



WHO WAS THE "CHOSEN LADY" OF II JOHN?

Lamar Wadsworth

When we read the letters that make up the greater part of our New Testament, we are reading someone else's mail. Suppose that you found a box of letters dating from the 1890's in the attic of the old family home. These letters might mention the names of many people well-known to both the writer and the recipient but unknown to you. Perhaps your 90-year-old aunt could tell you about some of them, but you never would be able to identify some of the people mentioned in those old letters.

Like letters from the attic of the old family home, our New Testament letters mention many people of whom we know little or nothing. Some were prominent leaders in the Christian communities of the First Century AD. For example, Romans 16 lists a number of leaders well-known to the early church but unknown to us—including two otherwise-unknown apostles, a man named Andronicus and a woman named Junia. Romans 16:7, the only place they are mentioned, is the kind of reference that makes us wish we knew more. They are on my growing list of people to look up when I get to heaven!

Those century-old letters from the attic might also mention "your dear cousin," "the pastor," "our neighbors across the road," or some other designation instead of a name. The original recipient knew to whom the writer was referring, but you have no idea. Similarly with various references to people in the New Testament: In Acts 16, we read of the jailer at Philippi who was converted. He may well have been alive when Acts was written. Certainly, there were people still living in Philippi who knew him by name, but Luke does not tell us that name. Then, in Romans 16, Paul sends greeting to Rufus and his mother. Paul does not mention her name; he simply refers to her as Rufus' mother. She and her son were well-known to the church in Rome, but they are obscure figures for us. We know little

about Rufus and less about his mother, not even her name.

In II John, most scholars agree from biblical evidence that "the elder" was the apostle John. The original recipients knew who "the elder" was, and they all knew who the "chosen lady" was—but we do not know who she was. However, I believe we can know some things about her if we continue to examine the biblical evidence.

THE MEANING OF KURIA

The word translated "Lady" occurs nowhere in the New Testament outside of II John. The word is *kuria*, the feminine form of *kurios*, a common New Testament word translated "Lord" or "master." The masculine form *kurios* is used to denote the head of a household or the master of a slave. Paul uses it in that sense in Ephesians 6. In Galatians 4:1, Paul uses *kurios* to speak of someone who is not under the authority of a guardian or trustee. Ultimately, in the New Testament, "the Lord" functions as the equivalent of the Hebrew word *Adoniah*, as a designation for Jesus Christ. The basic meaning of the word is "authority" or "master." It is very unlikely that *kuria* (feminine form) is a proper name. In the context of II John, the word probably denotes a woman who was in a place of authority or leadership. Perhaps she was the wife or daughter of a Roman official (compare Philippians 4:22 where Paul sends greetings from the saints who are of Caesar's household). The respectful title *kuria* indicates, at the very least, the high regard accorded her by John and the Christian community. This usage in II John may suggest that the title *kuria* was used the same way the term "Mother" is used in African-American churches today, as a title of respect for a godly older woman whose good influence extends far beyond her immediate family. However, the most reasonable conclusion from the limited data in II John is that she was a prominent leader in the Christian church.

The word translated “chosen” is a common New Testament word—our English word “elect” comes from it. Paul used the same word in Romans 16 to describe Rufus as a “choice man in the Lord.” Jesus used this word when he said, “Many are called but few are chosen.” In Colossians 3:12, this word is used to describe believers as “those who have been chosen by God.” It can be used in the sense of “respected” or “honorable.” Here in II John, the word probably should be taken in the sense of “elect” or “chosen.” Certainly, she was chosen in the Ephesians 1 sense of being “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,” but she was also chosen in the sense of having been either appointed by the apostle John or chosen by the church to a place of leadership. Aida Besançon Spencer, in her book *Beyond the Curse*, cites Clement of Alexandria in the second century AD who clearly used the word to denote persons ordained to places of public ministry.¹

John described the chosen lady as one who was known and loved by all who know the truth. “Truth,” as the term is used in the Johannine letters, is another name for Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit. This is clear from II John 2, which speaks of *the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever*, an obvious allusion to the promises of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit as recorded in John 14. In John 14:17, the Spirit is called the *Spirit of Truth*. In John’s theology, to know the truth is to know Jesus and to know Jesus is to know the truth. The chosen lady was well-known in the Christian community, and anyone who loved the Lord could not help but love her. The evidence strongly indicated she was at least a *diakonos*, a deacon like Phoebe in Romans 16—one who gave pastoral leadership to a house church, if not an *episcopos*, an overseer—one who had the oversight of a number of house churches. In the New Testament, the word translated “pastor” is *poimen*. In a non-technical context, it would be translated “shepherd.” (The translation “pastor” is simply the substitution of a Latin word for a Greek word.) While we do not have a flow chart showing the organizational structure of first century churches (which probably varied somewhat depending on the place and whether the church was predominately Jewish or Gentile), we should probably take “pastor/shepherd” as an umbrella term including both overseers and deacons. This is supported by I Timothy 3:13, which implies that overseers were chosen from among those who had served well as deacons.

“We may be sure that her ministry role was defined not by her gender but by her spiritual gifts, the call of God upon her life, the divinely implanted desires of her heart, the needs she faced, and the opportunities she had.”

Most of the published commentaries on John’s letters interpret the chosen lady of II John as a metaphor for a church rather than as a literal woman. In my time as a student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, Dr. Dale Moody often exhorted us to “Remember that the Bible often sheds considerable light on the commentaries!” Yet all too often commentators follow the interpretations of previous commentators, like sheep following the sheep in front of them right over a cliff. The views presented by one influential commentator are often unquestioningly adopted by succeeding commentaries.

Barker, Brooke, Bruce, Marshall, McDowell, Smalley, Stott, and Westcott are representative of many who view the chosen lady as a metaphor for a church, and her children as members of the church. I do not know which long-ago commentator was the first sheep over the cliff with that interpretation, but many others have followed! Even Gail R. O’Day, commenting on the Johannine letters in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, uncritically assumes that the chosen lady and her chosen sister (II John 13) should be taken as metaphors for churches. O’Day offers no reasons for her position, she simply asserts that it is so!²

The arguments in favor of interpreting the lady as a metaphor for a church are basically these: First, it is suggested that in a time when the Christian movement had fallen into disfavor with Rome, the metaphorical “chosen lady” would have made the letter appear to be an innocent personal note if it had fallen into hostile hands before reaching its destination. This argument is unconvincing. There was no public mail service, so John would have entrusted this letter to someone he knew who was going to the city where the recipients were located. The bearer may have been an emissary of John’s church or the chosen lady’s church.

