascent years of evangelical missions in America coincided with a period of much pride for women. The early nineteenth century witnessed a dramatic increase of education for American women, and in New England the literacy gap between men and women was finally closed.<sup>2</sup> Female education was no longer viewed primarily as “ornamental,” creating women who adorned their husbands; rather, under the influence of Hannah Moore the primary focus of female education during this time became one of “usefulness.”<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously, the realms in which women could apply such usefulness were undergoing reinterpretation. The domestic sphere grew in importance for women, expanding to include a host of new activities including teaching and benevolence. Such ideals as companionate marriage, moral motherhood, and religious revival further redefined women’s work.<sup>4</sup> As the home lost its economic position in society, it grew in sentimental, moral, and religious importance.

Because American women believed themselves to be experiencing immense privilege compared to their predecessors, they were horrified to discover the lives of women in various other cultures did not share similar characteristics. Particularly

significant for nineteenth-century American women were reports of female subjugation in “heathen” cultures. Perhaps because newfound access to education was a significant source of pride for American women, the comparative lack of female education within the non-Western world proved particularly distressing. More distressing than even this lack of educational opportunities for foreign women were practices such as self-immolation, infanticide, and physical confinement. Alarmed by reports of such treatment, American women became deeply concerned for foreign, especially Asian, women. Within missions circles it was quickly understood that all people needed the gospel, but non-Western women also needed social elevation.<sup>5</sup>

This mode of thought is consistently found throughout the many writings of early missionaries and missiologists, but it is particularly succinct in Ann Judson’s 1822 “Address to Females in America Relative to the Situation of Heathen Females in the East.” As one of the first three American women to serve in overseas missions, and as the only one of the three to endure beyond two years,<sup>6</sup> Judson held incredible sway over the imaginations of the American public.<sup>7</sup> Her correspondence was read enthusiastically, and she was lauded not only in America, but in Britain as well.<sup>8</sup>

In her essay, Judson writes to rally a new wave of women to take up the concern of missions, and specifically of subjected women in the East. She starts by reminding her readers of their privileges as American women, and her opening has provided the title of this article:

Favored as we are, from infancy, with instruction of every kind; used as we are to view the female mind in its proper state; and accustomed as we are to feel the happy effects of female influence, our thoughts would fain turn away from the melancholy subject of female degradation, of female wretchedness. But will our feelings of pity and compassion . . . allow us to

turn away—to dismiss the subject altogether, without making an effort to rescue—to save? No!<sup>9</sup>

Judson stresses the advantages American women enjoy to motivate their involvement in missions. She then contrasts these privileges with the grievances of Hindu women: They are excluded from the society of men and confined; they are not educated, but left in “listless idleness.” They are married at two or three years of age; marriage is not companionate; and women are considered the servants of their husbands. She concludes that it is no wonder female existence among the Hindus is considered an unbearable curse, leading women to “destroy their female offspring, and to burn themselves with the bodies of their deceased husbands.”<sup>10</sup>

Judson carefully differentiates this abject subjection of women in India and Bengal with the comparatively moderate oppression of women in Burma. Here her primary concerns are that husbands do not love the Burmese women as companions and women are subject to corporal punishment at the hands of their husbands and fathers. She writes, “to be born female, is universally considered a peculiar misfortune.”<sup>11</sup> In Judson’s mind, perhaps the underlying evil undergirding the wrongs committed against women in Burma is the neglect of their education.<sup>12</sup> Judson closes her essay with a cry to American women, which is worth quoting at length:

Shall we, my beloved friends, suffer minds like these to lie dormant, to wither in ignorance and delusion, to grope their way to eternal ruin, without an effort, on our part, to raise, to refine, to elevate, and to point to that Saviour who has died equally for them as for us? Shall we sit down in indolence and ease, indulge in all the luxuries with which we are surrounded, and which our country so bountifully affords, and leave beings like these, flesh and blood, intellect and feeling, like ourselves, and *our own sex*, to perish, to sink into eternal misery? No! By all the tender feelings of which



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the female mind is susceptible; by all the privileges and blessings resulting from the cultivation and expansion of the human mind; by our duty to God and our fellow-creatures, and by the blood and groans of Him who died on Calvary, let us make a united effort; let us call on all, old and young, in the circle of our acquaintance, to join us in attempting to meliorate the situation, to instruct, to enlighten, and save females in the Eastern world; and though time and circumstances should prove that our untired exertions have been ineffectual, we shall escape at death that bitter thought, that Burman females have been lost, without an effort of ours to prevent their ruin.<sup>13</sup>

Judson's call to American women was an incredibly important and well-remembered linking of Western female privilege with the plight of non-Western women, and it would set the tone for much of missiological thought concerning women. In fact, this general line of thought could be said to define the frame of women's missiology for well over the next century. As Dana Robert has shown in her *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*, the social elevation of women has been integral to the work of women in mission in the entirety of Western missions. She writes, "Women's mission theory was holistic, with emphasis on both evangelism and meeting human needs. Even in proclamation-oriented evangelical mission agencies, women were the ones to undertake ministries of compassion."<sup>14</sup> At times even taking on the label "Woman's Work for Women," women missionaries tackled some of the most complex issues facing women, such as sati,<sup>15</sup> foot binding, and prostitution, with education always at the heart of the endeavor.<sup>16</sup>

At the beginning of American missions, violence against women in the non-Western world was linked not only to religion, but also to the lack of the social progress of which American women believed themselves to be the beneficiaries. Prepared for usefulness by their education, American women believed that their sphere for moral and social influence included the world. American women were motivated to become involved in missions primarily by their own sense of privilege, and the Christian call was to use that privilege for the good and service of others less fortunate.

