
# SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

## THE FAMILY



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# *Editorial*

# *The Family: A Baptist Doctrine*

Opponents of Baptist identity and of the Conservative Resurgence have periodically complained when the Southern Baptist Convention changes its confession, or even that it changes its confession. Historically and theologically, however, altering a confession should not be seen as unusual, although it has been and ought to be done with the utmost of care. Drawing upon the widely accepted *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* written in 1833, Edgar Young Mullins led the Southern Baptist Convention to affirm its first *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925. In 1963, under the leadership of Herschel Harold Hobbs, the convention revised its earlier confession, issuing it under the same name. In 2000, L. Paige Patterson led in the adoption of yet another revision of the *Baptist Faith and Message*, primarily in order to reaffirm the truthfulness and inerrancy of Scripture. Thus, every forty years or so, the convention has seen fit to engage in a systemic review of their confession.

In the various preambles of their confession, the Southern Baptist Convention appealed to three principles regarding the practice of confessional change. First, they affirmed that the biblical deposit of truth does not change: "Each generation of Christians bears the responsibility of guarding the treasury of truth that has been entrusted to us (2 Timothy 1:14)."[1] Second, they affirmed that the unchanging Scripture, about which we are ever learning, must be applied to dynamic fluctuations in human society: "A living faith must experience a growing understanding of truth and must be continually interpreted and related to the needs of each new generation."[2] Third, because Baptists consider confessions derivative of Scripture, they are revisable according to need: "That we do not regard them as complete statements of our faith, having any quality of finality or infallibility." As a result, the convention concluded, "As in the past so in the future, Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time."[3]

Thus, as the messengers of the free churches of the Southern Baptist Convention have engaged in the proclamation of Scripture within a

[1]From the 2000 revision.
[2]From the 1963 revision.
[3]From the 1925 confession.

fallen culture, they have been led to address their formal confession more specifically to major issues as they feel led by the Spirit "at any time." For instance, in response to radical cultural challenges to the biblical definition of marriage and the family, Southern Baptists added an entirely new article, entitled, "The Family," to its confession in 1998.[4] Divided into four paragraphs, the article considers the definition of the family, marriage, the husband and the wife, and children.

This is not the first time a Baptist confession has addressed the biblical doctrines of marriage and family.[5] With a pedigree stretching back to at least the seventeenth century and a need to witness to a corrupt culture, Southern Baptists at the turn of the twenty-first century rose to the challenge of teaching the family from a biblical perspective. In appreciation, the Riley Center at Southwestern, directed by Evan Lenow, in cooperation with the Center for Theological Research, hosted a conference entitled "The Baptist Distinctive of the Family" at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in September 2007. The following essays were delivered during that conference and are printed here, *inter alia*, for use within our local churches and in the "The Christian Home" course required of students at Southwestern.

In this issue, Russell D. Moore challenges believers to be biblically faithful rather than culturally captive in their sexual morality. Evan Lenow deepens that challenge by reviewing hermeneutical tactics used by various errant readings of Romans 1:26–27, where Paul condemns homosexuality. This editor delivers a passionate piece regarding the theology, history, and practice of bringing the Word of God daily into the home. John M. Yeats, an adoptive parent, offers an appealing theological rationale for Christian couples to practice the adoption of children. Finally, Thomas White issues a compelling call for men to overcome various falsehoods and recover the biblical model of male leadership. The editors hope that current and future church leaders find these essays valuable as they address crises challenging the integrity of the family in our churches and communities.

[4]Dorothy Kelley Patterson, "Article XVIII: The Family," in *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination*, ed. Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Wooddell (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 183-91.

[5]*An Orthodox Creed*, Art. XLIII, in *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 48.2 (2006): 175–76; *Second London Confession*, Art. XXV, in William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 284–85.

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# *Southern Baptist Sexual Revolutionaries: Cultural Accommodation, Spiritual Conflict, and the Baptist Vision of the Family*

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Southern Baptists are accustomed to thinking of themselves as "God's last and only hope" for a darkening Western civilization.[1] Particularly on the issue of the family, Southern Baptists position their stance as increasingly out-of-step with a culture slouching toward Gomorrah. In many ways, both sides of the so-called "culture war" would agree that this characterization is true. But what if, in some significant ways, Southern Baptists are not quite the culture warriors we pretend ourselves to be? What if Southern Baptists are slow-train sexual revolutionaries, accommodating to the ambient culture's concepts of the family, just a little behind the rest of the populace? Could it be that our press releases and confessions of faith say one thing, while our church directories and membership rolls say something strikingly different?

If Southern Baptists are to create a counter-culture that preserves the biblical definition of the family, we must first recognize that our culture may not have changed as much as we think, and that we may have changed more than we would like to admit. If this is the case, then a compelling Baptist vision of the family for the twenty-first century must consist of more than heated culture war rhetoric, sentimental Mother's Day sermons, or market-tested denominational programs. It must consist of a truly transformational paradigm that sees all of reality through the biblical prism of Christ, and lives out this reality through counter-revolutionary churches.

[1]Bill Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

## The Myth of the Southern Baptist Culture Warrior

In the years 1998 and 2000, Southern Baptists adopted first a revision and then a new statement of their confession of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message* (BFM), which included language on the family. This was not the first Baptist confession of faith to address family issues (the Second London Confession of 1689, for instance, includes an article on marriage),[2] but the BFM is more expansive, rooting the definition of the family in creation and affirming the goodness of sexual differentiation, marriage, children, and the complementary vocations of men and women in the church and the home. This confessional stance affirms ideas that would hardly have been considered controversial in the previous years in which the Convention adopted confessions of faith (1925 and 1963), but were extraordinary given the changing attitudes of American culture, including American evangelical culture, on such matters. On issues such as a complementarian stance on "gender roles," the normative biblical framework for human sexuality, and the sanctity of human life—including that of the unborn—Southern Baptists maintain a clear confessional consensus.

Some social and political commentators have responded with alarm to the supposedly reactionary and regressive sociopolitical trends portended in the Southern Baptist—and other similar "Religious Right"—resistance to changing views on the family. Political strategist Kevin Phillips, for instance, warns of "theocracy" as he notes the vast influence of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as "the state church of the ex-Confederacy" and its "radical religion" on the regional culture of the Bible belt and in the "southernization" of the rest of the country.[3] And yet, one must ask just how "radical" this religion is. Phillips points to the vastness of Southern Baptist influence on electoral politics: the election of President Jimmy Carter, the Republican ascendancy since 1980, state ballot initiatives on marriage definition, and so forth. What he and others are not able to demonstrate is the "radical" influence on the way real families in real communities actually are living their lives. If Baptists are "the center of gravity" in the South, then should not the region be strikingly out-of-step with the rest of the country when it comes to marital harmony, divorce rates, sexual mores, domestic violence, parenting issues, and other related matters? In fact, though, in almost all of these categories, Southern Baptists and other conservative evangelicals demonstrate a remarkable sameness to the rest of the culture.

[2]William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 284–85.

[3]Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century* (New York: Viking, 2006), 159–70.

**Marriage and Gender**

Historian Barry Hankins contends that family and gender questions represent the "best issue" for Southern Baptist conservatives to demonstrate their "conservative countercultural" bona fides, since the outside culture is divided on questions such as abortion and church/state relations and since Southern Baptist conservatives now agree with the larger culture on racial issues.[4] And yet, sociologist Christian Smith argues that Southern Baptists hold to a theological conviction about male servant headship in marriage, but he questions based on survey data whether such a conviction means that Southern Baptist marriages, in practice, differ at all from contemporary culture's egalitarian, feminist models of marriage. Conservative evangelicals such as Southern Baptists, Smith asserts, are "moving along with the cultural current propelled over the past thirty years in part by the women's movement."[5] The conflicted interplay between theory and life in conservative evangelicalism does not mean that these evangelicals are egalitarian, Smith explains, but instead that they have "largely integrated an older ideology of headship into newer egalitarian languages and practices."[6]

As sociologist Sally Gallagher puts it, the family traditionalism of conservative Protestants in America is "largely symbolic" and "practically egalitarian."[7] This point is credible, given the fact that the wider culture seems much more shocked by Southern Baptist statements on such matters, than by Southern Baptist practice, or even by Southern Baptist preaching. Some feminist theorists could contend that the seeming lack of difference between Southern Baptists and other Americans on this point has to do with a still-"patriarchal" culture. But, one wonders, given the "revolutionary" changes in American (and European) life on gender matters in the past fifty years, if the sameness is not more a result of contemporary evangelical preaching that can be vague in application and therapeutic in focus, with the authority for differing "roles" for men and women grounded more in communication theory and *Mars and Venus*-type socio-biology than in the biblical revelation.

Baptist unfamiliarity with the language of such texts as Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3 is seen in the way some moderate Southern Baptist critics of

[4]Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 239.

[5]Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 189.

[6]Ibid., 190.

[7]Sally K. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 103. For a theological analysis of such studies, see Russell D. Moore, "After Patriarchy, What? Why Egalitarians Are Winning the Evangelical Gender Debate," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49 (2006): 569–76.

the 1998 revisions to the *Baptist Faith and Message* responded with seeming shock about language on headship and submission that is word for word from Ephesians 5, with the exception of the modifiers "graciously" to describe submission and "servant" to describe headship (which is itself translated into the softer-sounding "leadership" in the document). One wonders how many critics of the family language in the statement of faith were even cognizant that the language they found most problematic was the work not of a committee but of an apostle.[8] While this can be argued to be simply on the left fringe of the Southern Baptist experience, sociological and demographic evidence suggests that the trends, overall in American religious life, are moving in just such a direction.

**Sexual Ethics**

Similarly, there is real question about just how at "war" Southern Baptists are with the culture when it comes to sexual ethics. Southern Baptists maintain a consensus that sexual activity is biblically limited to the marriage union, and have sought commendably to shore up this ethic with good denominational programs encouraging premarital sexual abstinence among teenagers and young adults in Southern Baptist churches. While studies have shown some effectiveness of such initiatives in at least delaying sexual activity, it is not at all clear that Southern Baptists have created a sexual counter-culture. In a landmark study of the sexual practices of American teenagers, sociologist Mark Regnerus shows that abstinence pledge programs are most effective with younger adolescents, but the "appeal of the pledge diminishes as the sex drive increases with age."[9] Regnerus demonstrates, to the contrary, that evangelical Protestant teenagers are *more* likely to engage in sex than their Mormon, Jewish, and mainline Protestant peers. Indeed, Regnerus argues, these evangelicals "are largely indistinguishable from the rest of American adolescents."[10]

Regnerus identifies as mythic the common notion that conservative evangelical Protestant "virginity pledges" are a driving force in leading evangelical teenagers to cling to a so-called "technical virginity" through sexual practices other than intercourse, but his analysis of this is not the good news it might at first blush appear to be. The "technical virginity" delusion has never been rooted in an avoidance of religious "guilt," Regnerus contends, but instead in a "future-oriented, self-focused (but not

[8]Here I am not speaking, of course, of the more thoroughly liberal critics of the statement, who might have considered the original text the work of an anonymous "committee" in "the Pauline tradition."

[9]Mark D. Regnerus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex and Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 92.

[10]Ibid., 153.

anti-family), risk-aversive, parent-driven (and subtly class-oriented)" middle-class morality. In short, teenagers of whatever religious persuasion in contemporary America are more likely to delay intercourse or to substitute other forms of sexual immorality for intercourse because they want to go to college rather than because they want not to go to hell. As conservative evangelicals become more socially and economically ascendant, Regnerus predicts, the more likely they will be to adopt the same form of sexually-tolerant risk management focused on economic viability.

This trend is not surprising either given the ways the ambient culture has shaped even the most conservative Christian discourse on sexual morality. After all, our church initiatives and youth curricula often speak in terms of "premarital sex" and "abstinence" (as has this article, thus far). Hearing the language of the Bible on such matters, such as the word "fornication," seems awkward and strange. Indeed, to how many Southern Baptists would the term "fornicator" sound more like a throwback phrase from a Puritan preacher or a comedic "church lady" on the last generation's late-night television programs than like a term for serious discussion among followers of Christ? Further, the way many Southern Baptist parents and churches teach teenagers to be "abstinent" is already in terms of "risk management." Teenagers are taught to think primarily in terms of earthly "values," saving themselves for their spouse so that one can avoid negative consequences in their future marriage or walk with God. This is no doubt true, but why does the word "hell" seem, again, so hopelessly antiquated to our Southern Baptist ears when it comes to the subject of sexual morality? One does not have to be a wild-eyed "hellfire and brimstone" preacher to recognize that the apostles and prophets seem insistent that Christians understand that the sexually immoral "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9–10).[11] Why would we rather speak in terms of "struggling" and "need for accountability" or even "addiction?"

Furthermore, we must ask whether the typical "life cycle" of Southern Baptist childhood development and evangelism in the contemporary era does not itself almost presuppose sexual rebellion prior to marriage. Journalist Tom Shachtman details a little-known practice among some parts of the American Amish population known as *rumspringa*, or "running around."[12] In this culture, children raised in the isolated community are given the "space" upon achieving late adolescence to go out into the world and "roam," to experience the outside culture in ways ranging from automobiles, contemporary fashion, and cigarettes on one end of the spec-

[11]Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV).

[12]Tom Shachtman, *Rumspringa: To Be or Not to Be Amish* (New York: North Point, 2006).

trum to sexual experimentation, alcohol abuse, and narcotic drugs on the other. This "running around" ends when the adolescent returns home to the Amish, agrees to be baptized, and assumes his responsibilities as a mature member of the community. I wonder if, in some ways, we have not adopted unawares a Southern Baptist version of *rumspringa*.

We should be thankful in many ways, to be sure, when we hear the testimony of one who was baptized at an early age, nurtured in the children's and youth departments of a local church, went away to college and far from the Lord, engaged in immorality and rebellion throughout young adulthood, and then rededicated his life to Christ after settling down and beginning a family. But have we subtly adopted this model as the expected life cycle of a Southern Baptist church member? Is something wrong when a Southern Baptist version of Timothy—one who was raised in the teachings of Scripture and has held to the faith of his childhood (2 Tim 3:14–15)—is considered exceptionally spiritual? Again, we should be thankful for college ministries winning the lost to Christ on university campuses all over the country. But has something gone awry when the most passionate and faithful Christians on many college campuses are these new believers who are the ones often by necessity that must disciple cradle-raised Southern Baptists away from dissipation and toward Christ? Is it considered normal among us that it is the exceptionally healthy church that has a vibrant college ministry while so many others think of the "College and Career" class in the same way they think of purgatory—there may be one but there is unlikely to be anyone in it?

**Divorce**

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Southern Baptist cultural accommodation is found in the surprisingly high numbers of those who make the trek from our baptisteries to the local divorce court. Pointing to national statistical surveys which show that conservative Protestants are *more likely* to divorce than the general population, and that the South (again, in the center of influence of the allegedly vast sway of the Southern Baptist Convention) has a higher divorce rate than the rest of the country, theologian Ronald J. Sider rightly pronounces that there is a "scandal of the evangelical conscience."[13] Sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox, who has done the most significant analysis of this phenomenon, argues for a direct tie between these increasing divorce rates and Southern Baptist preaching and ecclesial practice related to divorce and remarriage.

There are, of course, a variety of views among Southern Baptists and other evangelicals about when, if ever, it is biblically permissible—based

[13]Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 19–20.

on the so-called "exception clauses" in Matthew and 1 Corinthians—to divorce or to remarry after a divorce.[14] Nonetheless, even the most expansive view of the biblical exceptions (and this author does acknowledge some narrowly limited causes in Scripture that would annul the marriage covenant, and allow for the church to accept remarriage) would still rule out most of the divorces in contemporary American culture. Moreover, the shift in Southern Baptist attitudes toward marital permanence does not seem to have come through any kind of theological reflection or conversation at all. Instead, the Southern Baptist approach to divorce seems to have meandered just a bit behind the mainstream of American cultural patterns of acceptance of "one wife at a time" as a sad, but normal, part of life. For many Southern Baptists, divorce does not seem like a "culture war" issue because it is not shocking, or disgusting. We have grown accustomed to it. These same Southern Baptists will have grandchildren and great-grandchildren for whom sex reassignment surgeries, prostitution, and polygamy may seem just as "normal." Will they be more counter-cultural than we?