Some also argue that the use of “chosen lady” instead of a personal name may just as well indicate John’s concern for the safety of an individual as his concern for the safety of a church. Had the letter fallen into hostile hands, they would have had no idea who the chosen lady was, regardless of whether the chosen lady was an individual or a church. But if John was so concerned about protecting the identity of the recipient(s), then why is Gaius clearly identified as the addressee of III John? It seems more rea-

sonable to think that the term “chosen lady” served to identify this woman as well as her actual name, in the same way that a Cyprian Levite name Joseph became better known to the apostles and to us as Barnabas (“Son of Encouragement”, Acts 4:36).

Secondly, commentators point out that most of the pronouns referring to the recipients of the letter are plural. Since the letter is addressed to “a” (no article in the Greek text) chosen lady *and her children*, this poses no difficulty. Noting that the pronouns translated “your” in verse 4 and “you” in verse 5 are singular, we deduce that John was writing primarily to the lady, but what he wrote was meant to be shared with the church that she led. Have we not all received and written personal letters that were addressed primarily to one member of the household but meant to be shared with the whole family? While English does not distinguish between you (singular) and you (plural)—except in my native deep South where we have the singular “you,” the plural “y’all,” and the emphatic plural “all of y’all”—if we examine personal letters we have written and received, we would find places where the writer was addressing only the individual recipient and also places where the writer was addressing the whole family. Drifting back and forth between you (singular) and you (plural) is typical of informal personal correspondence.

A third argument for taking the chosen lady as a metaphor for a church is that Israel and the church are frequently portrayed with feminine metaphors. Israel is portrayed as a woman—the sometimes unfaithful wife of Yahweh. Scripture portrays Jerusalem as the mother of Israel, an image that is reflected in Galatians and Revelation. We have the New Testament image of the church as the bride of Christ. A parallel to the “chosen lady” designation occurs in I Peter 5:13, “*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son Mark.*” This is the strongest argument in favor of the metaphorical view, but it is not strong enough to prove the case.

No one denies that Scripture often uses feminine metaphors for Israel and the church, but that does not necessarily mean that the woman of II John should be interpreted metaphorically. Scripture is also full of references to literal women, and the literal women greatly outnumber the metaphorical ones! Metaphors abound in Scripture, but common sense and context usually tell us if the writer is speaking metaphorically. The Babylonian empire was long gone by the time I Peter was written. When the Christian movement faced persecution by the Romans, we know that “Babylon” became a

Christian code name for Rome. It was a way of expressing the hope that the same God who brought down the oppressive power of Babylon long ago would also bring down the oppressive power of Rome. Revelation consistently uses the “Babylon” metaphor for Rome. We have other examples to show that early Christians often referred to Rome as “Babylon” Thus, we can safely conclude that “Babylon” means Rome in I Peter 5:13. However, it is a great leap of logic to say that we must take the woman to be a metaphor. Nothing in I Peter compels us to take the woman who is “in Babylon” as anything other than a real woman. The fact that she is paired with Mark in I Peter 5:13 certainly indicates she was as much a literal person as he was. There is no reason not to take the woman “who is in Babylon” to be an actual woman, a leader or prominent member of the church at Rome who was well-known to the recipients of I Peter. A. T. Robertson, citing the reference in I Corinthians 9:5 to Peter’s wife who traveled with him, made the plausible suggestion that the woman “in Babylon” may have been Peter’s wife.³ Robertson tends

to interpret the text literally unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise. Significantly, he takes both the woman “in Babylon” and the chosen lady of II John to be actual women.

Stephen Smalley contends that the Elder’s declaration of love for the lady and her children, along with his assertion that this love is shared by all who know the truth, should be taken as indications that the chosen lady should be understood metaphorically.⁴ But why? The wording differs little from the address of III John “*to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*” Smalley notes nothing unusual about John’s description of Gaius as one “*whom I love in the truth.*” He

views it as a rather conventional greeting in his comments on III John 1,⁵ which is precisely what it is. So why should the greeting in II John be interpreted differently? Smalley does not suggest that we take “the beloved Gaius” as a metaphor for a church!

John was expressing his love for the chosen lady as a colleague in ministry. He loved her in the same way and for the same reason he loved Gaius. Paul clearly teaches us in I Timothy 5:1-2 that men and women can work together as colleagues in ministry without any hint of impropriety. John enjoyed a collegial relationship with both Gaius and the chosen lady, based upon a shared commitment to Jesus Christ and the truth that is in him. “In truth,” as the expression is used in II and III John, is precisely equivalent to the Pauline expressions “in Christ” and “in the Lord.” Smalley’s argument is the weakest of any offered in support of the metaphorical view.

“That is all we know about her, but that is enough to uphold her as a worthy model for a church leader and as a biblical example of a Christian woman who engaged in public ministry that included teaching and preaching the word of God.”

OBJECTIONS TO THE METAPHORICAL VIEW

I see at least seven reasons supporting the position that the “chosen lady” should be understood as a designation for an actual woman who was a leader in the church, rather than as a metaphor for the church.

1. *As a general letter to a church, II John is redundant.* I believe this is the strongest objection to the metaphorical view. Why would John write this letter to a church? Everything in II John is found in fuller form in I John. The doctrinal content is so brief that it seems to assume the reader’s familiarity with I John. It makes no sense for John to have written this letter to a church that had already read I John. However, it does make great sense for John to write “something to the church” (III John 9, most likely a reference to the letter we know as I John) and then to send along at the same time or shortly thereafter two personal notes (II and III John) to encourage embattled church leaders who were guiding the church through the stormy waters of doctrinal confusion.

2. *Nothing in the text of II John requires us to substitute a symbolic meaning for the plain literal meaning of John’s words.* We have no known example in the New Testament or in early Christian literature of the term *kuria* being used in a clearly metaphorical sense. A metaphor does not work unless others understand the sense in which it is used. One who insists that the lady is a metaphor must demonstrate that the metaphor would have been understood by the original readers. No evidence suggests that the recipients of II John would have understood the term metaphorically. We do not know the identity of the “beloved comrade” Paul addresses in Philippians 4:3, but no one suggests that he is a metaphor for a church! There is no more reason to make the “chosen lady” into a church than there is to make the “beloved comrade” into a church. Greek scholar Henry Dana used to prescribe a good rule to his students: “When the plain sense of the text makes common sense, seek no other sense.”