### Gender and Empire

Looking back on Western women's global engagement, some historians are asking the question, what makes an empire? As this question becomes increasingly important with the rise of postcolonial studies, it must also be asked by Christians. We need to consider when and where our engagement with gender-based violence has, perhaps, looked more like a re-creation of the global community in the Western image, and when and where it has instead enabled women to engage issues according to their own contexts.

One scholar, Ian Tyrrell, defines imperialism as "a set of transnational networks of cultural communication, exchange, and

power."<sup>17</sup> With this broad definition in mind, Tyrrell has argued that much of women's work in missions should be understood as empire building. As Western, and in particular American, women left their own shores to intentionally influence the status, social situation, and education of women, they not only tacitly contributed to the cultural dominance of the West, but Western views on gender became intrinsically entwined with the soft power America exercised across the globe.

Tyrrell is careful to hedge his argument, and he takes note of the conflicting allegiances within American missionary structures. After all, Americans have always been distasteful of formal colonialism, and missionaries were often the staunchest public anti-imperialists.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the need to accurately dissect America's imperialistic influence on the world leads us unavoidably to the role of Western women missionaries. Tyrrell argues that the work of American women is best understood as one of "competing kingdoms," as they strove for religious and cultural hegemony but were nonetheless against the more overt actions of colonial and imperial power.<sup>19</sup>

By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the greatest source of American influence on the world was through the expansive work of its missionaries.<sup>20</sup> Considered the zenith of American missionary output, this period also saw an increased focus on moral and social reform. In fact, moral reform became the locus of America's sense of its own exceptionalism.<sup>21</sup> Tyrrell writes, "The morality issue was closely connected with the way Americans needed to distance themselves from European empires—there was a felt need to assimilate American empire to exceptionalism."<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, this notion of moral exceptionalism was intrinsically tied to views on women and gender. Again from Tyrrell,

The issue of morality was closely connected with the role of women and missions, and the role of women, in turn, was one of the distinctive elements that contributed to notions of American exceptionalism. Women's role in cultural expansion brought Protestant evangelism, imperialism, and American exceptionalism together via transnational moral reform.<sup>23</sup>

Central to these ideas was the notion that America was the most progressed expression of evangelical Protestant faith, which in turn resulted in the best situation for its women.<sup>24</sup> American evangelicalism was the apex of the Christian faith, behind which descended other Protestants, Orthodox and Catholic Christians, and finally, Muslims and the "heathens."<sup>25</sup> In parallel descending order, American women were considered the most liberated and heathen women the most subjugated. The level of a culture's moral and social progress was determined by its perceived treatment of women. As Catherine Beecher declared, "The democratic institutions of this Country . . . have secured to American women a lofty and fortunate position which, as yet, has been attained by the women of no other nation."<sup>26</sup> With the elevated status of its women in mind, America sent forth hundreds of women to

work in foreign contexts hoping to bring progress and reform for women in the rest of the world. As historian Lisa Joy Pruitt states,

American Protestant women held up images of “Oriental” women intending their American sisters to see themselves in positive contrast—educated and holding a privileged position in the home and in society at large. Protestant missionaries (both men and women) believed that evangelizing the women of the “Orient” would completely renovate those societies, releasing the women from cultural bondage while simultaneously bringing eternal salvation to all of the people.<sup>27</sup>

At this point we must ask ourselves what makes missions different today? American women seeking to engage the world on issues of gender-based violence must consider how the imperialistic history on this topic continues to shape missions. Rather than repeat the errors of their mothers, they must avoid requiring the non-Western world to be remade in the image of the West. The majority world is not a looking glass by which to admire Western standards of social progress. We must learn from the past and find a way to hold ourselves accountable.

### Women Reading the Bible

To avoid imperialistic patterns concerning gender-based violence which make Western women the standard for change in other cultural contexts, we must remain committed to scripture and to its local and contextualized interpretation. Even in confronting the vitally important topic of gender-based violence, those in the West must be slow to interpret what change should look like for women in other contexts. Violence against women is abhorrent and ought to be universally recognized and fought as such; the basis on which situations of violence are judged must not come from Western conceptions of womanhood, but from the Word of God in the hands of local communities.

Philip Jenkins caused a stir in academia some years ago when he published *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, recounting the changing demographics of Christianity.<sup>28</sup> In his follow-up work, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*, Jenkins devotes a chapter to understanding how the new demographics of Christianity are impacting women. His observations focus on the role the Bible has played for women in the majority world and are helpful for Western women seeking to engage across cultural differences.

