

## Editorial

A certain fable tells of a wicked lion that took over a forest. He hunted not just for food but because it amused him to kill. The terrified animals hastily convened a meeting and came to a decision. They would persuade the lion to accept an animal as his meal each day, sent to his den. The lion agreed. Each day, his meal arrived as promised. One day, the meal failed to arrive at the usual time. The lion waited, getting hungrier and angrier by the hour. At last, a rabbit appeared, running as if her life depended on it. “Great lion,” she panted on arrival, “six rabbits were sent as your meal today, but we were waylaid by a lion bigger and fiercer than you. Only I have escaped to come to you.”

The lion was furious. Another lion? Did he have a rival? The rabbit offered to show him, and brought him to a deep well on the edge of the forest. “The other lion lives in this well—look and see!” said the rabbit. The lion looked into the still water of the well below him and saw, of course, his own reflection. Without another thought, he let out an angry roar and leaped into the well. And that was the end of him.

In the fallen state of humanity, men and women often relate to each other as the lion did with his reflection: with suspicion, with animosity, with the desire to supersede. A relationship that was to be governed by mutuality is fraught with rivalry. The patriarchal social structures that continue to dominate our homes, churches, and workplace communities are the hotbed in which the abuse of power flourishes.

Alan Myatt persuasively presents how hierarchical thinking in Christian theology, especially as it endorses the superiority of the male over the female, reflects the Greek philosophical

concept of the Great Chain of Being, which locates all that exists into vertical positions of power relative to each other. Dwayne Howell illustrates through the story of David and Bathsheba how social power structures result in exploitation and questions the reading of Bathsheba—influenced by hierarchy—that seeks to blame the victim and absolve the perpetrator.

Moving from what *is* to what *should be*, Ian Payne and Aaron Husband examine what it means for men and women to be created in the image of God. Payne teases out the threads that constitute the equality of women and men, both at creation and in the reality of the new creation that Christ brings us into. Husband explains, using the analogy of a female-male pair appointed as co-directors of a Christian event, how the complementarian hierarchical position is incompatible with the concept of humanity—male and female—as bearers of the divine image.

A final contribution to what *should be* is John McKinley’s essay, which proposes that Christlike humility as it was practiced by the NT church is the means by which abusive male-female power relations can be deconstructed.

We look towards a world in which lions are wiser than in the fable: creatures that recognize the likeness between God and themselves (irrespective of sex) and honour it in each other, resisting the fallenness of hierarchical power relations.

Praying that this issue of *Priscilla Papers* inspires us to serve together, side by side, in God’s world.

Havilah Dharamraj  
Editor

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