Wilcox notes that surveys of Southern Baptist pastors show a distinct "softening" of clergy opinions and preaching on divorce, often related to pastoral comments on forgiveness and "second chances" for those who have been divorced and/or remarried.[15] Wilcox's assessment rings true when divorce is often conceived of in Southern Baptist churches in terms of "divorce care" ministries and "singles again" Bible studies (both of which are commendable and missiologically appropriate), but rarely in the context of prophetic preaching or congregational discipline. Of course, Southern Baptist pastors should not be condemnatory of those who are divorcing or divorced. As those who follow Christ, we should not be condemnatory of any sinner (John 3:17), but always should offer full forgiveness and complete justification for all who rest in Christ (Rom 8:1). But that does not explain why we would not warn sinners away from a sin for which the wages are death, and the consequences ruinous.

How can Southern Baptists and other evangelicals—whether on the Right or the Left of the political spectrum—speak to issues of social justice and the common good without addressing what is no doubt the leading cause of "widows and orphans" in our midst? Why would Southern Baptists think and speak in one way ("muted" and "ambiguous," in Wilcox's words) on the issue of divorce, and quite another (full volume and unambiguous) on an issue such as homosexuality? Wilcox suggests, and I think

[14]For a recent contrast of evangelical views on this issue, see Mark Strauss, ed., *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church: Three Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

[15]W. Bradford Wilcox, "Conservative Protestants and the Family: Resisting, Engaging, or Accommodating Modernity," in *A Public Faith: Evangelicals and Civic Engagement*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 58.

rightly, that Southern Baptists and other conservative Protestants have been "far from untouched by the dramatic increases in divorce since the 1960s."[16] Wilcox writes: "It may well be that leaders and pastors are more comfortable confronting homosexuality, which probably does not affect many people in the pews, than confronting divorce, which does." To put it bluntly, we have many more "out of the closet" multiple divorcees than "out of the closet" homosexuals in our churches. At issue here is pastoral courage. John the Baptist would put his head on a platter to speak truth to power that not even a king can have another man's wife. John the Southern Baptist is too often not willing to put his retirement benefits on the table to say the same thing to a congregational business meeting.

As I was preparing for this project, one of my student interns assembled for me a list of twentieth-century Southern Baptist quotations from various articles and sermons across the denominational spectrum on issues related to the family. The most impressive was from a Southern Baptist pastor speaking to the Christian Life Commission (now the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission) of the SBC in 1987 on the question of the family in crisis. This pastor prophetically charged Southern Baptists with relegating the issue of divorce to "descriptive statements in which we are drowning" at the expense of "normative statements, a divine word, a prophetic word, an authoritative word, a transcendent word from God." This denominational leader displayed what impressed me as some of the most remarkable pastoral courage I have seen in print, as he laid out the carnage left in our Southern Baptist churches by rampant divorce, noting what such does to our global witness for Christ. This leader did not attack "the culture" or the political establishment but lamented instead that divorce was "the only great question on which both extremes of the spectrum, politically and in our own convention, are tongue-tied." He charged the left wing of the Convention with a "mutinous silence" on divorce as they championed other causes. But he also charged the right wing of the Convention, his fellow biblical inerrantists, with having "an anti-abortion, anti-ERA, anti-sex education stance, but total silence in popular evangelical culture about divorce." As I read these bold words, I was sobered to contemplate how this leader's indictment is no less relevant twenty years later, indeed probably more so, despite "winning" the battle for the Bible and settling the issue of biblical authority long ago. I was sobered further to turn the page to find the name of this fearless prophet, and to recognize that he is now himself divorced.

Given this trajectory in Southern Baptist life, it is difficult to argue with political scientist Alan Wolfe's contention that the "culture wars"

[16]Ibid.

are mostly an illusion in the contemporary American milieu. The heated rhetoric of evangelicals in the political and media spheres, Wolfe asserts, are often directly related to the ineffectuality of Christian distinctiveness in our own living rooms and pews. Of evangelical conservatives, Wolfe writes: "Their inability to use their political power to lower the abortion and divorce rates, instill a sense of obedience and respect for authority among teenagers, and urge courts and legislatures to give special recognition to Christianity's power role in American religious life creates among them a perpetual outrage machine."[17]

So why are evangelical family lives so relatively unaffected by the traditionalist doctrine our churches espouse? Wolfe argues, compellingly, that our churches are intentionally embedded in the same consumerist, individualist, narcissistic culture that birthed the sexual revolution in the first place. He writes:

> If churches need day care for their children while engaged in frightfully long commutes from their exurb in downtown Atlanta or Minneapolis, the church will provide it. If not displaying a cross will bring in more of the unchurched, the cross will not be displayed. If young people want preachers that can speak their slang, preachers will be trained who can speak their slang. If women need to work to support the family's lifestyle, they will not be told from the pulpit that their Christian duty requires that they stay at home and be full-time mothers. If best-selling authors want to introduce believers to old-fashioned ideas about the end times, they do so through the medium of science fiction.[18]

In short, we're as counter-cultural as we want to be. And that's not nearly enough to turn our churches, much less the world, upside down.

## The Cosmic Roots of the Family Crisis

It is hardly a fair characterization for Christian Smith to speak of evangelical groups such as the Southern Baptist Convention and the "Promise Keepers" movement as wishing to "recreate some mythic 1950s happy nuclear family."[19] Enough has been written on the exegetical and theological groundings of the historic Christian position on the family and

[17]Alan Wolfe, "The Culture War That Never Came," in *Is There a Culture War? A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life* (Washington DC: Brooking Institution Press, 2006), 56.

[18]Ibid., 62.

[19]Smith, *Christian America*, 162.

its various components to make clear that there is more than nostalgia at work here. Moreover, some advocates of a traditionalist family have made clear, rightly in my estimation, that the economic and social patterns in mid-century America actually sowed the familial discord we now reap.[20] Christians, of all people, with a strong sense of human depravity in tow should agree that feminist scholar Stephanie Coontz is at least partly right that any nostalgic vision of an idyllic era of "normal" families is "the way we never were."[21]

Still, Southern Baptists should heed the warning never to see the "crisis in the American family" as a new development, or as the result of blind cultural or historical trends. The Scriptures present a picture of the family as constantly under assault in this age, albeit often in craftily veiled ways, that only appear to be incidental. Family chaos did not begin in Caligula's court, the Hefner mansion, or the Clinton White House; and the "culture wars" around the family are not chiefly a matter of what originates in Hollywood, Wall Street, or Capitol Hill. The antidote to our myopic vision on the family, whether nostalgic or apathetic, is to see it through the hermeneutical grid of the Scripture's storyline: the mystery of Christ.

Those who seek to redefine whatever point of traditional Christian concepts of the family often suggest that individual proof-texts related to the family ought to be placed within the proper context, or within the overall trajectory of Scripture.[22] They are quite right. Traditionalists have nothing to fear from this, except an exposure of our own timidity and cultural accommodation, since the "trajectory" of Scripture and the larger canonical narrative context could not be further from the contemporary revisionist proposals. When the goal and trajectory of Scripture is seen in its proper context—as an unfolding of the mystery of Christ against the opposition of the hostile cosmic powers—we see even why the family is so significant, as iconic representations of Christ Jesus, His church, and His Gospel.

[20]See, for instance, Allan Carlson, *The Family in America: Searching for Social Harmony in the Industrial Age* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003), and Brian Robertson, *Forced Labor: What's Wrong with Balancing Work and Family* (Dallas: Spence, 2002).

[21]Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

[22]Such arguments range from the relatively restrained end of the spectrum on "gender roles" represented by William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), to the relatively radical end of the spectrum on sexuality represented by *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006). This is not at all to equate the agendas or the outcomes of the two arguments, except as both argue for a larger biblical trajectory in order to understand individual texts.

**The Family and the Cosmic Curse**

The Scripture is clear that one cannot understand the universe rightly without distinguishing between those aspects of the creation that are "from the beginning" and thus created good, and those aspects that were unleashed by the curse on the universe's designated ruler, man (Rom 8:18–23). This "reign of death" that begins with the revolt in Eden does not simply result in individual alienation from God, but the disruption of the entire fabric of the cosmos—including the familial relationships established in the garden temple. Indeed, the most immediate disruption in the *shalom* of the Garden is seen in alienation of the one-flesh union of the man and the woman, as they experience nakedness and shame in one another's presence.

The curse that comes upon humanity—and all that is under their feet—upends every aspect of their calling as the universe's regal family. The woman's vocation as mother of all living now includes pain and anguish in childbirth (Gen 3:16). The man's vocation as the tiller of the ground, to bring forth bread for his wife and children, now includes the toil and sorrow of a cursed creation (Gen 3:17–19). The marriage union of the man and the woman now includes disharmony and rivalry (Gen 3:16). The "fruitful and multiply" command results not just in new life, but also in bloody fratricide (Gen 4:1–16). Eastward from Eden, the biblical story traces a bloody trail of familial anarchy—even just in the immediate literary context of Genesis—from polygamy (Gen 4:23) to rape (Gen 19:1–11; Gen 34:1–31) to incest (Gen 19:30–38) to vigilante tribal violence (Gen 34:1–31) to sexual blackmail (Gen 39:1–23). Add to this the accounts of the reproductive transgression of the angelic/human divide (Gen 6:1–4), the dishonoring of the patriarch of the post-deluge new creation by his son (Gen 9:18–27), and the repeated cycles of familial deceit, sibling warfare, inheritance skirmishes, and it becomes clear that the Edenic peace of the family is no more. This continues throughout the canon and beyond.

**The Family and the Christic Mystery**

When the Pharisees seek to trap Jesus with a question about divorce, Jesus indicts them for failing to understand the alpha-point of the biblical storyline. By pointing to the Mosaic era's provisions for divorce, they are missing that it was not so "from the beginning" (Matt 19:1–12). When the Sadducees seek to trap Jesus with a question about Levirate marriage, Jesus indicts them for failing to understand the omega-point of the biblical storyline. By assuming in the question the eternal relevance of the "fruitful and multiply" clause, they are missing the way it will be in the consummation—when human existence reaches its resurrection goal of a new creation (Mark 12:18–27). In both instances, they are abstracting

legal requirements or theological constructs from God's purpose in Christ, the Alpha and Omega of the creation. Unwilling to recognize Jesus as the Christ, they are unable to see where God's creational structures—whether the Sabbath (Matt 12:1–14) or worship (John 2:13–22) or dominion over the angelic beings (Matt 12:22–32) or the family structures—fit into the universe.

It is no surprise then that those who could not see their rebellion against God's anointed could not see their rebellion against the divine order on the family, be it through divorce or through the refusal to honor their fathers and mothers with financial provision. They are veiled to Christ, so they are veiled to the family order—all the while surrounding both concepts with out-of-context Scripture references and human traditions that excuse their rebellion and self-justify them, they suppose, before God. This is precisely what the apostle Paul refers to in Romans 1:18–32 when he notes that those who refuse to give thanks as creatures then become darkened in their minds and turn to the creation itself (as Adam does to a reptile in the Garden, and then by hiding himself in the vegetation God has made). This downward spiral results in being handed over to one's rebellion—a rebellion with distinct implications for the family order, including misdirected sexuality and disobedience to parents (Rom 1:26–27, 30). But what is this creation order against which humanity rebels? Why does Paul fit this in the context of a discussion of his lack of shame about the gospel of the resurrected Son of David (Rom 1:1–17)?

This is because, in the apostolic message, the gospel of Christ is the key to understanding the meaning of all of reality. The New Testament repeatedly makes clear that the universe was created through and for Christ as the firstborn and heir of all creation (John 1:1–3, Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:2–3). Adam and Eve seek to usurp God's wisdom through the fruit of the Tree, to grasp it for their self-interest in order to be deified by it. The man and the woman seek to know the mystery of the universe apart from the Word of God. But the apostolic message is that the mystery of the universe *is* the Word of God. Thus, millennia after the Fall God reveals in His wisdom what the world could not know through autonomous wisdom (1 Cor 1:21).

The apostle announces to the church at Ephesus that God "in all wisdom and insight" has made known the "mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9–10). In the fullness of time, God unveils that He created the universe as an arena for the kingship of His heir, His Son. He created all that exists in order to recreate them, to set them in line with their archetype, Christ Jesus, who will unite in His own person the fullness of Deity

and the consummation of humanity, so that He is both the God whose throne is unchallenged (Heb 1:8) and the human firstborn among many brothers (Heb 2:10–17). Jesus unites in His own person the God who creates through His *Logos*, and the human vice-regent who is to govern through and be governed by the *Logos* of God. He unites in His own person the God who promises to dwell with His people, and the people who dwell with their God—a unity that, mysteriously, joins in one new man the peoples of the earth fractured by the Fall since Babel (Eph 2:1–6).

One key aspect of this unveiled mystery is that the family structure is not an arbitrary expression of the will of God. It is an archetype, an icon of God's purpose for the universe in Christ. Paul's classic text on marriage, for example, from Ephesians 5 makes no sense if it is presented as tips for a happier, healthier marriage. It is part of an argument regarding the cosmic mystery of Christ "which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3:5). The Genesis 2 mandate to leave father and mother, to cleave to one another, to become one flesh is a "mystery" that "refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:31–32). Paul is emphatically not using Christ and the church as illustrative of human marriage. To say such would be similar to saying that Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead in order to teach us the proper mode of baptism. In both instances, it is the other way around. The husband/wife union is a visible icon of the Christ/church union; a union in which, as a head with a body, Jesus is inseparable from His bride, a bride He protects, provides for, leads, disciples, and sanctifies. He is as inseparable from His body, as a human head is from a human body; a truth Paul heard from the voice of the Galilean Himself when Jesus asked the persecutor of the church on the road to Damascus, "Why are you persecuting me (Acts 9:4)?"

Thus, male headship and female submission are not indicative of some hierarchy of value, or differing degrees of the image of God. Both are iconic, pointing to the purpose of the creation. The headship the wife is to submit to, then, is not a raw sovereignty. It is a covenantal love that reflects the love of Christ for His ecclesial Bride. The husband is to lead his wife as Christ washes His bride with water (Eph 5:26)—an image drawn from the prophetic promise of a God who washes His bride Israel with water (Ezek 16:9). It is modeled in Jesus' act of washing the feet of the foundation stone of his church, Peter, as representative of the apostles—an act that entails self-humbling on the part of the Lord Christ, but also requires decisive leadership. Peter says to his Lord, "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8), but Jesus leads His disciple to see the necessity of such cleansing (John 13:8–9).

In the same way, the Ephesians text says that the husband loves, "as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). Once again, Peter as representative of the apostles did not deem crucifixion to be a wise course of action for the messianic King (Matt 16:21–23; 26:50–56), but Jesus sets His face towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51–53), not for His own self-interest but for that of His church. The wife submits to her husband not because she is somehow less dignified than he, but precisely because she is a model, a picture of an assembly that is pursued, protected, and led by a Spirit-anointed King. Thus, "as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands" (Eph 5:24).