3. *There is clear evidence within the New Testament and mounting evidence from other sources that women served alongside men in prominent places of leadership in the early church.* Paul calls Euodia and Syntyche his “fellow-workers”—the same term he elsewhere applies to Timothy—and says that they “shared his struggle in the Gospel.” Karen Jo Torjesen cites evidence that we have from the post-apostolic age: A Mosaic in the Basilica of Sts. Prudentiana and Praexedis in Rome honors four women, one of whom is identified as Theodora Episcopa—*Episcopa* is the feminine form of *episkopos*, the word translated “bishop” or “overseer.” Although the hands of ancient misogynists tried to scratch

out the feminine endings on “Theodora” and “Episcopa,” the old inscription remains a legible witness to one who was both a woman and a bishop. In addition, a third- or fourth-century inscription on the Greek island of Thera marks the grave of another woman, Epictus Presbutis, the elder Epictus.⁶

4. *To take the “chosen lady” as a symbolic name for a church, we would have to ignore vv. 9-11 of II John.* John tells the chosen lady and her children to judge between true and false doctrine and to exclude those who try to bring in false teaching. John certainly wanted the whole church to practice discernment, but the church probably included some new Christians who did not know enough to discern between true and false teaching. They had a duty to learn, but somebody had to teach them. That responsibility rested most heavily upon the shoulders of one person, the chosen lady to whom this letter was written. If the church met in her home, she would have been the one to say who was or was not welcome there. The church’s responsibility to exclude false teachers was primarily her personal responsibility. Everybody’s responsibility ends up being nobody’s responsibility.

5. *In I and III John, we have good precedent for a church leader addressing those in his care as his children.* Other examples abound in early Christian writings. Of course, some of the children of the elect lady may have been her natural children. Burdick takes this view.⁷ When my wife and I adopted our daughters, somebody gave us a list of definitions for adoptive families—“natural children” are defined as “children who were not created in a laboratory by a mad (or even slightly unhappy) scientist.” Our girls are our “natural children.” But in addition, some of the elect lady’s children probably were her spiritual offspring, people she had personally led to faith in Jesus Christ. (My grandmother Bailey had a bunch of those! Her spiritual offspring greatly outnumbered her nine biological offspring.) Some of the elect lady’s children may have been her sons and daughters and/or people she had personally led to the Lord. As she led in the church, all these people were in her care.

The identity of the “children” in I John and III John is obvious. Why would the term be used differently in II John? John called those whom he led his children. It makes sense that he would refer to those led by his colleagues (the chosen lady and her chosen sister) as their children.

6. *A church would have to be called either “chosen lady” or “children” not both.* Spencer raises this objection. She argues that it is inconsistent with John’s use of terminology for both terms to refer to a church.⁸ John would not have used competing metaphors in a letter that is only half a page long!

7. *The brevity of the letter argues against it being primarily a letter to a church.* All of the existing letters to churches are much longer. Jude, the shortest letter that was clearly written to a church, is twice the length of II or III John. II John is short enough to fit on one side of a sheet of parchment—typical of the length of many Greek personal letters that exist from the New Testament period. While I would not build my whole case upon the brevity of the letter, that along with the other factors considered strengthens the case for viewing II John as a personal letter from one minister of the Gospel to another.

MORE THAN A GRACIOUS HOSTESS

In 1826, the English Methodist commentator Adam Clarke wrote, *“I am satisfied that no metaphor is here intended; that the epistle was sent to some eminent Christian matron, not far from Ephesus, who was probably a deaconess of the church, who, it is likely had a church at her house, or at whose house the apostles and travelling evangelists preached, and were entertained.”*⁹ Clarke was right as far as he went—I would only add that the chosen lady’s ministry probably went beyond being a gracious hostess, although it surely included that. Like Mary the mother of Jesus (last seen preaching in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost), Philip’s four daughters, Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary of Rome, the apostle Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Euodia, Syntyche, Nympha, Claudia, Apphia, and the ministering women of I Timothy 3:11, the chosen lady was a minister of the Gospel in the fullest sense of the term, one of many women who were able ministers of the Gospel in New Testament times.

The chosen lady may have been a widow. The term *kuria*, which implies that she was the head of a household, and the absence of any reference to her husband suggest that she was widowed.

It is also possible that she was single (although in the first century AD it is less likely that a single woman would have been the head of a household). Philip’s four daughters, who were single women, were ministers of the Gospel in New Testament times. Luke mentions them in Acts 21:4, not because it was remarkable for a young single woman to be a preacher, but because it was remarkable for there to be four of them in one family.

The chosen lady, like Lydia in Acts 16, probably worked hard in some cottage industry. Before the Industrial Revolution, nearly all industry was cottage industry and nearly all women’s work included much more than caring for children and keeping house.

She was probably a parent. Then, as now, most women give birth to children at some time in their lives. All of her children may have been grown, giving her more time and energy to devote to public ministry than she had when her

children were younger. We may presume that she had been devoted to her husband and children. That is one of the requirements for the ministering women in I Timothy 3:11, that they be *faithful in all things*. That includes faithfulness in marriage and family responsibilities.

The chosen lady may have been a leader in the church for many years, balancing her public ministry with work, home, marriage, and parenting. Perhaps God did not call her to a place of public ministry until later in life. Her public ministry may have been a long-deferred desire of her heart. We do not know, but we may be sure that she struggled to balance public ministry with many other responsibilities, just as female and male ministers do today. We may be sure that her ministry role was defined not by her gender but by her spiritual gifts, the call of God upon her life, the divinely implanted desires of her heart, the needs she faced, and the opportunities she had.

A WOMAN IN PUBLIC MINISTRY

Here in this little letter is all the Bible tells us about the chosen lady: John had the highest regard for her as a colleague in ministry. She was well-known among the churches to which I John was written. She was a gracious and loving person. She was so full of the Spirit of Christ that anyone who loved him would have to love her. She knew the difference between sound teaching and hogwash, and she was able to teach others the difference. Most people who were products of her ministry kept on walking in truth. That is all we know about her, but that is enough to uphold her as a worthy model for a church leader and as a biblical example of a Christian woman who engaged in public ministry that included teaching and preaching the word of God.

1 Spencer, Aida Besançon, *Beyond the Curse*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, p. 111.

2 O’day, Gail R., “1, 2, and 3 John” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Carol A. Newsome and Sharon R. Ringe. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, p. 375.

3 Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932. Volume VI, p. 249.

4 Smalley, Steven S. “1, 2, and 3 John” in *The Word Biblical Commentary*, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin. Volume 51, p. 319.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 344.

6 Torjeson, Karen Jo, *When Women Were Priests*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993, pp. 9-10.

7 Burdick, Donald W., *The Letters of John the Apostle*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.

8 Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

9 Clarke, Adam, *Clark’s Commentary*. Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, n.d. Volume VI, p. 936.

CBEers: WHO ARE WE?