In his chapter on women and Christianity in the majority world, Jenkins demonstrates how women’s ability to read scripture for themselves and apply it according to their local circumstances can change the shape of their lives. As we seek to learn from our past, he makes an important observation that, in many cases, the portions of scripture that hold power for women in the majority world are different from what many women in the West find helpful. For example, Jenkins highlights the account of Jairus’s daughter in Luke 8. For many Western women, the namelessness of the daughter has served as a symbol of oppressive patriarchal

systems; however, Jenkins recounts that in many African contexts, her clearly defined position within a family gives her honor and status as a community member.<sup>29</sup> Though this portion of scripture has caused consternation for many Western women, it empowers many African women when interpreted by them locally.

Regardless of such differences in perspective, what Jenkins most importantly highlights is the broad impact scripture has on women when they are able to contextualize it according to their own group needs. By reading the Bible, African and Asian women are finding new ways to participate in ministry, as well as address other important (and often untouched) matters such as exorcism, healing, sexuality, widowhood, and the inclusion of the outsider. In short, scripture contextualized by women seems to challenge their social situations and the roles they play, but always according to local and specific interpretations. Women who engage scripture for themselves are able to translate and embody the gospel for the feminine aspects of their own cultures, applying scripture to their immediate situations, and converting what is already there towards Christ.

Just as examining the past displays many of the West’s failings in this area, we can also examine the history of this topic for examples to hold ourselves accountable. Jenkins provides a beautifully specific example in his story of one Kenyan tribe’s self-examination of the practice of female circumcision. Jenkins notes that often the most important catalyst scripture provides for social change is not *how* the Bible treats a subject, but rather that it discusses the subject *at all*, thus enabling the matter to be discussed openly, often for the first time in a society. This happened in Kenya when the Bible appeared in the vernacular for the first time in the 1920s. Tribal women who had been taught to read started intensely examining scripture for themselves and discovered that circumcision had only been commanded for men, not for women as well. The Gikuyu women determined that it was not acceptable to circumcise women and formed a guild for the protection of their daughters. Jenkins writes, “To understand the radical nature of this step, we have to recall the central importance of circumcision for defining femininity, sexual morality, and adulthood. This was in short a biblically fuelled social revolution.”<sup>30</sup> With this story, Jenkins illustrates what it looks like when women start to contextualize the gospel for themselves.

As Jenkins accurately observes, the power for contextualizing scripture among women for their needs lies *not in outside forces*, but in their ability to engage scripture for themselves. He writes, “Beyond any single text, the Bible as a whole offers ample ammunition for the use of [social] outsiders, and for the dismay of the established and comfortable.”<sup>31</sup> And also, leaving women to pursue domestic piety through Bible reading is like forbidding a restive population to carry weapons, while giving them unrestricted access to gasoline and matches. Pursuing biblical passages relevant to women often produces innovative readings, sometimes by taking the simple step of placing a scriptural text in context, rather than simply reciting an isolated verse.<sup>32</sup>

Jenkins's examples of contextualization among women in the majority world suggest that for true change to take place, women's abilities to read and apply scripture will be a central, perhaps the central, factor.

### Conclusion: Avoiding a New Gender-Based Imperialism

In conclusion, the argument of this article is not that gender-based violence is a relative topic or that all past efforts to combat it were imperialistic. True injustice is carried out against women globally on a daily basis, and this has been recognized in the West from the inception of Protestant missions. Rather, this article hopes to raise awareness and remind ourselves of our past failing. Unless women in the Western church are to fall into the same errors of imperialistic, culturally hegemonic views concerning women in the majority world, we must accept that scripture in the hands of local women, rather than our own definition of social progress, is the starting place for combating gender-based violence. Western women will not always accurately understand localized situations, nor can they understand how best to speak truth in the world's many cultural contexts. But where American women are limited in their understanding, the Word of God is not. It is fully able to engage each woman, speaking to her suffering and calling for change.

Gender-based violence is an atrocity before God's eyes and one which the global community of Christians must work to combat. In order to participate, Christians in the West must first remember their history of combating this problem in ways that have focused on themselves as progressed exemplars. Enthusiasm to combat global gender-based violence must not come from a sense of moral or social superiority. American womanhood is not the standard by which to judge the situations of sisters across the globe. The Word of God is the standard, and thankfully, it is powerful enough to be translated, understood, and embodied in a host of ways by the women who encounter it within each cultural context.

### Notes

1. Jonathan Allen, "A Sermon. Delivered at Haverhill, February 5, 1812, on the occasion of the young ladies being about to embark as the wives of Rev. Messieurs Judson and Newell, going Missionaries to India," in *Pioneers in Mission: The Early Missionary Ordination Sermons, Charges, and Instructions. A Source Book on the Rise of American Missions to the Heathen*, ed. R. Pierce Beaver (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 276–77. Please note that the terms "foreign" and "American" (rather than United States) are used here to represent the nineteenth-century terminology and mindset of Allen and many others like him. The concept of "foreignness" was directly linked with Western notions of progress.

2. Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 101.