The offspring of the husband/wife union and the interplay between parents and children are also archetypal and Christological. The command to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth, is fulfilled eschatologically in the Christ who stands triumphant before His Father, not hiding in the vegetation as did the shamed first Adam, but announcing, "Behold, I and the children God has given Me" (Heb 2:13). The love between the Father and the Son through the Spirit is incarnated; it leads to life and flesh and community. The universe is built around the Father's joy in bestowing on His Son an inheritance (Ps 2:7–8), a great name (Phil 2:9–11), and the glory of a firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29). The command for fathers to protect, provide for, and discipline their children is not, again, arbitrary. It is in place because human fatherhood is to model the divine patriarchy (Heb 12:5–11). This is why Jesus teaches us to pray "Our Father" along with Him (Matt 6:9), because in Christ we participate in the Father/Son dynamic at the heart of the universe (John 17:24). Human fathers are to train their children to trust and obey precisely because God does so (Matt 6:10). Human fathers are to bring forth bread from the earth for their families precisely because God does so (Matt 6:11). Human fathers are to guard their children from evil threats precisely because God does so (Matt 6:13). The Fatherhood of God to His only begotten Son is thus paradigmatic of the family structure.

This is why Jesus tells us that we, being evil, can understand what it is to know God as Father—even our fathers would give us bread when asked, not stones. Jesus knows this experientially as Satan seeks to subvert the Father/Son relationship by tempting Jesus to turn stones to bread in the wilderness (Matt 4:3–4). The temptation is the same as that which came thousands of years earlier to the "son of God" in the wilderness beyond the Jordan, Israel, whom the Serpent caused to grumble against their Father's supposed lack of provision (Num 11:1–15; 21:4–9). God as Father responds with both discipline and provision. To Israel God says that He "humbled you and let you hunger" and "fed you with manna" so that "He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man

lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3). Satan wished Jesus to believe that His Father would give Him stones, not bread. But the promise of God to the Davidic Son is that "the enemy will not outwit Him" (Ps 89:22), but that instead, "He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation'" (Ps 89:25). Unlike the sons of Eli, who shame their father—and demonstrate his failure—by their enslavement to their own grasping appetites (1 Sam 2:12–17, 29), this Son trusts that His Father hears Him when He calls, and leads us through the Spirit to cry out with Him "Abba!" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

This is why the command to honor father and mother is included in the Torah of God. This is why such obedience is tied to the inheritance of the land of promise (Eph 6:1–4). This is why disobedience to parents is included as among the horrors of a universe in rebellion against God (Rom 1:30). This is why the man who will not provide for his household is "worse than an unbeliever" and has "denied the faith" (1 Tim 5:8). Such is not mere social control, and certainly is not a relic of an outmoded and inhumane patriarchy. The breakdown of familial honor, discipline, and order is indicative of a larger revolt against the archetypal Fatherhood of God. The way of Christ is to listen to the voice of His Father (John 5:19–23). Disharmony between parents and children is not simply a cultural problem; it implicitly pictures a false gospel of a Father who does not hear His Son, and a Son who does not honor His Father.

**The Family and Spiritual Conflict**

Only when we step back and see the fuller mosaic of the Christic mystery behind the family do we perceive something of why family disorder is always with us, in every age between Eden and the New Jerusalem. Paul tells the church at Ephesus that the mystery of the Christ/church union is a sign of the "manifold wisdom of God" that is now made known to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). It is no accident, then, that Paul writes of marriage in Ephesians 5 and childrearing in Ephesians 6 in the context of an ongoing discussion of spiritual warfare (Eph 4:14–6:20). In his Patmos vision to the apostle John, Jesus sums up all of redemptive history in the image of a woman clothed with the sun, giving birth to a child who is to rule the nations.[23] Crouched to devour the man-child is a dragon, which pursues the woman and her child with fury. This dragon—identified as the Serpent of Eden—despises the people of God precisely because from this people comes the Messiah. This is exactly the story first unveiled in the curse of the Serpent in the oracle

[23]For an excellent discussion of Revelation 12 as a recapitulation of redemptive history, see G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation,* New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 621–79.

of God in the Edenic garden. Yes, the woman will experience the cursed tumult of birth pangs (Gen 3:17; Rev 12:2), yet she shall be saved through childbearing (1 Tim 2:15). It is the offspring of the woman who will crush the skull of the snake-god (Gen 3:15) and thus through His pierced flesh and spilled blood free the human race from the tyranny of the satanic accusation (Rev 12:10).

It is little accident, then, that the Serpent's strategies turn in the biblical storyline to disrupting the *shalom* of the marital covenant, of the integrity of the sexual union, of the parent/child bond, and of the church as the household of God. These are icons of the mystery of Christ, visible images of the gospel against which the demonic powers rage in fury. The destruction of those made in the image of God is an act of violence against the God of the image (Gen 9:6), thus the satanic powers are murderous "from the beginning" (John 8:44). Likewise, the destruction of a Christ-imaging, gospel-announcing family order is as antichrist as desecrating the temple of God. This is why no generation of humanity is exempt from such warfare.

The spiritual warfare aspect of the family is also why the Scripture places such a close tie between family breakdown and occultism, with sexual immorality repeatedly tied to idolatry and vice versa.[24] The Scripture repeatedly shows the people of God drawn away by the demonic through fertility rituals, cultic prostitution, child sacrifice, and anointed kings and judges who are led to idolatry through sexual relationships with foreign women. The warfare of the Serpent against the Seed of Abraham cyclically involves the slaughter of children in the attempt to snuff out the messianic line (Exod 1:1–22; Matt 2:16–18). The mystery of the Christ/church archetype was revealed, it should be remembered, to a congregation in the shadow of the temple of a fertility goddess (Acts 19:21–41).

In the Scripture, this cosmic rage against the family order is decidedly personal. The counsel of a father to a son in the Proverbs speaks of the pull toward a man destroying his family through adultery as one who is led along as an animal to the slaughter, right to the abode of the dead (Prov 5–7). The foolish man is not just indulging his urges; he is listening to a voice (Prov 9:13–18). In forbidding an "unequal yoke" between believers and unbelievers, the apostle Paul echoes the Old Testament tie between paganism and marriage to unbelievers. Paul does not refer to the implications of such a union, first of all, for the couple's intimacy or the difficulties it would bring to childrearing. He asks instead, "What accord has Christ with Belial" (2 Cor 6:15)? Paul speaks of the man who scandalizes

[24]For a thorough treatment of the "whoredom" motif in the Old and New Testaments, see Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *God's Unfaithful Wife: A Biblical Theology of Spiritual Adultery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996).

the church and the culture by consorting with his father's wife as though he were prey for a predator. He instructs the congregation to hand the man over, through the Kingdom authority granted by Christ, "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor 5:5). Paul commands married couples to have sex regularly. This is not just because sexuality bonds the couple together and increases intimacy—although that is certainly true. It is a matter of spiritual warfare, "so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:5).

Like every other aspect of the wreckage of Eden, the curse that tears asunder the family order is absorbed in Jesus who reconciles the universe "by the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20). In living out the obedient trust in the Father that Adam and Israel refused, Jesus' covenant righteousness included obedience to every aspect of the Law of God, including that of obedience to parents (Luke 2:51). Even as He drowns in His own blood, Jesus fulfills righteousness by doing precisely what the Pharisees rebelled against in their own families: providing for his mother's care (John 19:26–27) even as the sword pierces her own soul just as the prophet foretold (Luke 2:35). Paul tells the church at Galatia that on the cross the sin-bearing Messiah "became a curse for us" (Gal 3:13–14), referring to Deuteronomy 21 that a man hanged on a tree is cursed by God (Deut 21:22–23).

This text immediately follows a similar instruction from Moses that says:

> If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst and all Israel shall hear, and fear (Deut 21:18–21).

Jesus indeed is charged by the elders of Israel with being a rebellious son, with being a glutton and a drunkard (Matt 11:19). He is indeed taken outside the gates of the city where He bears the curse of God, not for His own rebellion (for there was none) but for that of Adam's race. And, after absorbing in His body the full measure of the curse against the Edenic revolt, after tasting death, Jesus is raised to announce to the women at his tomb, "Go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God, and Your God" (John 21:17). He establishes a

community, a household, a family. And as the gospel goes forward through the ages and through the nations, He and His Bride are fruitful, and they multiply.

And so we are not surprised when the fallen creation is repulsed by the family order. It pictures for them Christ, the light of the world, from whom the Satan-blinded cosmos retreats into the darkness (John 3:19). The powers will ask us to deify sex, in a hedonism unhinged from the creation purposes of God (Rom 1:24–28). After all, what could be more cosmically mysterious than the ecstasy of orgasm? The powers will then ask us to reject gender, in a severing of procreation from sex. After all, who needs "male and female He created them" when we have mastered human cloning? But we do not give up on a culture because they have twisted the family order. The darkness does not overcome the Light (John 1:5). At the root of all sin, including family chaos, there is not some insurmountable obstacle to the advance of the gospel. Ultimately, it is just the same old conspiracy of power-hungry demons and fallen humanity. In the spattered bloodstains of Golgotha and the empty grave-clothes of the garden tomb, the demons are routed, humanity redeemed.

## The Path Ahead

The radical environmentalist Edward Abbey was probably on to something when he said, "Anyone who says he loves the Universe, or God, or Life, is probably neglecting his wife."[25] Abbey had probably seen countless people—among eco-radical secularists but, sadly, perhaps among evangelical Christians, too—who offer abstract slogans rather than flesh-and-blood love and respect. If Southern Baptists are going to cast a compelling Baptist vision of the family, we must articulate a program very different from what Abbey, and most of the rest of global culture, have heard from American Christianity. But such a move will mean that Southern Baptists probably will lose some influence, some affluence, and some social capital in exchange for seeing the family as part of a purpose-driven cosmos.

### Recovering a Warfare Vision

For too long, Southern Baptists have maintained some right ideas about the family, even unpopular ones, while keeping those ideas segregated neatly from the broader picture of the gospel to which we witness. To engage this issue, Southern Baptists must walk away from modernism and see once again the universe as the Scripture unveils it: as an invisible conflict of the kingdoms, a satanic horror-show being invaded by the reign

[25]Edward Abbey, *Postcards from Ed: Dispatches and Salvos from an American Iconoclast* (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2006), 79.

of Christ. This means that a Baptist vision of the family must be grounded in a "warfare worldview."[26] This worldview is particularly needed in an era when Western Christians are all too distant from the demon-haunted landscape of the Old and New Testaments, so much so that we unwittingly are blind to the personal and cosmic aspects of the struggle around us.

In his seminal study on thriving Christianity in the Global South, Phillip Jenkins attributes part of the resurgence of conservative Christianity in the Third World to the consonance between the biblical worldview of unseen spiritual conflict and that of African and Asian cultures. When the gospel comes with power and conviction, an African ex-animist or an Asian ex-ancestor worshipper is able to read the Bible better than an American ex-rationalist can, precisely because, at this point, their idolatries are closer to the truth of God than ours are. This mindset explains why the Global South churches see such a connection between Christian orthodoxy and family stability. "This spiritual-warfare perspective helps explain the depth and fury and alarm expressed in recent sexual controversies within the Anglican Communion," Jenkins writes. "When conservative African and Asian clergy invoked the name of the diabolical in these conflicts, they were not just indulging in overheated rhetoric."[27] We have much to learn from our African and Asian brothers and sisters here.

Yes, Southern Baptists have an "outrage" catharsis about the culture, but can we say that we have acted with "depth and fury and alarm" about our own divorce culture, about our own family breakdowns, about the loss of more and more of our baptized adolescents to post-Christian American culture? Unlike our African and Asian and Middle-Eastern brothers and sisters, we fail to see reptilian eyes behind such things. Could it be that God will humble Southern Baptists by making the Bible belt a mission field for Nigerian and Indonesian Christian missionaries, who will explain to hurting families who their real enemy is—and how to crush his head? If Southern Baptists were to embrace the supernatural perspective we say we believe, however, we would have much more to say. We would seem much less sophisticated, much more backward, much less at home in modern America.[28] It is far easier, and yet far more costly, to keep our talk of demons and spiritual warfare locked away in our closed but inerrant Bibles, lest anyone should mistake us for Pentecostals.

[26]Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997). Boyd integrates this warfare motif with unorthodox notions of God and providence, but the structure itself is hardly unique to him, but is the framework of the biblical narrative itself.

[27]Phillip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 102.

[28]For a discussion of the loss of the angelic and the demonic in Western religion, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Penguin, 1971).

A Kingdom warfare worldview—articulated in our pulpits, our Sunday school rooms, our dining room tables—would mean that Southern Baptists should walk away from a belligerent "culture warrior" tone when addressing the outside culture. If we remember—even in debates over the family—that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness" (Eph 6:12), then we are less likely to see those on the other side of "family values" debates as enemies to be vaporized. We will see that the enemy is not Hillary Clinton or Hugh Hefner, but a much less easily tracked foe. We will not mock with derision—even just among ourselves—the transvestites marching in the parade on Main Street of our community, nor will we sit silently as our sons don lingerie. We will be able, as the apostle instructs us, to be "kind to everyone" in order that "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Tim 2:22, 24–26). This compassion does not mean that we back down one iota from declaring the whole counsel of God on the family—or anything else. To the contrary, it means that we do so with vigor, but with tears in our eyes as we see our fellow image-bearers in the clutches of this era's dragon-king. It does mean, though, that our public discourse will lack the "You kids get off my lawn" type of ethos that it far too often carries.

This warfare perspective means that Southern Baptists would be more attentive to the family, not less, because we recognize that it is a target for the demonic beings that see in it a symbol of their downfall drawing near. We then must equip our own congregations to see the subtlety and craftiness of the Serpent's strategies "so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Cor 2:11). A biblically literate Southern Baptist church will be able to see that the demonic beings do not mind shifting tactics from generation to generation; wherever people are unsuspecting as to their own weakness, they will strike. If Bathsheba will not take down a son of Adam, then Babylon can; if not hedonism, then Pharisaism will do. It is at this point that Southern Baptists are especially vulnerable, because we fail to see how the family chaos around us is directly related to our captivity to our appetites.

Philosopher Leon Kass identifies in the Genesis text the core of what it means that our enemy is called a snake in Scripture. "For the serpent is a mobile digestive tract that swallows its prey whole; in this sense the serpent stands for pure appetite," he writes. "At the same time, the serpent is cold, steely-eyed, and unblinking; in this respect he is the image of pure attentiveness and icy calculation."[29] It is no accident, then, that the

[29]Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 81.

Scripture warns us against the path of Esau, who sells the inheritance of his father for a pile of red stew (Heb 12:16–17), and that the Bible directs us away from the god of the belly (Phil 3:19). From the tree in the garden onward to the wilderness beyond the Jordan to the present hour, the powers challenge the sonship of humans precisely by aiming at turning their digestive or reproductive tracts away from the Christic mystery and toward the self as god.

We have become the people that Jesus warned us about. Southern Baptists more and more want to distance ourselves from our blue-collar, economically impoverished roots, and more and more wish to be seen as affluent, suburban, and politically influential. But this comes with a cost. The reason we have made peace with the sexual revolution is because we are captive to the love of money. Southern Baptist men and women want to live with the same standard of living as the culture around them, and, as the Spirit warns, we will grind our churches and our families to pieces to get there (Jas 4:1–4). Why does the seemingly godly deacon in a conservative Southern Baptist church in north Georgia drive his pregnant teenage daughter to Atlanta under cover of darkness to obtain an abortion? Because, however he votes his "values," when crisis hits, he wants his daughter to have a "normal" life. He is "pro-life" with, as one feminist leader put it three exceptions: rape, incest, and my situation.[30]

Why do Southern Baptist parents, contra Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7, encourage their young adult children to delay marriage years past the time it takes to discern whether this union would be of the Lord? Why do we smilingly tell them to wait until they can "afford" it? It is because, to our shame, we deem fornication a less awful reality than financial ruin. Why do Southern Baptist pastors speak bluntly about homosexuality and X-rated movies, but never address the question of whether institutionalized day-care is good for children, or for parents? It is because pastors know that couples would say that they could never afford to live on the provision of the husband alone. And they are right, if living means living in the neighborhoods in which they now live, with the technologies they now have. Christian pastors know that no godly woman will ever say on her deathbed, "If only I had put the children in daycare so that I could have pursued my career." But do Southern Baptist pastors ever ask whether it might be better to live in a one-bedroom apartment or a trailer park than to follow this American dream? Rarely, because it seems so inconceivable to us that it doesn't even seem like an option. When confronted with the

[30]This line is attributed to Kate Michelman, formerly of the National Abortion Rights Action League. Elizabeth Achtemeier cites it in an address to the Presbyterians Pro-Life meeting at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), 3 June 1993.

challenge of a counter-cultural, family-affirming—but economically less acquisitive—life, too often we see what our inerrant Bibles define as the joyful life, and then we walk away saddened like another rich young ruler before us who wanted eternal life but wanted his possessions more (Luke 18:18–30).