Kaye Cook

"...Orthodoxy has yet to take its women seriously with respect to their status in society in general and their standing in the Church in particular. That woman is inferior to man is an established doctrine in most Fundamentalist and Evangelist churches... Women's Liberation (sic) is here to stay, and once again Orthodoxy is dragging its feet."

Richard Quebedeaux (The Young Evangelicals, 1974, p. 112)

College students are as uninformed as the rest of the church. When my students hear I am a biblical feminist, they are sometimes surprised to find out that I am married. Some assume that I support abortion on demand; others assume that I support the civil rights of homosexuals. These minds are not "blank slates," ready to be written upon. They have been taught these assumptions in their churches and families!

A survey of the evangelical literature suggests that many evangelicals share their biases. Too often, those who write about biblical feminists stereotype Christian feminists as extremists. They may describe biblical feminists, for example, as undermining the family, believing in androgyny, supporting socialism, and arguing that women's ordination and inclusive language are a matter of "human rights" rather than a gift of faith (Bloesch, 1984).¹

Indeed, it takes a careful survey of the evangelical literature to find these references. Many evangelicals simply omit any reference to biblical feminists, as if we have had little impact upon the history of the church. For a thoughtful comment on our invisibility, see Mary Stewart van Leeuwen's review of Mark Noll's The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind (printed in Priscilla Papers, Summer 1995.) She incisively titles her review "The Scandal of the (Male) Evangelical Mind." Perhaps by ignoring our contributions, writers like Noll hope to trivialize the issues that we—before God—think are important.

HOW WE DESCRIBE OURSELVES

Although various authors have written *about* biblical feminists, few have asked us directly what we believe. To find out what evangelical feminists believe, I developed a 3-page, single-space survey that was distributed at the 1995 CBE conference at Gordon College. Half (120) of the approximately 250 people who came to the conference completed the survey. A great big thanks to all of you who shared your ideas!

In the paragraphs that follow, I will summarize the results of this survey. I covet your feedback. What surprises you here? What interests you? Where do you "fit" in the range of feminist belief? Send your comments to Dr. Kaye

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I use the terms "biblical feminist" and "evangelical feminist" interchangeably, as does Groothuis (1994). Some people discriminate between these terms (see, e.g., Nash, 1993), defining biblical feminist (he uses the term "biblical equalitarian") as those with a high view of Scripture and evangelical feminists as those with a more critical view of Scripture (as shown by Paul Jewett's Man as Male and Female).

Quite a few people did not answer certain questions. For example, five people omitted their gender; six, whether they were CBE members; 11, their beliefs on inerrancy; and 31, their satisfaction with their church. Not knowing why people chose not to answer certain questions and seeing no pattern to the incomplete responses, I summarized all information as if every person answered every question.

WHO ARE WE?

Almost all (92.2%) of the 120 respondents were CBE members. Why not the other 10 respondents? The survey doesn't tell us. I wish I had asked. In any case, for ease of reporting and interpreting the results, I will act as if all those who answered the survey were CBE members.

Women completed 95% of the surveys. Most of the respondents (87.5%) were white Anglo-Saxon but fifteen (12.5%) were of other backgrounds: four were African Americans, three were Asian-Americans, two were Canadian, two were European, one was Hispanic-American, one was Asian, one was Australian, and one was European-Native American.

Most (80.5%) but not all of the sample considered themselves to be feminists. An additional 5% said, "I'm not a feminist but..." and went on to say that they believe in egalitarianism. These people may be aware of the distinction Nash (1993) draws between "biblical equalitarian" and "evangelical feminist." Or they may be discriminating between where they agree with secular feminism (i.e., male-female equality) and where they disagree (presumably most of the rest!).

Not surprisingly for an evangelical organization, 85% consider themselves evangelical Protestants. An additional 8% are Roman Catholic, 3% consider themselves liberal Protestant, and 2% are fundamentalist Protestant. When

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asked whether they are charismatic, a surprising 30% answered yes. It is not clear, however, whether they define charismatic as speaking in tongues or as believing in the gifts of the Spirit. In any case, their answer indicates a willingness to allow God to work in their daily lives.

WHAT CHARACTERIZES US?

We are most often (50%) middle adults between the ages of 31 and 45 but our age span is wide! 15% are between the ages of 18 and 30; 20%, between the ages of 40 and 60; and 15%, between the ages of 60 and 75. Thus CBEers cover the spectrum: wiser statespeople and young enthusiasts, survivors of the sixties and ethically committed members of the badly named "X" generation. Perhaps, rather than age, we share in common a willingness to take a stand on biblical principles, to be committed to beliefs even when those beliefs define us as individuals within a larger community.

Two thirds of CBEers are married (66%), most of these in their first marriage (94%). Of the remaining one-third, 24% are single and 11% are divorced or widowed.

Married CBEers struggle with the issues of egalitarianism at every stage in the marriage cycle: some of us (14%) have been married less than five years; 32%, less than 12 years; and 6% of us have been married at least 40 years! We have a lot to learn from each other!

Most married CBEers (78%) are parents, complicating the struggles of egalitarianism. 30% of families have one child; 34%, two children; and 36% have 3 or more children. We are more likely to have children, and have more children, than the average American family. The 1994 Statistical Abstract of the United States, published by the US Census Bureau, suggest that, on average in the United States, 46% of married couples have children. Of these, 18% have one child; 19%, two children; and 10%, three or more.

CBEers are, on the average, strikingly well educated. 38% have bachelor's degrees; 48%, master's degrees; and 11%, Ph.Ds. The national Census Bureau, in comparison, documents that, on the average, 14% of women in our country have a bachelor's degree and 6%, an advanced degree.

Although family income varies tremendously among CBE members, median income is high, in the \$36,000-50,000 range (see Table A). According to the 1994 Census Bureau, on the average, 13% of men make above \$50,000 and 3% of women make above \$50,000. In comparison, 40% of our sample makes above \$50,000.

Most of us work outside the home, 50% full-time and 24% part-time, somewhat higher than the national statistics. (According to Waldrop [1994], 58% of women and 76% of men work outside the home.) Median number of hours worked is 40 hours, but some (10%) work 10 hours or less and many (30%) work over 40 hours a week.

Almost one-quarter of us are not currently receiving a paycheck. Ten percent are retired; 6% are students; and 9% are homemakers. An additional 2% of us are job-hunting.

POLITICS

Although we have as many Republicans as the larger population, fewer of us are Democrats and more of us are Independents. That is, 34% of us consider ourselves Democrats; 38%, Republicans; 24%, Independents whereas, in the United States as a whole, 50% consider themselves Democrats, 37% Republicans, and 12% Independents (Bureau of the Census, 1994).