3. Dana Lee Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996), 33.

4. For examinations of these changes see Anne M. Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools," *Feminist Studies* 4, No. 3 (Oct. 1978); Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*:

*Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

5. For an excellent examination of this topic, see Lisa Joy Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005).

6. Robert, *American Women in Mission*, 47–48.

7. Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *Mission for Life: The Judson Family and American Evangelical Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 1–19.

8. Brumberg, *Mission for Life*, 56.

9. Included in James D. Knowles, *Memoir of Mrs. Ann H. Judson: Late Missionary to Burmah* (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1846), 350.

10. Knowles, *Memoir*, 351–52.

11. Knowles, *Memoir*, 352–53.

12. Knowles, *Memoir*, 353.

13. Knowles, *Memoir*, 354.

14. Robert, *American Women in Mission*, xviii–xix.

15. The custom of sati involved a widow committing suicide upon the death of her husband by throwing herself onto his funeral pyre. Whether this ritual was forced upon women by the community or whether women willing volunteered has been a matter of significant debate from the earliest days of British involvement in India.

16. Robert's *American Women in Mission* excellently examines the history of many of these causes, as well as the factors contributing to the label "Women's Work for Women."

17. Ian Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire: New Approaches to American Cultural Expansion," in *Competing Kingdoms: Women, Mission, Nation, and the American Protestant Empire, 1812–1960*, ed. Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Connie A. Shemo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 43.

18. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 45.

19. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 45.

20. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 46.

21. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 47.

22. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 47.

23. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 47.

24. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 48.

25. Tyrrell, "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 48.

26. As quoted by Tyrrell in "Woman, Missions, and Empire," 48.

27. Pruitt, *A Looking-Glass for Ladies*, 7.

28. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2011).

29. Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 169.

30. Jenkins, *New Faces of Christianity*, 171.

31. Jenkins, *New Faces of Christianity*, 177.

32. Jenkins, *New Faces of Christianity*, 169–70.

**HANNAH NATION** is a student of church history at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and is finishing a thesis on the literary themes used in memoirs of the first generation of American missionary wives. Hannah has worked in international campus ministry and plans to pursue doctoral studies in women's history. This article won the student paper competition at CBE's 2016 conference in Johannesburg, South Africa.



## Book Review

### ***A New Gospel for Women: Katharine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism***

By Kristin Kobes Du Mez (Oxford University Press, 2015)

REVIEWED BY MIMI HADDAD, President of CBE and Publisher of *Priscilla Papers*

At last we have a historical analysis worthy of its subject—Katharine Bushnell, who began her career as a missionary doctor in China and went on to become a theologian, missionary and perhaps the most significant gender reformer of her day. Through eight page-turning chapters, Kobes Du Mez introduces Bushnell within the context of American Protestantism where she rises to a “household word” (1). What distinguished Bushnell was her commitment to women’s emancipation as integral to Christian faith. From her work as a medical missionary, to her activism with prostitutes, to her biblical scholarship, Kobes Du Mez shows how Bushnell’s vocation was motivated by the cruelty of Christian men toward females.

Chapter 1 immerses readers in the Methodist context of Evanston, Illinois—a burgeoning paradise for women’s emancipation with its emphasis on the Holy Spirit equipping all believers regardless of skin color or gender (15). A rejection of social hierarchies embodied the mission of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Headquartered in Evanston, the WCTU created new frontiers for women globally. In this milieu, the young Bushnell had two key mentors: her neighbor Frances Willard, president of the WCTU, and Dr. James Stewart Jewell, a professor of medicine who prepped Katharine for admittance to the Chicago Women’s Medical College in 1876.

Chapter 2 expertly demonstrates how popular Christian movements (temperance, women’s missions, and abolition) pressed for a more Christian world that was also more feminist. Gender activism united a global sisterhood, blurring divisions of race and nation. Bushnell emerged on center stage, sensitized to patriarchy’s power to devalue and enslave women, and to distort the Bible for these purposes—challenges she witnessed as a missionary in China. Returning to the US, Bushnell joined forces with the WCTU to expose female sex slavery in Wisconsin and Michigan and to prosecute perpetrators. Her popularity soared and helped turn the country against prostitution.

Chapter 3 explores the partnership of leading women working around the globe “in the name of temperance and purity” (63). Alongside activists like Josephine Butler, Bushnell traveled internationally, documenting Christian complicity in the abuse of women and exposing high-level leaders. Miracles accompanied their work as their prayers challenged powers and principalities. Ultimately, they came to see how perpetrators slandered those they abused and how distorted translations of scripture fueled gender injustice. Their work abroad brought them wisdom and capacity to expose ethnic prejudice and its complicity in the sexual abuse of females in the US. One “theme remained constant: the culpability of Christian men” (80).

Chapter 4 traces Bushnell’s abrupt shift from purity work to biblical theology. Kobes Du Mez points to a pivotal event—an article by Josephine Butler that recounts a brutal rape by British soldiers in India, in broad daylight, while witnesses stood idle. The woman died, yet not one soldier was convicted. Women seemed insignificant compared to gratifying the sexual desires of men, because, according to Bushnell, Christians believe “that

God ordained woman to be a scapegoat of her husband’s self-indulgence, as a permanently adjusted penalty for Eve’s sin” (91). From the “sex-biased’ Chinese translations of Scripture” (94) to “her encounters with women in Indian and East Asia” (94), Bushnell realized that laws protecting women were impotent when coexisting beside a flawed theology of women.