Here Southern Baptists could stand to listen to some of our liberal critics, who deny a biblical understanding of the family but who seem to understand the connection between the whirl of familial destruction and the corporate culture we take for granted. After all, they are not usually Greenwich Village bohemians in tie-dye shirts or eco-feminist Marxists with Darwin fish on their Volkswagen vans who are producing the cultural pornotopia that America is exporting around the world, and right into our churches. They are more likely to be conservative Republicans in three-piece suits, and some of them know some Fanny Crosby songs by heart and know what a baptistery looks like from the inside. They vote their values too. Southern Baptists assume that consumer culture is morally neutral, and that American corporatism must be godly, since it is opposed so strongly by the culture warriors of the Left. But the counter-culture there is an illusion. Both left and right in the American mainstream are captive to the ideology that the appetites are to be indulged; the heart wants what it wants, by whatever system will do it most efficiently.

Philosophers Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter are correct that the counter-culture and the consumer culture are symbiotic. As they put it, "In the end, it is just people fighting for their right to party."[31] We should ask, then, whether Ralph Nader (yes, *that* Ralph Nader) is right that television advertising is a threat to the family order, since "corporations have decided that kids under twelve are a lucrative market, and they sell directly to them, subverting parental authority."[32] Could it be that Ronald McDonald and digitalized talking "Christian" vegetable cartoons are just as erosive of the family as the cultural rot we are accustomed to denouncing? Could it be that the consumer culture we mimic in our own church and denominational programs is, in reality, just as hedonistic as a truck-stop "peep show" booth, and for the same reasons?

**Recovering a Christocentric Vision**

If the family is under assault by demonic beings, then the ultimate antidote for hurting families is for churches to offer what frightens and disperses the demons: Jesus Christ. Southern Baptist churches believe the

[31]Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture* (San Francisco: Harper, 2004), 322.

[32]David Wallis, "Give Them the Business: Questions for Ralph Nader," *New York Times Magazine,* 16 June 2002.

gospel, and we know we should evangelize the lost. Too often, however, we preach as though the gospel were for unbelievers only, as though Christ crucified is the initiatory truth of the Christian life, followed by a series of ethical principles and life-coaching. This is not the preaching of the prophets and apostles, and such preaching does little to disturb the powers-that-be. Southern Baptists know they should believe the Bible, and they should preach it. But Southern Baptist churches must present the Bible not as a series of disconnected proof-texts but as a coherent and holistic vision centered on the unveiled mystery of Jesus Christ. There is no passage in the Old or New Testaments that is not about Jesus Christ and His gospel, because there is no aspect of reality that is not, ultimately, about God's goal for creation in Jesus Christ through the gospel.

Southern Baptist church members should not just see the commands of Scripture or the positive and negative examples of Scripture. Instead, they should see how their small storylines (including their family lives) fit in the overall storyline of Christ Jesus (Rom 8:28–29). Southern Baptist husbands and wives, and children and young adults, should see modeled constantly from the pulpit how to find their identity in Christ, how to be freed from condemnation through the triumph of Christ, and how to walk with Him in His Spirit (Rom 8:1–8) towards a cosmic inheritance that demonstrates the paltriness of the satanic offers of the kingdoms of self-satisfaction, self-vindication, or self-exaltation (Matt 4:1–11).

We must ask ourselves honestly whether the divorce culture and the adultery crisis in our churches have not been fueled in part by our own preaching. When we reduce marriage to endless sermon series on "Putting the Sizzle Back in Your Spouse" and "Ten Tips for Couples for a Hotter, Holier Romance," are we not contributing to the very same emphasis on hormonally-driven acquisitiveness as the culture, rather than on the model of a Christ who displays not just affection but fidelity to His Bride? Is it any wonder, then, that so many of our men and women—who have professed to believe the gospel—are willing to abandon their spouses and children when they find a new "soul-mate?" Could it be, at least in part because they felt the thrill of the new, the same kind of "spark" their car-radio pop songs and their pastor's marriage workshops tell them they always should feel when they are in love?

This means that family issues must be seen not as merely "moral" issues but gospel issues—because they have everything to do with God's announcement of Christ to the powers. Our evangelism training cannot stop with teaching our church members how to walk through a tract with a neighbor. It must also include how to preach the gospel through kept wedding vows and discipled children. It does not matter how insistently we proclaim eternal security; when those growing up in our churches see the

icon of the union of Jesus and His church being destroyed week by week after divorce, they are hearing a more compelling message. It does not matter how much we preach the holiness of God; a father who doesn't discipline his children is preaching to them the exact same sermon first voiced from a tree somewhere in Eden: "You shall not surely die." A teenage boy who tells himself that he has kept his "True Love Waits" promise by stopping at oral sex is not just hurting his walk with God, he is believing—and proclaiming—a false gospel. The teenage girl who is starving herself into conformity with the pixilated images on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine is crying out not just for a better self-image, but for a vision of Christ. The man who sits upstairs viewing Internet pornography while his wife chauffeurs the kids to soccer practice is not some unusual "pervert," he is (like his forefather Adam) seeking the mystery of the universe apart from Christ. The middle-aged woman who pores over romance novels fantasizing about an idealized man less disappointing than her husband is not just a sad figure, but one who is desperate for a picture of the gospel. With our pews laden down with worshippers seeking a counterfeit mystery, an alternative gospel, is it not time that Southern Baptists learned once again to address the "felt needs" of our people by presenting a captivating, imaginative, and biblical portrayal of the One who is both their deepest longing and their scariest fear: Jesus Christ?

**Recovering an Ecclesial Vision**

A speech on family values is much more likely to get applause at the Southern Baptist Convention than a speech on regenerate church membership. But only regenerate church communities, outposts of the Kingdom of Christ, can provide the alternative vision of the family we so desperately need. The apostle Paul reveals that pastors must have well-ordered households since "if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church" (1 Tim 3:5)? But the reverse is also true. If one cannot care for God's church, then how can he manage his own household? The church, after all, is the "the household of God," which is also to be well ordered (1 Tim 3:15). How can churches castigate the outside culture for believing the family structure is socially malleable when we fail in our ecclesial households to distinguish between those who are brothers and sisters, and those who are not (Matt 18:15; 1 Cor 5:11)?

The loss of the disciplined church is especially tragic in the wake of the scandal within the family structure within our own churches. What would happen if Southern Baptist churches, en masse, began to involve the entire church household in a marriage in crisis? What would happen if rather than quietly allowing a divorcing man to join a different Sunday

school class with his new wife, we called him to repentance, publicly, with the authority of Christ? What would happen if we, on the first word of accusation about spousal abuse, handed the unrepentant pugilist over to Satan spiritually for the destruction of the flesh (1 Cor 5:5) and over to Caesar legally for the avenging of wrongdoing (Rom 13:4)? What would happen if single mothers in our communities were treated as widows, cared for by the entire congregation spiritually, socially, and, where needed, economically? Perhaps if such churches were more common, we would have a decreasing need for parachurch organizations to train our people how to love their spouses and discipline their children because our people would see such on display every Lord's Day in the assembly of Christ.

The renewal of our churches for the sake of the family would mean a re-visioning of the pastorate. How can we teach our children to honor their parents, when in so many of our churches, the "fathers" of the church—the pastors God has placed over the care of His people—are treated with such disdain and dishonor, contrary to the explicit teaching of Scripture (Heb 13:7)? Can baby-boomer Christians—especially Southern Baptists—really be surprised at a younger generation that despises the authority of their parents, when so many of them have seen their pastors eviscerated by power struggles in congregational business meetings, or the subject of anonymous letter-writing campaigns and psychological warfare? On the other hand, we must question how the short-term pastorates so common in Southern Baptist life in the contemporary era have affected our vision of the family. No one is suggesting that a man ought to stay in the same pastorate, necessarily, all his life. But, could it be, that many pastors lack credibility when they instruct a man to remain faithful to his wife—even in the face of her Alzheimer's disease or his layoff at the factory or their son's cocaine problem—when so many of our families have seen pastor after pastor react to the first sign of hard times in a congregation by leaving for a more hospitable locale?

Finally, the renewal of the church will mean intentional one-on-one discipleship. This does not mean a new set of curricula from Nashville. It means modeling in our churches the way the Spirit has always worked: through older men mentoring younger men; older women mentoring younger women. We must recognize as did the apostle Paul that the demonic strategies against men and women are often different—focused as they are on the complementary vocations of each sex (1 Tim 2:8–15). We must also recognize that the fruits of sanctification often look different in men and in women, as both grow into the glory of their respective differences (Titus 2:2–3; 1 Pet 3:1–7). It is no accident that Paul refers repeatedly to his relationship with Timothy as that of a "father" with a "son," or

that Ruth is identified with Naomi as a daughter with her mother (Ruth 4:14–17).

Men in our congregations must take responsibility for the discipleship of our boys and young men, training them away from a pagan hypermasculinity that deifies the appetites and hurts women and children. "If you destroy the ideal of the 'gentle man' and remove from men all expectations of courtesy and consideration toward women and children, you have prepared the way for an epidemic of rape and abuse," warns agrarian Wendell Berry. "If you depreciate the sanctity and solemnity of marriage, not just as a bond between two people but as a bond between those two people and their forebears, their children, and their neighbors, then you have prepared the way for an epidemic of divorce, child neglect, community ruin, and loneliness."[33] Berry is exactly right, and is, perhaps unwittingly, strikingly biblical at this point. Women in our congregations must take responsibility for the discipleship of our girls and young women, training them away from the siren song of seeing themselves as sexual objects for the enjoyment of predatory men and towards seeing themselves as faithful "daughters of Sarah" (1 Pet 3:3–6).

With both men and women, such discipleship must be borne of genuine friendship, rooted in churches that celebrate authentic community. With both men and women, such discipleship is not simply about so-called "spiritual" things, but about how to make one's way in the world. Paul instructs Timothy not simply about doctrinal matters, but about his stomach ailments (1 Tim 5:23). The older women of Titus 2 train their protégés not only in the content of Scripture but how to work within their households and love their husbands and children (Titus 2:3–5). As we know from the Book of Proverbs, after all, such matters are "spiritual" too.

## Conclusion

The sexual revolution and the "changing American family": these are the status quo in a Satan-haunted cosmos. A truly biblical Southern Baptist vision of the family will not point to the 1950s (AD *or* BC), but to the Kingdom of Christ. Perhaps the continuing upheaval over the family will force Baptists either to fully and explicitly accommodate to the culture, so that our churches lose the lamp-stand of the presence of Christ, or to create authentically counter-cultural churches and families. If the latter, Baptists should be prepared to be much less comfortable in contemporary American culture. Perhaps we will have less impressive "Family Life Centers" and more impressive family lives. Maybe the next generation of

[33]Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community* (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 124–25.

Baptists will look much less respectable to their communities than we do; maybe their commitment to fidelity, discipline, self-sacrifice, and love will make them seem bizarre. But maybe, just maybe, this cultural weirdness will be the very thing the Spirit uses to prompt the culture to ask why such is the case. Maybe those who hear when He speaks of earthly things can then believe Him in heavenly things (John 3:12). Perhaps then, by picturing the mystery of Christ, Southern Baptists will show the culture around them what a real revolution, sexual and otherwise, looks like.

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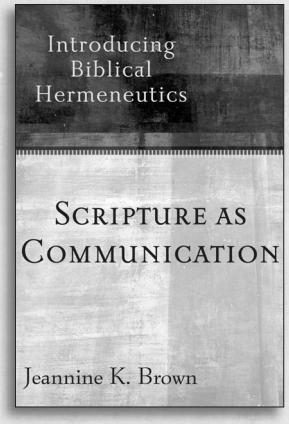


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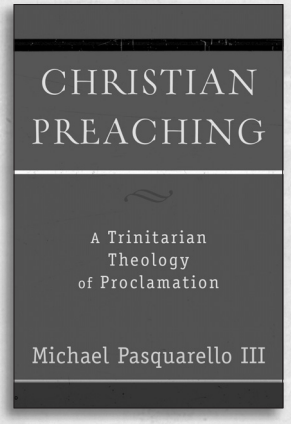


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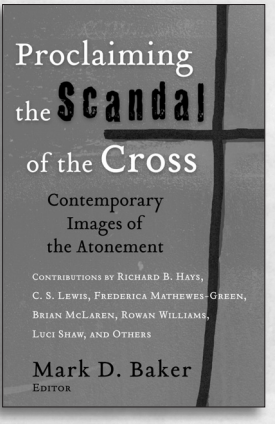


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# *Exchanging the Natural for the Unnatural: Homosexuality's Distortion of God's Design*

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On August 30, 2007, Judge Robert Hanson of Polk County, Iowa, ruled as unconstitutional the Iowa law forbidding homosexual individuals the right to enter into marriage and take advantage of the legal protections and benefits of marriage. In his decision, Hanson makes the following observation regarding homosexuality as he writes, "Homosexuality is a normal expression of human sexuality. Although homosexuality once was classified as a mental disorder or abnormality, empirical research since the 1950s consistently has failed to provide an empirical or scientific basis for this view, which has been renounced by professionals in multiple disciplines."[1] At the conclusion of his judgment, Hanson declares the Iowa law to be unconstitutional and declares, "Couples, such as plaintiffs, who are otherwise qualified to marry one another may not be denied licenses to marry or certificates of marriage or in any other way prevented from entering into a civil marriage pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 595 by reason of the fact that both persons comprising such a couple are of the same sex."[2] With this most recent judgment in the ongoing fight regarding homosexual marriage, we are reminded again of the emotions, politics and controversy surrounding homosexuality.

While much of the discussion regarding homosexuality takes place in the political and judicial arenas, the church is not immune from the emotions, controversy and even politics of this discussion as well. At the 2003 Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, homosexual activists protested the work of the convention as delegates from all across the country affirmed the convention's stance against

[1]*Katherine Varnum, et al. v. Timothy J. Brien*, Iowa District Court for Polk County, Case No. CV5965, http://desmoinesregister.com/assets/pdf/D284280830.PDF (accessed 11 September 2007).

[2]Ibid.

homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle. Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans are divided over the issue, and they potentially face major divisions among their denominations if they do not settle the issue in short order.[3] No matter the denomination, churches face the reality of dealing with homosexuality on a regular basis.

While the church in the past held generally to a consensus regarding homosexuality, various denominations have changed their stances recently.[4] In order for the church to address the issue of homosexuality effectively, we must depart from the vitriolic, political rancor that so often characterizes such discussions and turn to Scripture's treatment of the topic. Rather than focusing on public opinion, we need to concern ourselves with the only opinion that matters—the teaching of Scripture. Unfortunately, dedicating ourselves to the task of studying Scripture's discussions of homosexuality is not as easy as it may first appear. It has become more common for biblical scholars to interpret the six major passages dealing with homosexuality positively or at least neutrally in reference to it.[5] Since those passages have not been subject to new discoveries in the field of textual criticism, the difference in interpretation has been the result of a different hermeneutic.[6]

Space does not allow for us to survey all the Scripture passages related to homosexuality. Due to its specific reference to homosexuality and the nature of Paul's argument within its context, Romans 1:26–27 is perhaps the most significant passage of Scripture regarding this issue. This paper will review and evaluate the hermeneutic approaches of those who use Scripture, specifically Romans 1:26–27, to support homosexuality. In order to accomplish this purpose, the paper will examine the supposedly

[3]For a discussion of denominational strife regarding homosexuality and other sexual issues, see Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 89–112.