Ideologically, most of us consider ourselves political moderates, although, if not moderates, more of us describe ourselves as conservative than liberal. 13% rated themselves liberal politically; 25%, conservative; 56% moderate; and 4% socialist.

BELIEFS ABOUT THE BIBLE

The survey included four statements developed by James Davison Hunter (1987) to measure views about the Bible: (1) The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its statements and teachings, and is to be taken literally, word for word. (2) The Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its teachings, but is not always to be taken literally in its statements concerning matters of science, history, etc. (3) The Bible becomes the Word of God for a person when he or she reads it in faith. (4) The Bible is an ancient book of legend/history/moral precepts recorded by men. Hunter asked that respondents choose the statement with which they most agreed; in the current survey, however, respondents reacted to each statement. Thus, one can agree with more than one statement. CBE members felt this method was confusing, and the survey will be modified in the future to reflect this perspective.

CBE members believe in the inerrancy of Scripture. The first of Hunter's statements describes a strict inerrancy position while Kellstedt (1989) has described those agreeing with Hunter's second statement as "inerrantists but not literalists" (p. 13). 83% of the respondents agree with either statement 1 or statement 2 or both.

Some take a stricter definition of inerrancy than others. One-third (31%) take a strict view of inerrancy, agreeing that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, not mistaken in its teaching, while 40% explicitly disagreed with this statement. Two-thirds (65%) agree with a less strict inerrancy view, believing that the Bible is the inspired word of God, not mistaken in its teachings, but not always to be taken literally in its statements concerning, for example, matters of science and history. Sixteen percent explicitly disagreed with this statement. Thus, more CBEers are comfortable with the "inerrantist but not literalist" position.

BELIEFS ABOUT MARRIAGE

CBEers are egalitarians, not hierarchicalists. They (70%) feel that it does not matter whether it is the husband or the

wife assuming more leadership for the spiritual growth of the family. Further, they (91%) disagree that the father in a two-parent household is the parent primarily responsible for the spiritual well-being of the family.

Most (60%) disagree that the family should have one spiritual head, whether it be the husband or wife. Presumably, they believe instead that God is the spiritual head of the family and that the family needs no human head.

CBEers are quite family oriented. When asked whether husbands or wives should put home and family ahead of their career, CBEers felt husbands should put home and family ahead of career (66%) just as wives should (61%).

Further, many of us give priority to the family, particularly when there are preschool children present in the home. Many of us believe that one spouse should stay home full-time to take care of preschool children (66%). If both parents need to work, we also believe (68%) that it is better if one spouse (husband or wife) does not work a full-time job.

Although we may be more ambivalent about egalitarianism in parenting, we tend toward egalitarian beliefs in parenting as well as in marriage. Half of the CBE members polled think that it is all right for a woman to refuse to have children even against the desires of her husband (56%). Half of us (52%) also do not feel that most women are necessarily better suited emotionally for child-rearing than are most men.

Psychological literature argues that “working” mothers can establish as warm and secure a relationship with their children as mothers who don’t work (see, e.g., the classic article by Hoffman, 1984) and most CBEers agree. Three-fourths of CBEers (78%) feel that a working mother can establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work outside the home.

BELIEFS ABOUT THE CHURCH

Almost all (95%) of CBEers are *very* involved in a church, with 98% attending weekly. Many of us are in leadership roles: 86% of CBEers, or their spouse, are involved in leadership. More than half (53%) are satisfied (or extremely satisfied) with their current leadership. In contrast, one in five (19%), a sizable percentage, is not at all satisfied with their current role.

A review of Table 2 suggests that most CBEers support an egalitarian model for marriage,² encourage the use of inclusive language for men and women,³ and believe in the ordination of women and in women’s leadership in general in the church. Most of us oppose abortion (51% strongly), but approximately one in seven appears pro-choice. We are less clear on the effectiveness of anti-abortion legislation, although we tend to favor this. Most of us believe that the Bible takes a clear position on homosexuality (80%) and that homosexual practice is unbiblical (84%), but one in 20 of us disagrees. Indeed, more of us take a strong position against homosexual practice than against abortion! We do not hold a clear position on whether divorce is biblical or

not (45% believe it is unbiblical; 30% do not), but most of us believe that, if it is a sin, it is a forgivable sin (72%).⁴

SECULAR FEMINISM

Although few CBEers are involved with secular feminist organizations (14%), most CBEers share certain beliefs in common with secular feminists: beliefs in the desirability of a family-friendly workplace, the importance of receiving equal pay for equal work, and the necessity for addressing issues of family violence and rape. Most of us also support strong sexual harassment laws and the Family and Medical Leave Act, although the relatively high percent of the uncertain/undecided category suggests that many of us have not thought extensively about these issues. We do not, however, support a “pro-choice” agenda,⁵ premarital sex, a pro-homosexuality agenda, or goddess worship. Perhaps our relative lack of involvement in secular organizations reflects our perceptions that these are central issues to many secular feminists.

CONCLUSION

Despite what appear to be the fears of the larger evangelical community, biblical feminists are, ideologically and theologically, biblical centrists. First and most importantly, we take Scripture seriously and support an inerrancy position. Second, and this should perhaps be our biggest distinctive in evangelical minds, we believe in egalitarian models for marriage, the ordination of women, and inclusive language for men and women. But we do not clearly support inclusive language for God, we are ambivalent about divorce, and we strongly oppose abortion and homosexuality. This is a radical group, but not in the ways that Bloesch (1984) and others fear! Rather than undermining the family, we strongly believe that both husbands and wives should make it their first priority!

We are also a diverse group that resists stereotyping. Some of us strongly oppose the ordination of women, quite a few of us believe that divorce is not unbiblical, and a few of us are strongly pro-choice. As we plan and present programs within CBE, it is important to acknowledge our diversity and allow these voices to be heard.

I, for one, particularly appreciate church leaders and scholars who take biblical feminists seriously, and not simply because I am one. Our high level of education, our leadership roles in the church, and our high view of Scripture well qualify us to serve as spokespersons for the larger evangelical community. Perhaps the more important questions for us as CBE members is not “Who are we?” but “What is our calling” and “Whom will we become?”

Be ye therefore ambassadors for Christ, within the church when that is possible, outside it if that is your calling. There is no higher calling than to serve God as we are—women *and* men of Christ.

1 For a more positive and fairer evaluation of evangelical feminists, see, e.g., Rebecca Groothuis' Women Caught in the Conflict and Ronald Nash's Great Divides. These writers describe evangelical feminists as being evangelicals at heart, rather than apostates, and as being about God's business in our homes and churches.