For gender reform to succeed, biblical reform was needed. And women must lead the way by mastering the biblical languages: for “no class nor sex should have an exclusive right to set forth the meaning of the original text” (105). Hence, in 1887 the “WCTU began offering New Testament Greek” (97). Bushnell soon afterwards published *God’s Word to Women*—an entirely new reading “from Genesis through Revelation” (101). As Kobes Du Mez notes, *God’s Word to Women* exposed and redressed sexist translations aligned more with Satan than God.

Chapter 5 explores Bushnell’s capacity to challenge theological sexism by correcting caricatures of women, beginning with Eve. Though Christians believed God cursed Eve for her disobedience and for seducing Adam to sin, Bushnell reframed the conversation. She argued that it was “false exegesis” and men’s fallibility that condemned Eve, not scripture (109). Kobes Du Mez details patterns of distortions Bushnell uncovered in translation choices that scrutinized women’s moral character. Consider the Hebrew word *chayil*: when used of men it is translated as “force, strength, or ability” (123), but when referring to women it is rendered “virtue”—i.e. chastity” (123). Bushnell found similar challenges in the NT, admitting that these may be straws, “yet they all point in the same direction” (125). In contrast, however, the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), challenges the sexual double standard. Here “Christ insisted that man must first show himself to be chaste before dealing with woman’s unchastity” (125).

Chapter 6 features Bushnell’s genius in interpreting texts used to subordinate women. For example, Bushnell exposes “male-kinship,” not as a moral ideal, but as part of our fallen world. Hence, God intended a man to leave his family and cleave to his wife, just as women throughout scripture resist the confines of their patriarchal culture. Bushnell insists that, while Adam was banished from Eden, Eve—in turning away from God—chose to follow her husband out of paradise. In “choosing to follow her husband out of Eden, Eve had reversed the fundamental law of marriage” (131). Patriarchy is also noted by the inclusion of Joseph in Christ’s lineage, “one in no way related to Jesus Christ by ties of blood” (134).

Kobes Du Mez displays Bushnell’s skill in interpreting concepts such as “headship.” Asking larger theological questions, Bushnell queries: who is the head of humanity, men or Christ? Can women serve two masters—God and men? Bushnell insists that Eph 5:21-24 is primarily a call to imitate Christ. “It is only as man imitates Christ in his conduct that he can remain in the Body of which Christ is Head” (141). All Christians are to submit to one another (Eph 5:21), and this entails “the Christian grace of yielding one’s preferences to another” (141).

Bushnell's capacity in Greek is prominent in her assessment of 1 Cor 11:1-16, insisting that *exousia* is wrongly "interpreted in verse 10 to mean 'veil' and to signify man's authority over woman [when it] had never before in Scripture or classical literature been found to have that meaning" (137). For Bushnell, this error represents "the most audacious handling of the sacred text on record" (137). Concerning 1 Cor 14:31-40, Bushnell observes that reinforcing women's subservience to men ignores how women prophets throughout scripture were guided by God rather than men. Moreover, there is no OT law that calls women to obey their husbands. For Bushnell, the "sentiments expressed in verses 34 and 35 ought to be attributed not to Paul, but rather to another person" (146) who elevated Jewish legal traditions over women's freedom in Christ. Finally, in assessing 1 Tim 2:11-15, Bushnell reminds readers that, unlike Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus which was read to the entire church, Paul's epistle to Timothy was private.

Chapter 7 shows how *God's Word to Women* positioned itself between radical and conservative Christians. It was "at once progressive and traditional, radical and conservative" (152). Refusing higher criticism, Bushnell was nonetheless prepared to challenge flawed translations. Yet, she was clear about one issue: "the Bible contained within it the true source of women's liberation" (157), but only when read accurately in its historical and cultural contexts. Kobes Du Mez demonstrates Bushnell's commitment to the fundamental moral principles of scripture, and her work was read and reviewed by popular and academic critics alike.

Chapter 8 considers how her influence waned. As feminists favored sexual freedom, purity work was marginalized and eclipsed by "social hygienists" who devalued prostitutes as immoral and feeble-minded. Rejecting the "stupid assumption that prostitution proves feeble-mindedness," Bushnell asserted "that any deficiencies likely resulted from their 'abuse in sexual matters by men,' rather than from any 'inherited condition'" (170). Continually challenging promiscuity with its double standard for men, Bushnell insisted that "sexual freedom could not undo the systemic oppression of women that persisted in American society" (177). Shallow is the assertion that female sexuality "could erase deeply rooted male supremacy in the culture and in the economy" (177).