[4]Mark Liederbach observes, "Before 1950, Christianity's doctrinal statements or rulings remained consistently opposed to homosexuality. Since then, however, there has been a dramatic change in society toward this issue." Mark Daniel Liederbach, "A Historical-Theological Evaluation of John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* Three Points of Debate: Behavior, Orientation, and Church Discipline" (M.A. thesis, Denver Seminary, 1993), 3.

[5]Most scholars agree that the six passages addressing homosexuality are Gen 19:1–11; Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9–11; and 1 Tim 1:10. Some also discuss Judg 19:1–26; Ruth 1; and 1 Sam 18:1–4; however, there is very little consensus concerning whether those passages have any relation to homosexuality. Some of the arguments, such as the relationship between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel have been used by some to give biblical precedent for homosexual relationships; however, most scholars who support homosexuality do not even reference those passages. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1993), 189.

[6]Heimbach asserts that this new hermeneutic is the result of a return to sexual paganism within the culture and even within the church. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 52–54, 71–73.

scriptural arguments of proponents of homosexuality, evaluating in particular the hermeneutical principles employed by those authors, then draw applications for the church concerning homosexuality. In the end, we will see that proponents of homosexuality employ faulty hermeneutics to reach their conclusions and that Scripture does indeed forbid the exchange of the natural for the unnatural concerning God's design for sexuality.

## Evaluation of Arguments Treating Romans 1:26–27 as Supporting Homosexuality

The passage of Romans 1:26–27 "is the best-known and most-often cited passage in Christian debates about homosexuality."[7] The passage also appears to be the clearest prohibition against homosexuality in the entire Bible, but there is a substantial group of interpreters who see this passage in a different light. Romans 1:26–27 reads, "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."[8] Proponents of homosexuality offer several interpretations that eliminate the apparent proscription against homosexual behavior.

### Idolatry

Some believe that the prohibition of homosexuality in Romans 1:26–27 is part of a larger prohibition against idolatry as pronounced throughout Romans 1:18–32. Margaret Davies notes, "In Rom. 1:18 ff., an argument is advanced which suggests that idolatry leads to unethical behaviour because it suppresses the truth about God, the creator of the world, and encourages a futility in understanding, a foolishness which exchanges the glory of the immortal God for images of creatures."[9] The basis for this interpretation comes from vv. 18–19, which read, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them." Thus, the homosexuality forbidden in this passage is merely that which results from an idolatrous expression of one suppressing the truth of God. Therefore, it

[7]Marcus J. Borg, "Homosexuality and the New Testament," *Bible Review* 10 (1994): 20.

[8]All Scripture passages are quoted from the New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition.

[9]Margaret Davies, "New Testament Ethics and Ours: Homosexuality and Sexuality in Romans 1:26–27," *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995): 317.

is not homosexuality expressed within a "God-honoring" relationship or atmosphere; rather, it is an action expressed as a result of rebelling against God. Davies claims this interpretation reflects a Jewish understanding of Hellenistic culture: "Two aspects of a Hellenistic way of life particularly offended Jews, idolatry and homosexual practice, and the two are related as cause and effect."[10]

It is significant that Scripture states that God has abandoned these individuals because they have suppressed the truth about him. Leland J. White observes, "Clearly, Paul depicts God as abandoning those who do not honor him, who fall into idolatry. Thus, those condemned are outside Israel, possibly outside the faithful remnant of Israel. This is a diatribe against the gentiles. God, who created them, has abandoned them, i.e., no longer claims them as dependents. Thus, without honor, they act dishonorably, lacking control over their bodies."[11] The abandonment by God results in immoral behavior. Therefore, their arguments follow the line of thought that idolatry leads to abandonment which results in homosexual behavior. In essence, this interpretation holds God responsible for homosexuality.

The link with idolatry is sometimes attributed to temple prostitution, which could be both homosexual and heterosexual in nature. Boswell notes, "It is sometimes argued that the significance of the passage lies in its connection with idolatry: i.e., that Paul censures the sexual behavior of the Romans because he associates such behavior with orgiastic pagan rites in honor of false gods."[12] This connection is made through Old Testament condemnations of temple prostitution and the somewhat common practice of temple prostitution in the first century. However, Boswell does not believe that such a link is completely accurate:

> First of all, there is no reason to believe that homosexual temple prostitution was more prevalent than heterosexual or that Paul, had he been addressing himself to such practices, would have limited his comments to the former. Second, it is clear that the sexual behavior itself is objectionable to Paul, not merely its associations. Third, and possibly most important, Paul is not describing cold-blooded, dispassionate acts performed in the interest of ritual or ceremony: he states very clearly that the parties involved "burned in their lust one toward another" ("ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους"). It is unrea-

[10]Ibid.

[11]Leland J. White, "Does the Bible Speak about Gays or Same-Sex Orientation? A Test Case in Biblical Ethics: Part I," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 25 (1995): 23.

[12]John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 108.

> sonable to infer from the passage that there was any motive for the behavior other than sexual desire.[13]

Part of Boswell's solution to this problem is to link homosexuality to the Gentiles' rejection of monotheism. He argues that "it should be recognized that the point of the passage is not to stigmatize sexual behavior of any sort but to condemn the Gentiles for their general infidelity. There was a time, Paul implies, when monotheism was offered to or known by the Romans, but they rejected it (vv. 19–23). The reference to homosexuality is simply a mundane analogy to this theological sin; it is patently not the crux of this argument."[14] According to this interpretation, homosexuality is not even the point of the context surrounding Rom 1:26–27, and students of Scripture are in error to impose a proscription against it based on this passage. Fundamentally, idolatry is what Paul condemns, not homosexuality.

The problem with this interpretation of the passage is that it dismisses the plain reading of Scripture for a more circuitous interpretation that may be equally valid, yet not the direct intention of the immediate text. The hermeneutical principle employed in this interpretation may be called the rule of purpose. Charles H. Cosgrove defines the rule of purpose as follows: "The purpose (or justification) behind a biblical moral rule carries greater weight than the rule itself."[15] In this interpretation, one sees the overall purpose of the passage to condemn idolatry; thus, the purpose of the passage outweighs any specific prohibition that may be viewed as untenable by future generations. While Cosgrove affirms the use of this rule, he admits that it can be subjective and lead to antithetical interpretations. Thus, one's interpretation based upon the rule of purpose would be no more authoritative than someone else's formulation. Since both could not be right, this principle becomes unworkable on the basis of subjectivity and must be cast aside by any exegete seeking the meaning of Scripture and its applicability for homosexuality.[16]

Certainly, idolatry is in view in the larger context of Romans 1 and may bear some significance to the proscription against homosexuality. In Romans 1:22–23 Paul writes, "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." Thus, part of the depravity of foolish men was that they traded

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 108–09.

[15]Charles H. Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture in Moral Debate: Five Hermeneutical Rules* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 12.

[16]For a full treatment of the rule of principle's application to homosexuality in Romans 1:26–27, see Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture*, 37–44.

worship of God for worship of images, idols, and creatures—idolatry. However, a better way to view Paul's statements about homosexuality in relation to these about idolatry is to see them as comparable distortions. The ungodly and unrighteous have distorted a proper worship of God by actively pursuing idolatry. In the same way, the ungodly and unrighteous have distorted a proper understanding of sexuality by actively pursuing the unnatural relations of homosexuality. The root of the problem, therefore, is a rebellion against God in unrighteousness, and idolatry and homosexuality are manifestations of this rebellion. Richard B. Hays sums up this idea as he states, "The genius of Paul's analysis, of course, lies in his refusal to posit a catalogue of sins as the cause of human alienation from God. Instead, he delves to the root: all other depravities *follow* from the radical rebellion of the creature against the creator."[17]

**Homosexual Acts versus Homosexual Orientation**

The most significant argument made concerning this passage and its relation to homosexuality is the matter of homosexual orientation. Some interpreters believe that when Paul condemned those who exchanged the "natural function" for the "unnatural," he was speaking to heterosexual individuals who participated in homosexual acts, rather than homosexually-oriented individuals. Paul could not have known that certain individuals had a "natural" homosexual orientation. Arland J. Hultgren writes, "In 1:27 Paul is not speaking of homosexual attraction on the part of males. The concept of sexual orientation, including homosexual orientation, had to wait another nineteen centuries to be formulated."[18] Since Paul was incapable of understanding sexual orientation, according to this interpretation, he could not have condemned homosexuals who were acting according to their nature. Instead, Boswell states that "the persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by apparently heterosexual persons. The whole point of Romans 1, in fact, is to stigmatize persons who have rejected their calling, gotten off the true path they were once on."[19]

In Paul's limited, first-century understanding of the human condition, he would only have recognized the relationship between a man and a woman as evidenced from the creation narrative in Genesis 1 and 2. Abraham Smith declares, "Paul's cultural interpretation of the Genesis traditions would indeed have left him with only one option for sexual relationships—

[17]Richard B. Hays, "Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 (1986): 189.

[18]Arland J. Hultgren, "Being Faithful to the Scriptures: Romans 1:26–27 as a Case in Point," *Word & World* 14 (1994): 319.

[19]Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 109.

that between a male and a female."[20] According to Boswell, this would be part of the only valid application of the term "natural" (φύσιν) because there was not a fully developed understanding of natural law in Paul's day. Boswell asserts, "The concept of 'natural law' was not fully developed until more than a millennium after Paul's death, and it is anachronistic to read it into his words."[21] Thus, there is no moral significance attached to Paul's words; it is merely a matter of character. Boswell continues, "For Paul, 'nature' was not a question of universal law or truth but, rather, a matter of *character* of some person or group of persons, a character which was largely ethnic and entirely human. . . . 'Nature' is not a moral force for Paul: men may be evil or good 'by nature,' depending on their own disposition."[22] In Paul's purely Jewish understanding, he would not have any knowledge of a natural relationship outside one between a man and a woman.

In addition to Paul's understanding of natural relationships, this interpretation presupposes that his use of the phrase παρὰ φύσιν limits what is meant by "unnatural." Boswell claims, "'Against' is, moreover, a somewhat misleading translation of the preposition 'παρά.' In New Testament usage 'παρά' connotes not 'in opposition to' (expressed by 'κατά') but, rather, 'more than,' 'in excess of'. . . ."[23] This means that the "unnatural" actions of homosexuality are just more than what is normally expected from natural behavior, and not necessarily immoral. John J. McNeill argues that the term φύσιν represents not a created nature but a learned behavior as he writes that "the character referred to by *phúsis* does not necessarily represent something that is innate, but could be a matter of training and social conditioning."[24] Boswell further elaborates, "Finally, this exact same phrase—'παρὰ φύσιν'—is used later in the same epistle to describe the activity of God in saving the Gentiles . . . (Rom 11:24). Since God himself is here described as acting 'against nature,' it is inconceivable that this phrase necessarily connotes moral turpitude."[25] With such an understanding of παρὰ φύσιν, proponents of this view believe that the condemnation of homosexual acts cannot be a moral condemnation. Instead, Paul simply notes the unusual nature of such behavior, but not something that is morally impermissible.

The foundation for this interpretation of the passage is the belief that the progression of science since the first century to the twenty-first has

[20]Abraham Smith, "The New Testament and Homosexuality," *Quarterly Review* 11 (Winter 1991): 25.

[21]Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 110.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid., 111.

[24]John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, 1976), 54.

[25]Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 112.

caused parts of Scripture, specifically Paul's prohibition of homosexuality to be an outmoded, cultural statement that does not square with modern science. Again, Cosgrove has provided a technical term for this hermeneutical principle—the rule of nonscientific scope. This rule states, "Scientific (or 'empirical') knowledge stands outside the scope of scripture."[26] This hermeneutical principle is essential to the proponents of homosexuality because they appeal to the advancements of modern science in relation to Scripture passages that deal with homosexuality. Cosgrove suggests, "The Bible contains both momentous and trivial instances of scientifically outmoded empirical knowledge. . . . It is widely acknowledged that where modern scientific knowledge contradicts ancient biblical assumptions about empirical reality, the church ought not to assert those ancient assumptions in the teeth of scientific evidence."[27]

Cosgrove's principle has a specific application to Romans 1 in that Paul viewed homosexuality as "unnatural" because he was deprived of modern scientific knowledge. Had he known what twenty-first century scientists know, it is alleged, he would have been more specific in his prohibition. He would not have deemed homosexual orientation as unnatural. Instead, he would have only prohibited homosexual actions performed by heterosexuals. Hultgren declares, "He [Paul] had no idea that there could be persons who actually have a homosexual orientation; he could not have done so."[28] Since Paul could not have known the information available to biblical scholars today, it is the responsibility of the modern interpreter to put the information into the text that was not available to Paul.

The problem with interjecting the rule of nonscientific scope into the debate about homosexuality is that some scholars unequivocally claim as fact scientific evidence that has not been finally proven. Citing studies on rats or small groups of deceased humans, scientists have made speculative conclusions about the role of the brain in homosexual activity. As evidenced by the studies of LeVay and Swaab and Hofman,[29] the results of such studies are inconclusive and should only be viewed as potential explanations for homosexual behavior. In addition, no conclusive genetic evidence has been found linking a particular gene to homosexual tendencies. Until that day comes, the rule of nonscientific scope cannot be employed because it does not accurately represent the scientific data available at this time.

[26]Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture*, 116.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Hultgren, "Being Faithful to the Scriptures," 322.

[29]For a full discussion of the scientific evidence, see Simon LeVay, *Queer Science* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 129–47, and Feinberg and Feinberg, *Ethics for a Brave New World*, 185–89.

Scholars in all fields are understandably anxious to use scientific evidence to justify their particular agendas, but one should not sacrifice the true scientific results for the sake of an agenda or a cause. D.A. Carson would consider this to be the logical fallacy of "appealing to selective evidence." He states, "As a general rule, the more complex and/or emotional the issue, the greater the tendency to select only part of the evidence, prematurely construct a grid, and so filter the rest of the evidence through the grid that it is robbed of any substance."[30] The apprehension of scholars in using incomplete information is only overshadowed by their desire to prove their point. Thus, some feel obligated to present the complete story that the scientific evidence is not complete, but the revelation of such information is often relegated to a footnote or endnote.[31]

An acceptance of the scientific idea that homosexuality is an inborn trait leads to even greater problems than merely a misinformed interpretation of Romans 1. Heimbach writes, "Once the idea of inborn orientation takes hold, Christians start thinking the Bible is out-of-date and cannot be trusted on sex. Instead, they believe the culture is more trustworthy because it understands sex better than scripture does—better even than God himself."[32] Thus, all biblical standards of sexuality must be dismissed by the culture based on "scientific evidence" that homosexuality is a constitutional trait. Beyond that, it also impacts the way that one views God. Heimbach surmises, "If God is responsible for creating homosexuals who cannot help having same-sex desires and cannot change, yet he also condemns having same-sex desires with no hope of same-sex marriage, he must then be unfair, cruel, and evil."[33] For these reasons, the rule of nonscientific scope must be dismissed as a relevant hermeneutical principle regarding the issue of homosexuality until conclusive scientific evidence is discovered.

Instead of leaning upon uncertain scientific evidence, the student of Scripture is capable of fully understanding Paul's meaning for "against

[30]D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 93.