2 More than 85% strongly or moderately agreed with this statement, and none disagreed.

3 We are less clear, however, on our support or disagreement with inclusive language for God.

4 This question does not distinguish between those who believe that divorce is a sin and those who do not.

5 Quite a few of us (22%) are uncertain or undecided about this issue.

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Table 1

Percentage of CBEers at each income level

< \$20,000	20%
\$21,000-35,000	20%
\$36,000-50,000	20%
\$51,000-75,000	25%
>\$75,000	15%

Table 2

Beliefs about the Church and Bible Teaching

	Agree*	Neither*	Disagree*
Inclusive language (M/W)	91.0	8.2	0.8
Inclusive language for God	42.4	40.7	16.9
Egalitarian model for marriage	86.9	13.1	—
Ordination of women	94.2	3.3	2.5
Woman or man in leadership	91.7	7.5	0.8
Spkr use feminine metaphors	58.1	35.0	6.8
Strict anti-abortion	52.1	31.7	16.3
Anti-abortion except...	48.3	33.6	18.1
Anti-abortion legislation	43.3	33.3	23.3
Laws do more harm than good	21.6	50.9	27.6
Bible clear on homosexuality	79.2	15.0	5.9
Homosexual practice unbiblical	83.9	11.0	5.1
Divorce is unbiblical	30.6	38.9	30.6
Divorce is a forgivable sin	71.9	17.5	10.6

* "Agree" includes "Moderately" and "Strongly Agree" (positions 1 and 2 on the 7-point scale which people were asked to use); "Neither Agree nor Disagree" includes "Mildly Agree" and "Mildly Disagree" (positions 3, 4 and 5); and "Disagree" includes "Moderately" and "Strongly Disagree" (positions 6 and 7).

Table 3

Agreement with Beliefs of Secular Feminists

	Agree*	Neither*	Disagree*
A family-friendly workplace	90.5	7.7	1.7
Equal pay for equal work	94.1	0.8	5.1
Anti-family violence/rape issues	93.0	6.2	0.9
Strong sexual harassment laws	81.4	17.7	0.8
The Family and Medical Leave Act	71.6	26.7	1.8
"Pro-choice" abortion ideology	12.8	22.3	64.9
Pro-homosexuality agenda	3.4	13.7	82.9
Goddess worship	2.6	2.7	94.8
Support for premarital sex	2.6	3.4	94.0

* "Agree" includes "Moderately" and "Strongly Agree" (positions 1 and 2 on the 7-point scale which people were asked to use); "Neither Agree nor Disagree" includes "Mildly Agree" and "Mildly Disagree" (positions 3, 4 and 5); and "Disagree" includes "Moderately" and "Strongly Disagree" (positions 6 and 7).

PORTRAITS OF TWO SISTERS

SNAPSHOTS OF A DEVOUT WOMAN

Patricia A. Halverson

As I read the gospels, I feel as if I am slowly turning the pages of a photo album of the life of Jesus. The opening pages contain snapshots of the events surrounding his birth: a picture of the angel appearing to Elizabeth, one of Simeon holding the newborn Savior in the temple. I can also see his baptism and his lonely sojourn in the wilderness. The album fills with pictures of the Lord and those who knew him—people who followed him, challenged him, served him, abandoned him.

A picture of a certain woman appears on three of the pages. A closer look reveals that in each of these three encounters between Jesus and this woman, she is at his feet. In two of the pictures, people are angry with her—but not Jesus. In only one photo is she speaking, and that through tears.

She lives in Bethany with her brother and sister. She is, of course, Mary. Martha appears in these scenes with her, but my primary focus is on Mary.

The first picture shows Martha welcoming Jesus (and probably his entourage) home for a meal (Luke 10:38-42). Martha is a hospitable person and known for her energy, but this time she feels overburdened. Finally in exasperation she interrupts the group gathered around Jesus and asks him, “Do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Tell her to help me.”

Jesus zeroes in on Martha’s real need. Her plea for help in and of itself is not wrong, but her sense of frustration is. Her mind has become muddled¹ by that which, Jesus says, is not all that important. “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things....”

He points her to Mary who sits at his feet listening to his word, unencumbered by the domestic tasks at hand. The text does not specify whether or not the group consists merely of the three siblings (Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus) and possibly other relatives, and Jesus and the twelve disciples, or if there were also present the other men and women who traveled with him (Luke 8:1-3, for example). Therefore we do not know the scope of Martha’s preparation. Nevertheless, in essence Jesus simply tells Martha to follow Mary’s example. “Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38-42, NASB). Under this snapshot in my photo album I have written the caption, “Sitting at his feet.”

We next find Mary in mourning because her brother Lazarus has died (John 11). The text offers several reasons

as to why Jesus delayed so that Lazarus would certainly die: 1) to reveal the glory of the Father and Son, vv. 4,40; 2) because he loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, vv. 5-6; 3) so that his followers would believe, vv. 14, 25-27, 42, 45. These lessons enhance *our* theodicy, but the sisters do not have the advantage that we do in knowing how it all ends. Jesus has spoken words of hope and promise, but the women lack the full context. They only know that Lazarus is dead and they believe Jesus could have prevented it.

When Jesus finally does arrive just outside Bethany, Martha rushes to meet him. The text does not reveal her emotion, only her actions and words. Does she feel betrayed by him, or is she merely stating her faith, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died”? In response to Martha, Jesus places Lazarus’ death into a larger context, that marvelous resurrection theology, which she already knows and believes. She also knows that he is Messiah. The conversation appears to end abruptly as she goes to call Mary.²

At the words, “The teacher is here and is calling for you,” Mary rises quickly and leaves the house. Unlike Martha, she is followed by the mourners who suppose that she will continue to grieve at the tomb. Instead she goes to meet the Lord; when she reaches him, she falls down at his feet, weeping. It almost looks as if she and Martha had rehearsed what they would say to Jesus when they saw him, because Mary repeats verbatim what Martha has already said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³

The only recorded words of Mary add up to one sentence already spoken by Martha. However, rather than concluding that Mary is incapable of thinking for herself so that her only recourse is to parrot her sister, I suggest she is simply a quiet person who is better at listening and doing than in speaking what is on her mind.

In any case, up to this point Jesus has remained composed and completely aware of his actions and words and intent. Now he is deeply moved and he begins to cry, not because Lazarus is gone, as some onlookers suppose, but because this woman and her friends are hurt so deeply. She who had sat engrossed at his feet now is in anguish. As with Martha, we can only speculate on the emotion behind Mary’s words, “If you had been here....” Does she express a pang of doubt or solid faith? Does she feel that Jesus abandoned them in their hour of need or simply state that they wish he could have come in time? Maybe, in the only way she knows how, she is asking that question we all ask in the midst of great loss: “Why?”