Kobes Du Mez considers Bushnell's impact by noting that Bushnell believed that, important as her purity efforts were, her truest vocation was biblical studies. Hence, during the years before she died, *God's Word to Women* was available in "England, Australia, New Zealand, India, China, Korea, and Germany" (181). Her work remains in print today and continues to empower women's emancipation across geographic and denominational lines, particularly given the escalation of sex slavery coupled with the ongoing reality of religious and cultural patriarchy.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

*A New Gospel for Women* contributes significantly to the history of women in missions, social justice, and biblical scholarship. By assessing Bushnell's achievements in context, Kobes Du Mez empowers readers to better understand their own challenges and opportunities as activists, scholars, and as those (like Bushnell) working to dismantle patriarchy as a biblical ideal. After all, many issues Bushnell challenged persist, like a wooden or "staunch commitment to biblical inerrancy, dispensational theology, and

antimodernism" (159) that fuels a masculinist Christianity with its "blatantly misogynistic, rhetoric and practices" (159).

Further, Christians have for centuries depicted women as "weak—and vulnerable to doctrinal error [whereas] assigned truth [is considered] a masculine quality" (159). Given the "associations of right doctrine with masculine virility" (160), "it was not long before women's rights and the evils of modernism became firmly linked in the minds of many conservatives" (160). Consider Grudem's *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* and *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*. History does indeed repeat itself, which is why the careful historical analysis of Kobes Du Mez is crucial. *A New Gospel for Women* challenges the assumption that biblical feminism is a post-1960s construct and that egalitarians today are driven by secular feminism. Finally, Kobes Du Mez displays Bushnell's capacity to lead in many fields (medicine, theology, social justice, international diplomacy), achievements that both united women globally while also casting vision and confidence for women's vocational pursuits then and now.

Regarding weaknesses, Kobes Du Mez might have done more to consider Bushnell's spirituality—her prayer life and study of scripture as these guided her activism and evangelism and as they reflect prominent qualities of early evangelicals (noted in Bebbington's quadrilateral<sup>1</sup>). Finally, a more thorough review of Bushnell's treatment of 1 Tim 2:11-15 would have been useful, given how mishandling this passage has stifled women's service. Here Bushnell has much to offer. She shows how Paul affirmed women teaching men when the church was not under persecution, provided they teach the gospel accurately and learnedly (1 Tim 2:11-12) and they are not disruptive either in their chatter or clothing (1 Cor 11:5, 12:34).<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Bushnell's highest theological achievement is to identify women not through Eve's failures, but as united to Christ's victories. Bushnell shows that a correct interpretation of scripture as it relates to "women's social, ecclesiastical and spiritual status"<sup>3</sup> should be ascribed in the same manner as "man's social, ecclesiastical and spiritual status, [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.'"<sup>4</sup> Redemption, for Bushnell, provides women with a new being (*ontos*) for a new purpose (*telos*) that challenges gender prejudice and interpretative bias that, throughout history, condemned women as ontologically inferior in their association with Eve rather than through their union with Christ. Bushnell establishes a theological foundation for women's ontological and functional equality that constitutes an entirely new worldview that supports and grows egalitarian theology to this day.

Bushnell is to egalitarians what Luther was to the Reformation, and Kobes Du Mez has added significantly to our understanding of a great Christian reformer.

### Notes

- 1 David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s-1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).
- 2 Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women* (Minneapolis: Christians for Biblical Equality, 2003), 154-65.
- 3 Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 169.
- 4 Bushnell, *God's Word to Women*, 169.

## Book Review

# *Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming Violence Against Women*

By Elaine Storkey (SPCK, 2015)

REVIEWED BY KEVIN GILES

I have read nothing quite like Elaine Storkey's book, *Scars Across Humanity*. It tells the story of violence against women in today's world. The book is very well researched and accessible; moreover, it is spine-chilling. As I sat with the book in hand after reading it I felt both pleased that someone had so powerfully told this awful story and depressed by what I had read.

This book has great weight, not only because of the important facts covered, but also because of who wrote it. Storkey is a philosopher, sociologist, theologian and BBC broadcaster who has taught in several of the most prestigious universities in England. She has been a member of the General Synod of the Church of England since 1987. She succeeded John Stott as the executive director of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity in 1991. In 1997 she was appointed president of Tearfund, a UK-based evangelical aid and relief organization.

After an introductory chapter, the following eight chapters deal with specific forms of violence against women in the chronological order that they are most likely to occur in a woman's life: abortion of female fetuses and infanticide, genital mutilation, early enforced marriage, honor killing, domestic violence, trafficking and prostitution, rape, and the abuse of women in war.

Then follow four chapters exploring the various explanations that have been given for these inexcusable realities. First, Storkey gives a good hearing to evolutionary biology as the root cause, but in the end finds it wanting. It fails to acknowledge that human beings are free agents who can decide how they behave. Second, patriarchy, the belief that men should rule over women, is considered as the cause. She agrees this is a pernicious idea but again concludes that, as free moral agents, human beings are not bound to perpetuate patriarchy and its abuses. Third, two chapters consider the argument that religion is to blame. The first chapter is on religion in general and Islam in particular as the cause, and the second is specifically on Christianity. She concedes that most religions are conservative and teach the subordination of women, although often at the same time they speak of the worth and dignity of women. Nevertheless she points out that, in today's world, most religions include voices advocating for freedoms for women. Islam is no exception; there are indeed Muslim feminists. This is for them a hard path to take because the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (the record of the life, teachings, and deeds of Muhammad) explicitly give men authority over women and allow polygamy. What is more, they can be read to give permission to men to beat their wives, to condone rape in certain circumstances, to permit the marriage of prepubescent girls, and to encourage honor killings.