[31]In her treatment of homosexuality and Romans 1, Margaret Davies admits that she has used scientific evidence in her interpretation that was not available to Paul when he wrote his epistle to the church at Rome. She states, "I have used some arguments from nature which take account of more recent research and reflexion [sic] than were available when Pauline texts were written. In advancing these arguments, I do not mean to imply that human nature is absolutely fixed and unalterable. We need to recognize that human nature is to some extent malleable." This is the extent of her admission in the body of her article that scientific evidence is not complete concerning her arguments. Then in a footnote, she cites a study by a Professor Roger Gorski of the University of California in Los Angeles admitting that homosexuality may not be a result of different brain structures. Instead, he says that the practice of homosexuality may change the structure of the brain. Davies, "New Testament Ethics and Ours," 330.

[32]Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 129.

[33]Ibid., 129–30.

nature." Translated literally, the phrase παρα φυσιν means "against nature." But what does that mean for this passage? Bauer offers the following lexical meaning for the term φύσιν: "[T]he regular or established order of things, *nature*."[34] This implies that there is a created order that is established by something other than human action. That created order is exactly what Paul intends to bring to mind in this argument. The reader, especially one with any familiarity with the Old Testament, is likely to recall the words of Genesis 1 and 2 while reading this passage. In Genesis 1:27, Scripture says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Continuing on in chapter 2, Scripture says, "The Lord said, 'It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.' . . . The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:18, 22–24).

Thus, arguing from the pattern set forth in the rest of Scripture, it is concluded that men were designed from creation to develop intimate relationships with women, and sexual intercourse is by nature designed for the relationship of a man and a woman. Therefore, Paul's statement that "their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν)" means that the unrighteous women gave up natural sexual relationships with men for unnatural sexual relationships with women. In the same way, the men exchanged natural sexual relationships with women and pursued unnatural relationships with other men, burning "in their desire toward one another." David F. Wright notes, "But the allusions in the chapter to divine creation (vv. 20, 25) justify us in believing that the argument from nature has to be taken with great seriousness."[35]

**Pederasty**

Another argument developed from Romans 1:26–27 is the understanding that Paul is condemning the Greek practice of pederasty rather than homosexuality. According to this view, the only understanding of homosexuality that Paul knew was the ancient Greco-Roman practice of pederasty. Mark D. Smith states, "If Paul knew only the 'model' of pederasty, his words in Rom. 1 can only be interpreted as a proscription of

[34]Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1070.

[35]David F. Wright, "Homosexuality: The Relevance of the Bible," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 61 (1989): 295.

that ancient practice, not as a condemnation of mutually consenting, adult homosexual relationships such as are widely publicized in modern American culture."[36] As a result, Paul's comments in Romans 1 are construed to carry little or no significance for the modern Western world because the practice of pederasty is already considered illegal by most Western governments. Thus, the proscription of this passage becomes irrelevant in light of modern cultural practices.

The popularity of the Christian understanding that Paul is referring to pederasty in his condemnation of Romans 1 is due to the influential work of Robin Scroggs. In his book, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, Scroggs defines pederasty as follows:

> 1. In the typical romantic relationship, the beloved is most often a boy or a youth around the age of puberty extending at times into the late teens. 2. The lover is most likely to be an adult, probably older than twenty years, the upper age extending indefinitely, at times to middle age and even beyond. 3. There are enough variations of the above to blur the focus of the picture. These may well be exceptions, and are on occasion branded as such by the tests themselves. Historical reality can never be completely captured by generalizations. 4. What *does* seem constant, no matter how much the typical age differential was modified in specific instances, is the acceptance of the roles of active and passive by the partners. . . . 5. Apart from certain exceptions of an adult male prostitute who retains his passive (or perhaps also active) role well into adulthood and thus may service adults his age, *I know of no suggestions in the texts that homosexual relationships existed between same-age adults*.[37]

Scroggs bases his conclusions on the work of K.J. Dover in his book, *Greek Homosexuality*.[38] Mark Smith observes, "For Scroggs, pederasty is far more than a description of behavior; it is a sexual 'model,' a cultural construct which includes patterns of behavior that are considered appropriate, concepts of normal and abnormal activity, and a cultural ideal of beauty. For the Greeks, pederasty was considered normal and, within certain legal and customary bounds, appropriate."[39] Thus, Paul addresses a "culturally-ap-

[36]Mark D. Smith, "Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26–27," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (1996): 226.

[37]Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 34–35.

[38]K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).

[39]Smith, "Ancient Bisexuality," 227–28.

propriate," specific behavior that stands outside the boundaries of behavior established by the church.

This interpretation finds its basis in Paul's use of the term ἄρσενες in Romans 1:27. James E. Miller asserts, "Important for understanding Romans 1:26–27 is the frequent use of *arsen/arren* (male, not age specific) and the rarity of the term *aner* (man/adult male) in these Jewish attacks on pederasty. The use of the non-age specific term is sometimes a code-word for the adolescent boy. . . ."[40] Such an interpretation would fall in line with the basic understanding that pederasty involved a boy or youth and an adult male. The most common form of pederasty is considered to be that between a teacher and a student. The greatest problem that Paul would have with this kind of relationship, thus bringing his condemnation of it, was the dehumanizing characteristic involving the youth who submitted to homosexual acts. Scroggs, thus, only condemns homosexual relationships that involve active/passive distinctions between partners.[41] Miller adequately sums up the arguments of this position as follows:

> There are two basic reasons why a first-century hearer of Romans 1:27 would think specifically of pederasty. First, Paul is attacking an accepted Gentile practice. Homosexuality between adult males was not an accepted activity, but pederasty was. Second, in light of Jewish polemic against Gentile practices, by using the term *arsen* Paul implies that at least one of the males involved is not an *aner*. The terminology of Romans 1:27 is characteristic of pederasty.[42]

Again, Paul's prohibition becomes culturally irrelevant in the context of twenty-first century Western culture because even the secular government forbids such action, and Scripture no longer needs to forbid this behavior in order to distinguish between the church and the world.

This interpretation suffers from two basic problems. First, it ignores an essential element of the text that would subvert the interpretation of pederasty. In Romans 1:26, Paul introduces the only direct proscription of female homosexuality in all of Scripture. Interestingly, most commentators gloss over this reference in their greater attempts to legitimize all forms of homosexuality.[43] Scroggs states, "I had to conclude that our sources did not

[40]James E. Miller, "Response: Pederasty and Romans 1:27: A Response to Mark Smith," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997): 863.

[41]Smith, "Ancient Bisexuality," 228.

[42]Miller, "Pederasty and Romans 1:27," 863.

[43]Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), 40.

permit us to make any certain statements about female homosexuality."[44] Unfortunately for proponents of the pederasty view, Paul's reference to female homosexuality in v. 26 causes great problems. Pederasty among females was not a common practice and, therefore, would subvert the argument that Paul knew only of the "model" of pederasty in relation to homosexuality. Obviously, he understood that some form of lesbian behavior existed when he wrote the words of v. 26. Smith writes, "It is probable that there was no female parallel to pederasty (with the possible, though doubtful, exception of Plutarch's Spartan women). From what we can tell from the available evidence, the most prevalent form of female homosexual practice involved mutually consenting women of roughly equal age."[45] The understanding of female homosexuality effectively dismisses the interpretation of pederasty as the only form of homosexuality condemned by Paul.[46]

Second, proponents of this interpretation, and the others as well, employ one final hermeneutical principle to support their positions—the rule of moral-theological adjudication. The rule of moral-theological adjudication states, "Moral-theological considerations should guide hermeneutical choices between conflicting plausible interpretations."[47] This hermeneutical rule is perhaps the broadest principle employed by anyone interpreting Scripture in regard to homosexuality. Its function is various and without substantial limitations. Cosgrove writes, "Analyzed in rhetorical terms, an appeal to *one* interpretation of scripture when other equally reasonable options are available typically functions as follows: the attractiveness of the resultant ethical/theological construction is held out as a kind of silent argument for the exegesis adduced in its support."[48] While this hermeneutical rule is not as evident on the surface of interpretations as others already discussed, it is still present.

Every interpreter approaches the text with certain presuppositions that almost always color his interpretations. The main presupposition with which proponents of homosexuality approach the text is the rule of love. While no one explicitly states that the passages concerning homosexuality should be interpreted in favor of homosexuals because it is the most loving thing to do, such a presupposition does underlie the interpretations. Many count homosexuals among their closest friends and, therefore, desire to do nothing that would bring them pain or anguish. Thus, the only loving thing

[44]Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, 126.

[45]Smith, "Ancient Bisexuality," 243.

[46]Köstenberger and Jones appeal to the inclusion of lesbianism as evidence that the pederasty view is not a consistent interpretation of Romans 1:26–27. Andreas J. Köstenberger with David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, & Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 217.

[47]Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture*, 154.

[48]Ibid., 154–55.

to do would be to support them in their lifestyle and tell them that God also supports them. Since the greatest commandments are to love God and to love one's neighbors (Matt 22:34–40), one should interpret Scripture in light of these commandments. Since someone can love God and still be a homosexual, then it is the duty of the exegete to view Scripture in such a way that his interpretation also expresses love for his neighbor.

This rule, however, "is really not a rule at all but only a description of a state of affairs."[49] Just because something is actually happening in the world does not necessarily mean that it should be happening. The use of this rule sets up an interpretive grid based on the actions of others. Another problem with this hermeneutical rule is that it is based on a faulty method of interpretation. E.D. Hirsch, Jr., proposes that a fundamental rule of the ethics of interpretation is to seek the author's intent, thus honoring the rights of the author to have his words understood as he intended them when he wrote them. He writes:

> Therefore, let me state what I consider to be a fundamental ethical maxim for interpretation, a maxim that claims no privileged sanction from metaphysics or analysis, but only from ethical tenets, generally shared. *Unless there is a powerful overriding value in disregarding an author's intention (i.e., original meaning), we who interpret as a vocation should not disregard it*. Mere individual preference would not be such an overriding value, nor would be the mere preferences of many persons. The possible exception is mentioned only because every ethical maxim requires such an escape clause.[50]

If the text is not interpreted as the author intended for it to be, then there is no end to the various interpretations possible. In the case of Romans 1:26–27, such adjudication leads to honoring the shamefulness of homosexuality.[51] The final problem is that this rule of interpretation does not solve the issue as much as it complicates it. Various moral-theological adjudications are possible because each exegete will approach the text with his own set of presuppositions. However, there is no method for determining whose presuppositions are more valid.

Only a faithful interpretation of the text understands homosexuality as one of the distortions of God's created order that is the result of the "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrigh-

[49]Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture*, 177.

[50]E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 90.

[51]Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, 305–06.

teousness" (Rom 1:18). In the larger context of Paul's prohibition against homosexuality, he mentions that the truth of God has been suppressed in the unrighteousness of men (Rom 1:18). As a result of the unrighteousness of men and turning from the truth of God, God gave them over to their lusts. A part of that "giving over" was the exchange of natural sexual functions for unnatural functions. Thus, the homosexual act is labeled as being the result of unrighteousness and turning from God. No matter if one understands the acts described in Romans 1:26–27 as homosexual intercourse or homosexual orientation, such behavior is still linked to unrighteousness. Therefore, no conceivable form of homosexual behavior can be acceptable to the New Testament believer because all homosexual acts are clearly understood to be acts of unrighteousness.

## Applications for the Church

After examining the arguments from Scripture by proponents of homosexuality and evaluating the hermeneutical principles employed by those proponents, one can clearly see that the debate over homosexuality is quite emotional and unlikely to be resolved to the satisfaction of the diverging parties in the near future. While the exegesis may seem clear to those who view Scripture as inerrant, infallible, and sufficient to teach modern believers what they need for living the Christian life in this world, the experiential complexities of various influential scholars will continue to impact the church.

There are several applications that the church can take away from this analysis of the scriptural debate concerning homosexuality. First, it is the duty of the church to base its arguments on sound exegesis. Every hermeneutical principle that a scholar may present is not necessarily one that the church wants to accept. Many hermeneutical principles employed by proponents of homosexuality are extremely subjective (e.g., the rule of purpose) and may be used to support all types of arguments. If the teachings of Scripture are to be considered at all, there must be some objective basis by which one interprets Scripture. When addressing homosexuality, it should be the goal of all interpreters to understand Paul's intended meaning.

Next, believers should engage in the debate over homosexuality and other moral issues in the church today. As mentioned earlier, many denominations are currently facing division or complete collapse over the issue of homosexuality. The clearest example of this division is seen in the Anglican Communion. While official church documents declare an opposition to homosexuality, large portions of the denomination have vocally abandoned the previously accepted moral standards. Unity among the

brethren should be a goal within the church; however, it should not come at the cost of doctrinal integrity. Therefore, those who uphold a biblical understanding of sexuality should stand firm upon the Word of God and declare what Scripture teaches regarding homosexuality.

The third application is that the church should love homosexuals and those who interpret Scripture in favor of homosexuality. This does not mean that the church should unequivocally accept them into their midst without correction and teaching, but it does mean that the church is called to love all people. Homosexuals are people who need to hear the life-changing message of the gospel just like heterosexuals. The church should reach out to homosexuals with the gospel and help them to turn from their unrighteous lifestyle when they accept Christ. For homosexuals who also claim to be believers, the church should lovingly show them the error of their ways and seek to restore them to a proper relationship with the Lord. Concerning those who interpret Scripture to support homosexuality, the church should love them as well. They should lovingly confront them with their error and seek to show them what the Scripture actually says about homosexuality. If they refuse to listen and a proper relationship cannot be restored, then they should be dismissed from the church *with the hope that they will one day be restored*. False teaching and false teachers have no place in the church; however, even homosexuals and false teachers may repent. After mentioning homosexuals among a list of offenders, Paul writes, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). Homosexuality is a sin that individuals can overcome, and resources are available to help those individuals do so.[52]

## Conclusion

The issue of homosexuality impacts all parts of the American culture from religion to politics. While most debates over homosexuality in the public square revolve around personal preferences, spousal rights, and cultural mores, the debate within the churches centers on Scripture, and Romans 1:26–27 is a crucial part of the scriptural debate. A commitment to the true teaching of Scripture must be maintained in the face of cultural preferences in order to support a true sexual morality. It is the responsibility of believers to accept the teaching of Scripture and proclaim it to a lost and dying world so desperately in need of the truth. Therefore, even concerning the matter of homosexuality, Christians need to set aside personal preference and cultural pressure in order to teach the truth about Scripture

[52]Köstenberger with Jones, *God, Marriage, & Family*, 226, 402–03; Jeffrey Satinover, *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 168–209.

that homosexuality is a sin. At the same time, we must never forget that we are all sinners and that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). It is only by the grace of God that we have been saved, and our refrain should be that we are "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith'" (Rom 1:16–17).

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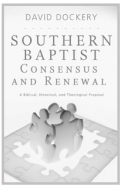


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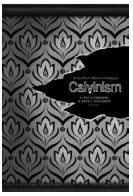


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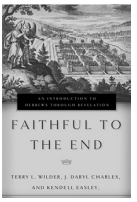


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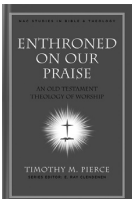


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# *"My Son, Be Strong in the Grace That Is in Christ Jesus": The Baptist Family at Worship*

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Let us approach the issue of the Baptist family at worship from its biblical basis, its historical manifestations, and a systematic but practical implementation today.

## The Biblical Basis

Perhaps the single most important passage with regard to the family at worship may be found in the fifth book of Moses, in the same passage in which the basic confession of the Old Testament is contained. The *Shema* is at the core of the Old Testament faith, and it is very interesting how the *Shema* and the commandments of God, the two tables of which were just reviewed in the previous chapter of Deuteronomy, form the context in which we have the command of God to conduct family worship.

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words, which I command you, today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deut 6:4–9; NKJV).