We know the glorious outcome, as did Jesus from the very beginning. Yet, this poignant snapshot of Mary’s anguish, as she weeps at the feet of the Lord only minutes before he raises Lazarus from the grave, offers a glimpse of divine compassion as he weeps with her. I call this picture, “Suffering at his feet.”

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REVISITING THE STORY OF MARTHA

Martha Linda Marion Montgomery

Of all the things I know about Martha, the most thrilling to me is the fact that she and Peter had almost identical Christological confessions (John 11:27, Matt. 16:16).

Martha: *Su ei ho Christos ho huios tou Theou.*

Peter: *Su ei ho Christos ho huios tou Theou tou zontou.*

Martha: *You are the Christ, the Son of God.*

Peter: *You are the Christ, the Son of the God the living.*

Martha knew who Jesus was. He was her friend; but he was also the Christ, the Son of God.

Traditionally, Martha is known for her hospitality. She lived in the first-century village of Bethany with her sister, Mary, and her brother, Lazarus. In commentaries, she is most often depicted as a bossy, yet efficient, housewife and cook. But by remembering these two facts about Martha—her knowledge of Christ, and her efficient hospitality—we can come to her story with a greater understanding of this fascinating, multi-faceted woman, so that we see more than some one-sided picture of Martha as only a busy homemaker who failed to choose the “better part.”

Martha and Jesus were friends. Her home in Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem and thus a convenient retreat for Jesus and his disciples, a place where they could be away from the following crowds. This home was probably made of stone, rectangular in shape and with an open court in front. There was a room for domestic animals, sleeping quarters for the family, and a central room with a hearth for cooking. Steps led to the roof, and possibly a guest room. Although in a house this size there would almost certainly have been servants, Mary and Martha probably did much of the housework and cooking themselves.

Planning and preparing food for Jesus and his disciples would have been a huge task: thirteen guests, and possibly more if “disciples” included members of his larger entourage. In addition to fresh-baked bread, the menus might have included baked or fried cakes coated with honey and sprinkled with seeds and nuts. Figs, grapes, beans and lentils could have been served as well, and then—in honor of the special guest—there might have been roast meat.

The Luke 10:38-42 account tells us that Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made for

Not long afterward, Jesus returns to Bethany. In this final set of snapshots from John 12 we find Jesus having dinner with friends. Again Martha is serving. A nameless woman is anointing Jesus with nard, a very expensive ointment.⁴ John tells us she has anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair.

For other details, we must turn to Mark’s account (Mark 14:3-9). There we learn that it is Mary who anoints not only his feet, but also his head.⁵ In each account Mary is criticized because her detractors know that the ointment is worth a year’s wages for the common laborer. They think such extravagance is a waste. They think it should be donated to the poor, but Jesus disagrees.

As he did earlier when Martha criticized Mary, Jesus again defends Mary in front of all those gathered. In fact in Mark, Jesus predicts that the account of this incident will accompany the preaching of the gospel throughout the world. (I suppose we could do better on that score; I haven’t heard many sermons on this!) The point that Jesus makes is this: He is about to be killed and he *is* worth the expense, the humility, the effort and the criticism. She has done what she could, but Jesus deserves much more. My caption on this final picture reads, “Serving at his feet.”

Who *is* Mary, this quiet and criticized woman, this misunderstood, rule-breaking paragon of humble devotion? I trust that some day we will know.

1 The verb translated “bothered” is *turbazo* which means “to become disturbed; made turbid.”

2 Though the dialogue appears cut off, we can assume that not everything spoken is recorded. Martha tells Mary that Jesus has summoned her, and Jesus asks Martha later, verse 40, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (NIV) Neither statement is recorded as part of his earlier conversation with Martha, though Jesus did say the latter to the disciples in verse 4.

3 In the Greek text, the statement made by Martha (v. 21) and Mary (v. 32) to Jesus is letter for letter the same.

4 According to the notes in *The Life Application Bible* (Tyndale House, Wheaton, 1986), this fragrant ointment was imported from India and used to anoint kings.

5 This or a similar event is recorded in Matthew 26:6-13 and Luke 7:36-49. The differences in the minor details among the four gospels can be harmonized quite easily. See Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, “Bread and Roses at Bethany,” *Priscilla Papers*, Spring 91, pp. 1-2.

The two major differences in the four accounts occur in Luke. He removes the event from the context of Holy Week, so there is no mention of the woman anointing the Lord for burial. Luke also differs as to why she is criticized. In the other three texts, people are offended because of the extravagance. In Luke, Simon is offended because Jesus is a rabbi who ought to know that this woman is “a sinner.” Though the Lukan account shares some common elements with Matthew, Mark and John, the opinion of some is that Luke’s event is a separate, earlier occurrence involving someone other than Mary of Bethany.

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this meal. But distracted from what? I think she was distracted from sitting at the feet of Jesus where she would rather have been.

Was Martha working hard at her servant task, while at the same time wanting to enjoy the conversation and teaching of Jesus? I wonder if it was her mounting frustration, as she watched Mary neglecting her usual housekeeping tasks and instead doing what she—Martha—would rather have been doing, that drove Martha to ask, “Lord, don’t you care?”

In his understanding and love, Jesus gently, I think, quietly calmed her down by repeating her name twice. “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset.” But he might also have said, “We both know that you know who I am. Mary needs to understand that too. This conversation with Mary is more important than housework for her right now.”

I don’t think we can say that Mary chose the things of the Lord and that Martha did not. They both had household tasks to do. They were both friends of the Lord. Martha knew Jesus was the Christ; Mary was sitting at his feet learning the same thing. And most likely, Mary later helped Martha with the serving.

I never liked my first given name, Martha, and have been reluctant to use it, until I studied her story more closely. She was certainly more than “just a housewife.” As we know from her interaction with Jesus in the account given in John 11:1-44, Martha was strong and she was spiritual. She was responsible. She was loved by Jesus.

My dad always told me, “Martha is in the Bible; hers is a good name.” Now I believe him.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In both Luke 10 and John 11, Martha appears to be more of an activist than Mary, and so we could speculate that Martha bore more responsibility for the household’s management. Yet, significantly, although Martha was again serving when Mary anointed Jesus with the costly perfume (John 12), Martha is not recorded as joining the protest against such a “wasteful” gesture. Therefore we could also speculate that, despite their different personalities, the two sisters were united in their gratitude for Jesus’ loving restoration of their brother Lazarus to them.