Dr. Storkey says that, as an evangelical Christian, she found the chapter on Christianity the hardest to write. She has to acknowledge that across the ages Christian theologians have taught the superiority of men and the inferiority of women and have often spoken in misogynistic ways. Even today, many evangelicals dogmatically assert that the Bible teaches the permanent subordination of

women, usually in euphemistic and obfuscating terminology. Nevertheless, Storkey points out, Christianity has never endorsed any of the appalling abuses of women she speaks about in her book, and the voices for change are growing louder. A pressing issue for those many evangelicals who teach the subordination of women, she says, is domestic violence. Telling men that the Bible gives them leadership in the home encourages and legitimates controlling and abusive behavior in needy and insecure men. When women find themselves in this situation, they seldom find support when they turn to a male pastor. Holding to the belief that the man is the head of the home, some pastors place women in dangerous circumstances.

What I found most staggering in Storkey's book was the extent of the abuse against women. One in three women in the world may suffer abuse or violence in their lifetime. Possibly two million female fetuses are aborted a year; one hundred and forty million women have been genitally mutilated; over twenty million people are trafficked each year; one hundred and forty million girls have been forced into marriage in adolescence; one in four women in Western countries will experience domestic violence, and the figures are much higher in other parts of the world. It is estimated that thirty million women were raped in 2012. In the US one in five women will be raped in her lifetime. Honor killing of women is more common than one might expect, especially on the Indian sub-continent and in Middle Eastern Islamic countries, but dependable numeric estimates are elusive. An estimated ten thousand honor killings take place annually in Pakistan alone. These figures are amazing and awful. How can women be so appallingly treated, we cry out!

The endemic violence and injustices perpetuated against women are hard to believe, but even harder to accept is that all too often women themselves are perpetrators of this violence. For example, it is almost always women who mutilate young girls, and women are often involved in trafficking and running brothels and often complicit in honor killings. The involvement of women in these things is an example of how, in all entrenched social hierarchies, invariably sanctioned by religion, the oppressed internalize and own their unworthiness and subordinate status.

This book is a must read. Buy a copy and pass it on. Better still, buy several copies and give them away. This is a story we Christians need to hear.

**KEVIN GILES**, an Australian, has served as an Anglican parish minister for over forty years. He has been publishing on the substantial equality of the sexes since 1975 and is a foundation member of CBE International. He holds a doctorate in NT studies and has published books on the church, church health, ministry in the apostolic age, the book of Acts, gender equality, and the Trinity, besides numerous scholarly and popular articles.



# Book Review: *Man Enough: How Jesus Redefines Manhood*

By Nate Pyle (Zondervan, 2015)

REVIEWED BY TAYLOR JAMES MURRAY

Nate Pyle is a pastor in Fishers, Indiana. His recent book, *Man Enough*, tackles the question of biblical gender roles from a fresh perspective. His offering is the latest in the recent influx of gender studies in the “spiritual memoir” genre. While authors like Rachel Held Evans (*A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, 2012) or Sarah Bessey (*Jesus Feminist*, 2013) have provided important insights on the ongoing complementarian versus egalitarian debate, they have commented largely on how this debate has affected women. This focus is, of course, understandable, given the alarming ways the church has mistreated women for hundreds of years; however, this is only half of the discussion. Pyle focuses on the often-ignored role of men and asks the question, “What makes a man?” Pyle’s study answers this question by demonstrating that Christ’s teaching and example set men (and women) free from the traditional stereotypes.

Pyle’s study hinges on the idea that cultural context informs how one defines “manhood.” Simply put, according to one popular version of society, men should enjoy cars and sports, and they should be warriors, pumping with testosterone. Those who do not fit this mold, or who are unable to participate, are considered “less than.” Additionally, within this definition of manhood is the prerequisite that men must suppress their emotions. Anything that one might construe as weakness is disallowed, lest one’s contemporaries label him “a girl” (32ff.).

According to Pyle, the church has largely endorsed these stereotypes with little to no pushback. Undoubtedly, this cultural depiction of manhood fits some of the men in today’s churches, but it does not fit every man. For some who already feel ostracized, these are impossible standards. This raises a number of important questions: What if the husband is not the primary breadwinner in the family? Do stay-at-home dads fail as men? Pyle argues that one’s definition of manhood should not rest on such standards, rather on one’s identity in Christ. Those who are adopted as children of God should feel free from the pressure to prove that they are “real men”—Christ frees believers from these unattainable standards (42–43; cf. Gal 3:28).

In his assessment of the church, Pyle addresses major biblical passages that deal with purported gender roles. He observes that the qualifications found in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 should be benchmarks for all believers—not simply men. Moreover, he notes that 1 Tim 5:8, where believers are called to “provide” for their families, is not ascribed to men specifically, but to “anyone,” meaning man or woman. He concludes his exegesis with this important thought: “Maybe the separation of spheres between men and women and their role in home and society are [sic] marked more by cultural ideals than biblical commands” (59).