I would be less than honest with you if I told you that my family started its devotionals only because we were convicted by this passage. Our concern did start when I proclaimed this passage to a Baptist congregation that I shepherded when our oldest child was very small. But, over time,

through on-again, off-again efforts, I have become convicted of the need for this practice due to overwhelming convictions regarding two components of a theology of family worship. First, I have come to believe that the Word of God is the only hope that I or my wife or our children have for following Jesus Christ as Lord in true discipleship. Second, my God-given love for my wife has over time turned into a deep passion for the welfare of our five children—three boys and two girls.

**The Word and the Spirit in the *Shema***

"The Word," a theological term indicative of the Second Person of the Trinity, and "Love," a theological term traditionally indicative of the Third Person of the Trinity, are the personal and thus doctrinal and practical motivations behind this theologian's desire to engage in family devotionals. A man is compelled and enabled by Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit to lead his beloved to the throne, where together they might worship the First Person of the Trinity. Let me throw an Augustinian wrinkle into the gracious Trinitarian work upon this human family. Augustine, the father of Western theology, said, "The text *Hear, O Israel: the Lord your God is one Lord* (Deut 6:4) is not to be understood as excluding the Son or excluding the Holy Spirit, and this one Lord we rightly call our Father as well because he regenerates us by his grace."[1]

I would take Augustine one step further, however. While, negatively, the *Shema* certainly does not mitigate against the Trinity, I believe, positively, that you can hear echoes of the Trinity at work in the Old Testament text that are made clear in the New Testament. The Word and Love, the two missionary persons of the Trinity, are sent by the Father to redeem the world, and they are at work in redeeming the family. The Word of God is the source of the Love that Karen, my wife, and I have for the conducting of family worship (John 15:26). The Spirit, the very Love of God, truly proceeds from the Son, just as the Spirit and the Son also proceed from the Father. And the Spirit, in turn, compels us to look to the Word so that we might in turn look to the Father (John 15:26). According to Ephesians 2:18, through Christ Jesus we have access by one Spirit to the Father.

This subtle and sublime Trinitarian truth recorded in the New Testament has its earlier Old Testament basis in the monotheistic confession of Israel. "Hear, O Israel, The Lord your God, the Lord is one!" Oh, how can we hear God, but only by the intentional revelation of God through his Word? In this text, we have the Word and the Spirit, too.

Here is the Word. In the Old Testament, we repeatedly hear that God speaks and he calls us into a relationship of grace and obedience,

[1]Augustine of Hippo, *The Trinity*, 5.12, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 197.

and in the New Testament, we learn that this Word by whom he speaks is Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son (John 1:1, 14). For instance, in Isaiah 6:6–10, God speaks and he calls his people into a relationship of grace and obedience. However, due to the hardness of our rebellion, we are unable to respond unless God opens our ears and breaks up the hard ground of our stubborn hearts.

And here is the Spirit. In the Old Testament, we learn that our lifelessness and resultant inability to hear is overcome only by the Holy Spirit of God, whom we learn in the New Testament proceeds from the Father (John 15:26). According to the testimony of the prophets, it is only by the Word of God that God speaks to us. And according to Ezekiel 36:26–27, it is only by the Spirit of God that our hearts are renewed to hear and obey God's Word. Cardinal Ouellet, moreover, correctly notes that, "To the extent to which spiritual creatures allow themselves to be indwelt by the Spirit of Love, they are elevated to the incomparable dignity of being servants of God's glory."[2]

In the Deuteronomy passage, can we not hear the echoes of the Son and the Spirit? We are called to "love" God with all of our heart, soul, and strength (v. 5). And how can we love except by the gift of the One who is the Love between the Father and the Son, that is, the Holy Spirit? Moreover, we are called to place "these words" in our hearts (v. 6), and how do we know God's words unless he speaks to us by his Word, the Messiah Jesus? So, by his Spirit and by his Son, the Father graciously calls us into a relationship of loving obedience. The Three call us to witness to the One who is God, by love and by words.

Oh, how do I give my children the love that God has for them? By speaking to them the very words of God! How do I love my children whom I seem so inadequate in loving? By speaking to them the very words of God! Oh, how do I find the strength to know God in my own heart? By speaking and hearing, that is, obeying, the very words of God! How do I overcome the inconsistencies and sins that wrack my own soul so that I might speak a word of true love to my wife and to my children? By speaking and by hearing the very words of the almighty three-in-one God—He is powerful enough to overcome all of my weaknesses by means of sending his Son and his Spirit. He is merciful enough to forgive all of the sins of my soul by means of Christ's cross that atones by blood. He is gracious enough to renew this wicked heart of stone into a heart of obedient flesh.

The *Shema*, when properly perceived as actively catechetical, is not a rigidly monotheistic statement but a dynamically Trinitarian confession. In the dynamic activity of revelation and redemption, God manifests himself

[2]Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, trans. Philip Milligan and Linda M. Cicone (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 17.

as the God who shows and saves. By means of the very actions of confession or teaching and of reception or renewal, the God who is ultimately One reveals Himself to be ultimately Three. God, give us the biblical confession and give us the spiritual confession. Help us to know and to proclaim your Word and help us to live and offer life by your Spirit. God the Father, by the Word of God and by the Spirit of God, superintends and permeates the very process of Christian confession and regeneration.

**The Father of the Home as the Agent of Catechesis**

As the fathers of Israel gathered around to hear the words of God through the lips of the prophet Moses, they must have trembled. They had seen the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and had heard the loud voice from Mount Sinai. They had seen the idolatry led by Aaron during the absence of Moses on that holy mountain evocative of the *mysterium tremendum*.[3] They had seen the judgment of God come upon the golden calf and its worshippers. They had heard the Ten Commandments of God located in the two tables (Deut 5:1–22). And now, they had heard the saving confession of the people of God in the *Shema*.

But their trembling must have turned to confusion when they heard what was demanded of them. Those, pointedly the men, who had been taught the Word of God by his prophet were now being called to become teachers of the Word of God themselves. From Deuteronomy 5:22, it appears that the Ten Commandments were directed first to the male heads of household: "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." And in Deuteronomy 6:2–3, we learn that teaching was focused upon the fathers and their sons and, in turn, their grandsons. This certainly does not mean that women and girls were excluded from hearing the public proclamation, for "all Israel" was gathered to hear the covenant of the Lord (Deut 5:1). However, the responsibility for repeating the confession and commands given by God through Moses was laid upon the male heads of the household, essentially upon the fathers. Let those who wish some more egalitarian method take up the matter with God, for this was his revealed method, and we must accept the revelation the way it is by grace and obey it by grace.

And what is the father's responsibility? The father's responsibility is to present the Word of God with every avenue possible at every moment possible to everyone possible, but especially to his children! According to Duane Christensen, "Whether understood literally or metaphorically, vv 8–9 show that the individual person, his home, and his community (*sh'ryd*, 'your gates') were to be distinguished as the focus of obedience to the commandments as a response of love for God." Christensen recognizes the

[3]Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), 12–13.

universal nature of the witness to God's words, but then notes the textual stress on witness to the family. "The focus [is] on teaching your children 'these words' diligently within the context of the family—at all conceivable times and places. . . ."[4]

This text prescribes the proclamation of the biblical Word everywhere, at all times, in private, and in public. First, this text demands that the believer teach his children diligently in every place, literally when relaxing in the home and when walking down the road. Second, it demands that the believer teach his children diligently at all times, literally when going to bed and when getting up in the morning. Third, it then demands that the believing father keep the commands visible upon his person, literally binding them to his hand and to his forehead. Finally, it demands that the believing father keep God's words visible in public, literally writing them on the house and on the gates at the approach to the house.

Although some orthodox Jews have turned this text into a formality and thereby perhaps brought some trivialization to it, the intent is for the text to be visibly and continuously displayed and read and discussed and exhorted. You cannot just display the Bible like a pretty coffee table showpiece; you must actually read this book. You cannot just read the Bible in rote practice; you must discuss it's meaning. You cannot just discuss the Bible's meaning; you must teach your children to obey it. And we all know that our children will follow our example before they will follow our words!

Let this responsibility burn deep into the heart: The father of the family is responsible for bringing his family to the text to read it, to discuss it, and to live according to it. In order to correctly raise our families, we must read the text. In order to correctly read the text, we must discuss its meaning with our families. In order to correctly teach the text to our families, we must live our lives out of the text. Truth is more often caught than taught, and it is taught by our stated and active beliefs and ethics, not just in public, but also in private.

## The Historical Manifestations

We know from biblical history that the Jews were careful, especially after the exile and return, to require instruction in the Word of God. See, for instance, Ezra's catechetical efforts in Nehemiah 8, which included not only instruction by the clerical leadership of the people (vv. 1–12), but also close examination of the text by the heads of the families with the priests, so that they might interpret the text and then implement it (vv. 13–18).

[4]Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, Word Biblical Commentary 6A (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 144–45.

In the New Testament, we read of how young Timothy was raised by his mother and grandmother to know the Scriptures (2 Tim 1:5, 3:14–15). We also read that Paul served as a surrogate father to him, a spiritual father (1:2). One wonders, however, where was Timothy's real father? Why was he not teaching Timothy the Bible? How long did Timothy suffer because of his father's inability or unwillingness to obey God and teach the Word to his son?

**Augustine's Wasted Years**

In the early church, Augustine of Hippo, who would later become perhaps the greatest theologian in all Christendom, frankly discloses that he struggled for many years with his theology and his sexual morality. One wonders whether Augustine might have been an even more fruitful preacher and theologian if his father had taken proper spiritual interest in his son. One wonders whether Augustine would have avoided not only personal spiritual blunders but also some fundamental theological blunders that have plagued and continue to plague the Western churches if his father had spent the time to teach his son the Word of God. Could the persecution that Augustine encouraged of dissident Christian groups have been avoided if he had had a father that showed him God's love rather than being the distant figure for whom Augustine did not care?

Augustine lamented his father, who had a fine public reputation, but failed to teach his son. And the problem was not that Augustine's father did not provide for his son's education; the problem was that his father did not himself teach his son. In his famous *Confessions*, Augustine says,

> No one had anything but praise for my father who, despite his slender resources, was ready to provide for his son with all that was needed to enable him to travel so far for the purpose of study. Many of our townsmen, far richer that my father, went to no such trouble for their children's sake. Yet this same father of mine took no trouble at all to see how I was growing in your sight or whether I was chaste or not. He cared only that I should have a fertile tongue, leaving my heart to bear none of your fruits, my God, though you are the only Master, true and good, of its husbandry.[5]

Can you not hear the cry of this child? Although I appreciate my father providing for me financially in such a sacrificial manner, where was he when I needed moral guidance? Does he not care about me enough

[5]Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 2.3, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1961), 45.

to see me saved and sanctified? Am I unworthy of being discipled? Augustine, fortunately, had a mother who taught him God's Word and even sent preachers to come talk to him. Monica, Augustine's godly mother, wept and prayed for him, but it was only when she was near her death that he was finally converted, and he looked upon the years of his wasted life with utter regret. How many Christian fathers do we have today who are neglecting their families? How many are insuring their own children's fall into wasted lives because they refuse to obey God's Word and teach the text? How many will weep over a child headed to hell because they would not take the time to share the Word?

**The Reformation Witness to Family Worship**

Among the sixteenth-century Reformers, it was commonly known that the father was responsible for his children's spiritual welfare. Martin Luther advised those who lived in areas where the Gospel was not properly proclaimed in the churches that the fathers must be responsible for their households. Although the family could not share the Lord's Supper in such a situation, the father was both empowered by his Christian priesthood and held responsible by God for ministering salvation to his family by proclaiming the Word to them. The world around may be going to hell, but the Christian father has the resources to lead his family to glory. "The father in the home, on the other hand, can provide his own with the necessities through the Word and in pious humility do without the nonessentials as long as he is in captivity."[6] In other words, what we need more than anything is the Word of God. We simply cannot do without it, and it is in the end the father's responsibility to make sure his children hear the Word.

Among the free churches, Menno Simons encouraged the sixteenth-century Anabaptists to look at their own children as the special object of their Great Commission efforts, for every child is born into sin and requires instruction and training in righteousness.

> [T]he nature of man is completely corrupted in Adam and is rebellious against the Word of the Lord from childhood, therefore let us be mindful and solicitous of our own children, and let us display unto them a still greater degree of spiritual love than with others; for they are by nature born of us, of our flesh and blood, and are so solemnly committed to our special care by God. Therefore be sure that you instruct them from their youth in the way of the Lord, that they fear and love God, walk

[6]Martin Luther, *Concerning the Ministry* (1523), in *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 40: 10.

> in all decency and discipline, are well mannered, quiet, obedient to their father and mother, reverent where that is proper, after their speech honest, not loud, not stubborn, nor self-willed; for such is not becoming to children of saints.[7]

Menno set a high bar, because Scripture sets a high bar. The question that comes to mind is, "How do we meet this standard of turning out such wonderful children?" Many will throw their arms in the air and surrender the responsibility as impossible to fulfill. And yet, Menno knew from the Word of God and from long experience that the only way to raise such children is by biblical catechesis. As a New Testament Christian, Menno neither propagated the coercive error of infant baptism nor believed in catechizing in the sense of having his children memorize the Westminster Catechism or the Heidelberg Catechism, as fine as those flawed catechisms are. Rather, the key to raising such children is simply by the Word of God. "My beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, you who sincerely love the Word of the Lord, instruct your children thus, from youth up, and daily admonish them with the Word of the Lord, setting a good example."[8]

This was not a facile reading of the Word of God, but a deep searching of its meaning and then consistent implementation of its teaching. "Study to the utmost of your power, to lead your children on the way of life and to keep them from the way of death, as much as in you is. . . . Watch over their salvation as over your own souls. Teach them, and instruct them, admonish them, threaten, correct, and chastise them, as circumstances require."[9] The advice given by Menno Simons was theologically pristine and anthropologically sensitive, a sometimes difficult balance to strike.

We thus learn through Menno Simons that the sixteenth-century free churches understood that the Bible is the proper basis of catechesis, for the words of men will fail while the Word of God is living and powerful. Our sixteenth-century forefathers understood that the teaching of one's own children is very important, and that such teaching is best carried out through exemplary discipleship. They displayed an intense concern for familial welfare and refused to engage in the Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed errors of human tradition and infant baptism.

## The Baptist Witness to Family Worship

The Baptist witness to family worship has its roots in our early modern beginnings in the seventeenth century and among both of the major

[7]Menno Simons, *The Nurture of Children* (1557), in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons, c. 1496-1561*, trans. Leonard Verduin (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 950.

[8]Ibid., 951.

[9]Ibid.

branches of the English Baptist family, that is, among the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists. The surviving witness to this movement of family worship may be found in the popular catechisms of that period. A catechism is a written teaching tool usually in the form of a dialogue. The teacher is expected to memorize the question and the student the answer. Rather than emphasize the Particular Baptist catechisms, as is all the rage these days, let us give the General Baptists their proper due.

In his popular compilation of Baptist confessions, covenants, and catechisms, Timothy George offers a catechism by a Particular Baptist, Benjamin Keach, and by an Open Communion Particular Baptist, Henry Jessey. The General Baptist catechisms are never considered, even in the introduction, leaving the impression with the uninformed that only the Particular Baptists made any substantial contribution to the matter.[10] This is unfortunate at a number of levels, both historically and theologically. For, to their advantage, a General Baptist catechism is structurally biblical, while the Particular Baptist catechisms are typically thematic. (On the other hand, perhaps seeking to overcome the deficiencies of the Particular Baptist thematic approach, Jessey's *A Catechism for Babes, or, Little Ones* constantly refers the teacher and student to the biblical text, although retaining a thematic structure.)[11]

Thomas Grantham was one of the leading theologians in the General Baptist tradition, and he has left us a catechism that is very helpful. Following the expository structure of Hebrews 6:1–2, he wrote the catechism because he understood that some parents needed help to fulfill the commission to evangelize their own children. Grantham began, "As you are expressly bound by Gospel-Rules, to do that which is right unto your Servants, and to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; so I am very sensible, that the capacity of many well-meaning Christians is very low, to methodize their Instructions in this behalf."[12] Grantham, a General Baptist Messenger and the author of the monumental *Christianismus Primitivus*, was no doctrinal slouch. Indeed, he is perhaps the first major systematic theologian in the Baptist tradition, preceding the popular Calvinist Baptist John Gill by a half-century.[13]

[10]Timothy George, "Introduction," in *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms: John A. Broadus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 16–18.