In his book, *Miracles of our Lord*, George MacDonald wrote: “Joy of all joys! The dead come back! Is it any wonder that this Mary should spend three hundred pence on an ointment for the feet of the Raiser of the Dead?” And surely it would also be no wonder if the activist Martha fully supported her sister in this act of extravagant devotion to the One who had clearly shown them both that he was the resurrection and the life.

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW

“RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH” ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

James V. Potter

“If wives were submissive like God intended them to be, there wouldn’t be any domestic violence” is a statement that I have heard over and over again during my years as a counselor. These comments have not all come from the lips of battering husbands, but from many Christian workers and members of the clergy as well. Is domestic violence a modern phenomena associated with the feminist movement? Is it the result of non-submissive wives? Is it a phenomena associated with the inner cities, slums or urban blight? Or, is domestic violence just a sign of the times that we live in?

Consider these statistics. Between two and four million American women are beaten each year by their husbands or boyfriends; domestic violence is the second leading cause of injury to women between the ages of fifteen and forty-four! Domestic violence threatens the stability and survival of the family—especially the children, who learn that violence is an acceptable way to deal with stress or conflict. Boys who grow up in abusive homes are more likely to become batterers, and girls who grow up in these circumstances are more likely to become abused wives.

This transgenerational pattern of violence is a clear example of the warning contained in Numbers 14:18-19. “The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet, he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

The secular world has developed an answer for this problem: *Break up the family and you break up the cycle*. In these and other words, the world declares that the only way to bring violence within a family to an end is to end the marital relationship. This concept does not sit well with Christians, however, who have been instilled with the words from Malachi 2:16, “I hate divorce says the Lord God of Israel,” and the sacred marriage vow we took “to love, honor and cherish until death do us part.” But how can a mother adhere to biblical teaching and still protect herself and her children from the effects of domestic violence? Is divorce the *only* way to insure protection from her abuser? Does divorce “work”? Will God forgive?

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These are questions every Christian wife who has been battered has asked. Each one is important, but perhaps the most imperative question is “Does it work?”. Does divorce always stop the pattern of spousal abuse and end the negative impact on the children? NO! Current research has demonstrated that single parent homes have more reported incidents of child abuse than two parent homes, and separation and divorce often result in an escalation of the spousal abuse unless other legal intervention is employed. Husbands who batter go on to batter new girlfriends and wives, and battered wives enter new abusive relationships to repeat the pattern again.

Domestic violence against women is nothing new. That oft quoted scripture regarding God hating divorce *really* says: “I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel, and I hate a man covering himself with violence as well as with his garment” (Mal 2:16). Does this mean that the husband is at fault? God’s answer is found in the same chapter:

Another thing you do: you flood the Lord’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because He no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask “Why?” It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant (Mal 2:13-14).

But what about the wife’s submission? Look again at Ephesians 5, where the Apostle Paul is continuing his dialogue about *children of light* that began in Ephesians 4:17. Only, this time begin with 5:21 instead of 5:22. Paul says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” And then, parenthetically, Paul gives specific instruction to *both* spouses: first to wives (verses 22 through 24), and then to husbands (verses 25 through 29). Unquestionably, wives are cautioned to submit (or yield) to their husbands. At the same time, however, husbands are directed to love their wives in the same manner as Christ loved the church (which presumes a willingness to die for their wives)!

Most men whom I’ve counseled through domestic violence issues are keenly aware of their wife’s faults—usually much more so than they are of their own. Rarely, however, have I met a man who is struggling in his marriage who has begun to grasp the significance of his personal responsibility in submission and service to *his wife*. But undeniably, Paul commands,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself in radiance, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (Eph 5:25-28).

Furthermore, the man who loves his wife will also love his children. Paul continues his discussion of marriage in Ephesians 5, by stating that “...a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh (verse 31), which echoes Genesis 2:24. These are the same words found in Malachi, where the prophet says, “Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are one. And why one? Because He was seeking godly off-spring” (Mal 2:15).

Ask a mother how she feels about her children—the “fruit of her womb”. She will suffer abuse and even die to protect her children. Consider the metaphor of God’s love as a mother’s love contained in Psalm 91:3-4: “Surely he will save you from the fowl’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.” Perhaps you have witnessed a mother hen calling her chicks and protecting them under her wings, even to her death.

When a man embraces the profound submission required of a husband, and sees his wife as part of his own flesh, he will love “her” children (even though they may not be his biologically) as she does—as a part of himself. And, when this happens a miraculous change will take place in our families, in our communities and in the world.

I think it fitting to conclude with the closing verse of the closing book of the Old Testament: “He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse” (Mal 4:6).

From my point of view, I ask:

Whom shall we blame, or find at fault,
for the curse of violence in our land?

And could the sobering answer be:

Not society, nor school, nor church,
but the lack of love from daddy’s hand?

Correction: Volume 10, Number 2 of Priscilla Papers (Spring 1996) showed an incorrect ISSN identification number. The correct number is ISSN I 0898-753X.

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CBE is an organization of Christians who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Galatians 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

CBE is made up of individual members and local chapters of women and men who work together to promote biblical equality in their own areas and in their own churches and organizations.

Our mission is to make known the biblical basis for freedom in Christ. We seek to advance the cause of Christ and the work of the gospel by encouraging full development of the gifts and talents of all Christians in the service of God. We seek to educate Christians regarding the Bible's message about the equality of men and women of all races, ages, and economic classes in church, home, and society. We desire to reach out in a healing ministry to those who come from differing backgrounds and behavior patterns.

Membership is open to anyone who supports the Statement of Faith and the mission of the organization. Members receive *Priscilla Papers*, CBE's quarterly journal, and have access to all resources available from the national office which include: the speakers' bureau; audio and video cassettes of significant speeches on the subject of equality; discounts on books and reprints purchased from the Book Service; and assistance in beginning a local or regional chapter of CBE.

Editorial Advisory Board

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Editor

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Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.

We believe in the unity and trinity of God, equally existing as three equal persons.

We believe in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.

We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.

We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all races, ages and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.

We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society.

We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as the patterns God designed for us.

CBE Membership Application

Enclosed is my yearly CBE membership fee for the national organization. All fees are in US dollars (check one):

	US Members	Canada Members	Other International
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$33	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Low Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$17	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20
Individual Lifetime	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250

Also included is my tax-deductible contribution in the amount of \$ _____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province/Country _____

Zip/Postal Code _____

Phone _____

Church Denomination _____

Please clip and mail to: Christians for Biblical Equality
P.O. Box 7155
Saint Paul, MN 55107-0155

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This journal is edited by Gretchen Gaebelein Hull and published quarterly by Christians for Biblical Equality, P.O. Box 7155, St. Paul, MN 55107-0155.