Pyle pivots to a different authority: the example of Jesus Christ. If one defines masculinity through Jesus’s example, it creates an atmosphere that permits men to rest when they feel weary, and allows them to feel more in-tune with their emotions.

This, according to Pyle, does not make one any less of a man, but makes one “fully human.” As Pyle concludes, “In Christ, we do not see the distinctions between men and women emphasized; rather, gender takes second place to imitating Christ” (156). What makes one “man enough” is not culturally stipulated; rather, it is based on how one follows Jesus’s example.

Pyle reveals a church subculture that holds men hostage to an impossible standard. In the same breath that Christians observe that not all women are homemakers, one needs also to admit that not all men are rugged breadwinners. While one would not wish to diminish the plight that women have suffered at the hand of the church, Pyle does present an important perspective that needs to be taken into account.

Pyle’s most pertinent observations revolve around the obligation for men to act “manly.” As mentioned above, in this cultural (and perhaps artificial) definition, men are silently encouraged to suppress their emotions and adopt a kind of neo-stoicism. Unfortunately, many conservative evangelicals often look to the Jesus in the temple with the whip at the expense of the Jesus who weeps (70). Accordingly, their perspective suggests that men must be strong—even when there are times when they are unable to be strong. Yet, if Christians subscribe to this definition of masculinity, they must reject the lyrics they are taught to sing from infancy: “We are weak, but he is strong.” Men should be allowed to admit that they are weak, or that they cannot carry the load by themselves.

Pyle has produced a fine study that necessitates only a few criticisms. There is an uneven balance between personal anecdotes and interaction with the Bible—the latter of which feels secondary in a number of places. Similarly, this study could have benefitted from a more thorough look into church history: Pyle rarely mentions important historical figures who could have buttressed his thesis. With these minor criticisms in mind, as a popular rather than academic study, this book certainly accomplishes its goal. It presents an important perspective that is frequently ignored within the church today.

This volume—like those of Evans and Bessey before it—is attractive for a variety of reasons: its thought-provoking subject matter is matched with a perfect cocktail of wit and honesty. There is little doubt that the church would benefit were it seriously to consider Pyle’s study.



**TAYLOR JAMES MURRAY**, a graduate of Crandall University and Tyndale Seminary, is currently studying at the Acadia Divinity College in Nova Scotia, Canada. He is a recent contributor to *The Encyclopedia of Canadian Religion* (forthcoming).

# Christians for Biblical Equality

*Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) is a nonprofit organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28.*

## Mission Statement

CBE exists to promote biblical justice and community by educating Christians that the Bible calls women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership in the home, church, and world.

## Statement of Faith

- *We believe* in one God, creator and sustainer of the universe, eternally existing as three persons in equal power and glory.
- *We believe* in the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- *We believe* that eternal salvation and restored relationships are only 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* the Holy Spirit equips us for service and sanctifies us from sin.
- *We believe* the Bible is the inspired word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.
- *We believe* that women and men are equally created in God's image and given equal authority and stewardship of God's creation.
- *We believe* that men and women are equally responsible for and distorted by sin, resulting in shattered relationships with God, self, and others.

## Core Values

- Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.
- Patriarchy (male dominance) is not a biblical ideal but a result of sin.
- Patriarchy is an abuse of power, taking from females what God has given them: their dignity, and freedom, their leadership, and often their very lives.
- While the Bible reflects patriarchal culture, the Bible does not teach patriarchy in human relationships.
- Christ's redemptive work frees all people from patriarchy, calling women and men to share authority equally in service and leadership.

- God's design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a man and a woman, celibate singleness and mutual submission in Christian community.
- The unrestricted use of women's gifts is integral to the work of the Holy Spirit and essential for the advancement of the gospel in the world.
- Followers of Christ are to oppose injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that marginalize and abuse females and males.

## Envisioned Future

CBE 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.

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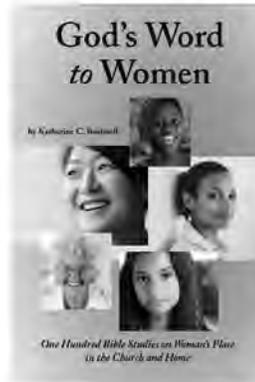


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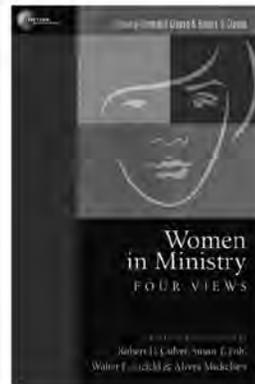
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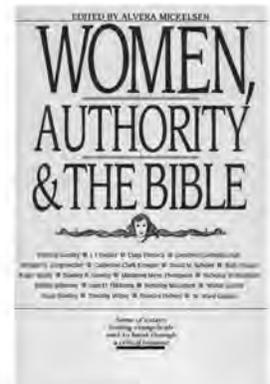
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