[11]Ibid., 227–37.

[12]Thomas Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism: Or, A brief and plain Explication of the Six Principles of the Christian Religion, as recorded Heb. 6.1,2* (London, 1687), 3.

[13]Grantham, *Christianismus Primitivus: Or, The Ancient Christian Religion In Its Nature, Certainty, Excellency, and Beauty, (Internal and External) particularly Considered, Asserted, and Vindicated, From The Many Abuses which have Invaded that Sacred Profession, By Humane Innovation, or pretended Revelation* (London, 1678).

Yet, Grantham understood that catechesis was not the preserve of the specialist. Indeed, in education, the key is getting on the level of the student and raising them to a new level of thought. Grantham, therefore, experimentally verified his catechism by using it with his children. "And having a desire to serve you in what I may; I have here presented you with some Brief Rules (from the good Word of God, which is able, through Faith and Love, to make our Children wise to Salvation) which, by the Blessing of God, I have found to be useful in my own Family."[14] As a theologian-father, I can verify that children will not suffer high-flying words, so useful in summarizing difficult concepts. They will simply stare at you quizzically and ask, "Dad, what exactly is 'supralapsarianism'?" Grantham, as a wise father, understood that theology at its best is a child's theology.

Grantham also understood that children need us to teach them the theology of the Bible in order to extend them the means of divine grace. "Be exhorted to tender the Salvation of all that are under your care, above all other Considerations, lest their Blood be required of you."[15] Did you notice the qualifying clause there—"above all other considerations"? Let it be clearly heard: the father's duties to teach his children the Word of God is of the highest consideration and may require some major sacrifices of time and money on his part. However, it is worth it, for your children are intended by God to be the greatest blessing to you. The soul of a child is worth the loss of a large salary or a shorter commute or the taking of a less-prestigious post or the loss of a fancy vacation far from home.

Catechetical instruction of children can be found in the earliest Baptist churches in the southern United States, too. Richard Furman, revolutionary-era pastor of the First Baptist Church of Charleston, utilized catechisms with the children in his church, rejoicing in the instructions provided by godly parents. One child, Eliza Tupper, late in life, remembered when Furman baptized her. It was a tearful occasion: on the one hand, her father had passed away; on the other hand, she had hope as the result of his love and witness that she would see God and her daddy again. At her baptism, she wrote down what Furman told her, "My dear child, how happy your sainted father would have been could he have witnessed this scene." Soon after, she recorded the wonderful way in which Furman regularly came down out of the pulpit and inquired publicly of the children whether they had learned their catechism at home, querying them on what they had learned in the family catechetical period.[16]

[14]Grantham, *St. Paul's Catechism*, 3.

[15]Ibid.

[16]James A. Rogers, *Richard Furman: Life and Legacy* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2001), 206–7.

Catechesis was not only a common Baptist practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also in the nineteenth century. The famous Southern Baptist theologian and preacher John A. Broadus took time from his heavy preaching and teaching and writing and administrative schedule to author *A Catechism of Bible Teaching* in 1892.[17] Unfortunately, although family worship and Bible teaching continued well into the twentieth century, it seems to have become something of a rare phenomenon of late. At the popular level, some modern Baptist fathers have begun to rediscover the old concept of "the family altar." Indeed, the practice of family worship has been called "the abandoned discipline."[18]

The family in the latter part of the twentieth century came under assault by the liberal American culture. (For instance, the selfishness of "the Me Generation" issued forth in "free love" and the long-term result has been an increase in divorce, the legalization of abortion, and the growing acceptance of the abomination of homosexuality.) Fortunately, Southern Baptists revised the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1998 by adding an eighteenth article, on the family. The second-to-last sentence in our confession alludes to the need for family Bible study: "Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth." The article then cites our focal biblical text in Deuteronomy 6.[19]

## The Systematic Response

How then do we bring these truths into practice? What are the problems that we face in obeying the will of God with regard to teaching the Word of God to our children constantly? What are some possible solutions? Let us speak of the modern obstacles that must be surmounted first, and then please allow this academic to share his personal experiences thus far in seeking a solution. Before proceeding, however, please know this. I do not have a bulleted list that provides the final solution and do not believe that such exists except in the fevered mind of the enthusiast. The Word of God is relational and calls us into a dynamic state of dependence through the Spirit. True theology is not a list of doctrines, as helpful as such a list may be. True theology comes out of a submissive relationship with a living God who reveals himself in a saving way only through the Bible, and calls us into responsive words and acts.

[17] *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, 257–82.

[18] http://www.sbcimpact.net/2007/09/12/the-abandoned-discipline-of-family-worship (accessed 12 September 2007).

[19] *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Convention Press, 2000), 22.

**The Problems We Face**

There seem to be four major problems facing modern families as they seek to institute family worship centered upon the Word of God: time, fatigue, various needs, and individual insufficiency. In theological terms, we could classify these problems as coming about as the result of problems in ktisiology, anthropology, and hamartiology. (For the sake of clarity, we will focus on the popular terms.)

**Time.** First, modern families are bombarded by the world with demands for their time. The fact is, however, that God has provided human beings with limited time in a day and limited time in this life. Time is a precious and fleeting element that requires wise stewardship. And yet, there are many things—some necessary, some good, some pleasurable, some frivolous—that make demands upon a family's time.

In our family, the father requires much time for work, and his job is not easy. It is fulfilling and fascinating, because it is according to the will of God, but it is difficult to make the schedule work. Moreover, there is the periodic temptation of taking on even more responsibility from the employer, or from colleagues, or from related ministries.

Not only are there temporal demands upon the father, but upon the mother. She teaches four children in homeschool, fortunately aided by a homeschool cooperative and periodic Christian schools, while providing for one infant. And when, exactly, is mom supposed to have downtime, away from the children? After all, not only is there school, but there are sports, extended family, and a women's Sunday School class to teach, and a piano to play at church, meals to prepare, and a house to clean, and diapers to change, and spills to wipe. And when dad is away on one of his work trips, there is the need to take the lead in discipline.

And not only are there temporal demands upon father and mother, but upon the children. They each have need of time for play as well as school and for social activities as well as church and exercise. They each need to learn responsible stewardship over their finances and time. And what about the major interruptions of sickness and the minor but disturbing interruptions of the medical emergency or the temper tantrum, or the occasional disputes which come from the inevitable sibling rivalry, or the tragedy of a broken heart?

The fact is that our families are under incredible pressures due to time. And we have not even mentioned those incredible time wasters that are part of modern family life: the television, the internet, the electronic games. . . . The modern family is squeezed for time, and God wants his slice, too? Yes, but he wants more than a slice: God wants all of our time.

**Fatigue.** The second problem that the modern family faces is fatigue. It is incredible, but when we first began to sit down for our family worship,

it was apparent that we were all tired. This was especially true after a long night at church or at a sporting event, and so on. The temptation was there just quickly to bathe the kids, put them in bed, and go to bed oneself. And that was before we felt convicted to make sure that the children as well as the parents received regular exercise! Who can read the Word of God and worship when you are so tired?

**Various Needs.** A third problem that the modern family faces, especially with multiple children, is that every child is facing a different crisis in some way, based upon their stage in the growth cycle, the quality of their relationships with others, and their (in)ability to sit still for longer than two seconds. The children need different attention based upon their various needs, and their ages determine much about their ability to participate in structured family worship.

**Inability to Do It on Our Own.** A final problem that the modern family faces results from both human limitation and human sinfulness. From the standpoint of human limitation, Scripture teaches that all flesh is like grass and is quickly consumed. Isaiah 39:6–7 says, "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it."

And not only are we bound by created limitations, but by willful sinfulness. From the standpoint of human depravity, man proved himself incapable of fulfilling the demands of proclaiming God's law, just as he proved himself incapable of fulfilling the sum and substance of God's law. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Such sinfulness extends to the refusal to witness as God intends. Need we mention such fine examples of this as Jonah?

With such problems of time, fatigue, various needs, and the inability to do it on our own, one might succumb to despair. However, that is not necessary, for we have a gracious God who has provided the solution through his Word and his Love, that is, his Son and his Spirit.

## The Solutions the Yarnell Family Has Learned

**Scheduling the Times.** Before deciding to throw in the towel and give up on family worship and Bible study, please just try to obey God's Word. He tells us that he never asks something from us that he does not provide a way for us to fulfill it (1 Cor 10:13). Experientially, the Yarnell family has learned that we must prioritize our time. A few years ago, I turned down a major promotion (in spite of press accounts to the opposite) in order to focus upon my family. Moreover, I have learned over time to avoid overcrowding my schedule in order to make time for my family. And the best way to do that is to set your own calendar by putting the family times in the appointments category and making sure that they have the

priority above the competition. Our family times are electronically wired into my calendar and attitudinally wired into each one of us.

Furthermore, we have stumbled into realization that a known regular schedule is necessary for the children. Children thrive when provided with a structured life. And they need the removal of clutter, not only in their living space, but in their daily and weekly activities. Cable television and any other unnecessary or distracting activity from their day's precious schedule must be ejected from the home. (By the way, we have learned that strictly limiting television is beneficial, not only for increasing attention spans, but for the development of reading skills. Moreover, the periods in which we did not own a television taught us that its use significantly retards the necessary growth of the child's imagination. Children are happier without the television, especially when their parents play with them. The problem is that too many parents use the television for a babysitter, allowing their precious minds to be shaped by the godless attitudes of Hollywood.)

As for structured worship, we have found it best to have two worship times per day, a shorter one and a longer one. In the mornings during spring and summer and fall, father and the three boys head out the door around 7:00 a.m. for a 20-minute walk around the neighborhood. Afterwards, we gather at the top of the driveway and read the Bible and pray. By the time we arrive back, clued in by one of her brothers running ahead to get the Bible, my little girl will come running out to stand by daddy and hear the Word along with her father and brothers. That usually takes about 5–7 minutes, but it is phenomenal for our lives. We start the day by hearing the Word of God. The texts we use in the morning will come from the epistles or from the proverbs. I then explain the text in short and then we pray: short, simple, and oh so sweet.

In the evening, all of us gather in the living room or one of the bedrooms and hear the Word of God at more length. Usually, we will take a short pericope from the Pentateuch or the gospels or the psalms, as we are working through whole books. After reading the text, I will explain it to the family, and then ask pointed questions as to its meaning and importance, and allow them to ask questions, too. Then, we will ask for prayer requests, and after prayer, mom will lead us to sing. These are glorious times for us, for it is a time for teaching as well as for repentance and forgiveness, not only by the children but also by mom and dad.

**Commitment.** The answer to the problem of fatigue is the persistence of commitment. Love is, after all, a commitment to put the other before oneself. When tired, we keep pressing on. When distracted, we keep pressing on. When guilty, rather than trying to cover over our sin, we admit it to one another, and we show the children how to keep pressing on. Love is commitment, the continual pressing on to better the life of the other, no

matter what the personal cost is. "There is no greater love than this: that a man lay down his life for another" (John 15:13).

**Loving the Children.** The problem of understanding and helping to meet the multiple and various needs of children is solved by an unending and deep love for them. I love my children and I love them more as we spend time in the Word together. And by the Word, the Spirit draws closer to our hearts. As the Spirit, whom Augustine identified as the loving bond between the Father and the Son, reaches out through the Word, God's love is shed abroad in our hearts. Moreover, we know that the Word itself is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing down into us and examining our hearts, rendering judgment with regard to our sins, showing us our need and the way of forgiveness.

As I have allowed the Word to move about in my head by devotion, I have seen him transform me and make me the man I cannot be on my own. The Spirit and the Word are living and active (cf. Heb 4:11–13). Will you trust God and let him loose in your household by letting the Word out of its closed covers? By the way, when I say the Word, I mean the Bible alone. You really do not need other books to read to your children in worship. Indeed, it would be good for both you and your children to learn that the Word of God is sufficient to accomplish that for which God sent it (Isa 55:10–11). Lay down the human books and pick up the divine-human book.

**Christ and His Church.** Finally, we mentioned the problem of our insufficiency to lead family worship out of our own strength. Who gives us strength to prevail when we cannot? Christ, by His Word. Christ, by the proclamation of his Word in the church. The family and the church are necessarily intertwined, in a fashion similar to that of the perichotic relationship of the Trinity, a beautiful movement of love. The family and the church are equally necessary partners in the propagation of a pious people.

## Conclusion

I realize that I cannot love my children adequately, but God can love them fully by his Spirit through me. I also know that I cannot sufficiently help my children whom I love, for I am weak, but God is strong by his Word. Recently, I spoke at a conference at Southwestern Seminary. The next day, as I was returning to the conference, a man ran his car into mine. As a result of being pushed into the path of a truck, the accident gave me a debilitating concussion. That metaphorical expression—about feeling like one has been hit by a truck—took on a literal meaning for me. The gracious providence of God and the fleetingness of life also took on new meaning.

This man, a man who has striven to be strong for his wife and his family, could be taken away any moment. I have never felt so vulnerable and so helpless; this 6'4" frame covered with 280 lbs. of flesh is weak. I am weak, and I am strong only through Christ. Out of personal weakness in Christ comes strength.

I look at my sons and I want them to be strong and courageous, for if anything happens to their earthly father, they must be strong and courageous in his place. I want my sons to provide for and rescue their mother and their sisters in crisis. I once had this waking dream, a very haunting one, both beautiful and terrible at the same time. I love the strength of my boys: Truett, our oldest son, is so tall and strong and is a warrior at heart, a warrior for God; Graham is going to be a man of matchless strength who knows only that he wants to be a blessing. I thank God for my boys and I pray for them to be everything that God wants them to be.

Anyways, I dreamed that my middle son, Matthew, who will probably be the smallest son, displayed by sacrifice an extraordinary physical strength and emotional courage. Our beautiful daughter, Kathryn, by now older, was being abducted or worse. I cannot remember now, and do not want to remember, for the terror frightened me and scarred my memory. Anyways, as Kathryn faced this personal crisis, when all hope seemed lost, Matthew came with his small body and with inhuman speed threw himself into the way. I feared and I exulted. I feared that in setting his sister free that my son would die. I exulted that out of a love borne of the Spirit by the reading of God's Word my son had become a real man. Just a dream, perhaps, but dreams are often the fabric from which the substance of life is constructed.

What kind of husbands and fathers and men of action and speech will my sons be? What kind of wives and mothers and women of chaste and wise actions and speech will my daughters be? I pray that they will be godly and self-sacrificial people. I pray that my sons will be like Michael Sattler, boldly pointing people to the love of God in His Word right to his very death. I pray that my daughters will be loved by husbands who are like my sons. I want our boys to be like the husband of Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."

I know this to be true: These boys can be strong only by grace (i.e. by God's Spirit) and that grace comes only by His Word (i.e. by Jesus Christ). So my living and dying message to each one of my boys is this: "You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."[20] Lord, Karen and I beg of you: Let our sons and our daughters live from your Word.

[20]2 Tim 2:1.

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# *The Biblical Model of Adoption*

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In the spring of 2002, popular talk show host Rosie O'Donnell revealed her lesbian relationship live on her show. In what would become the final season of the program, O'Donnell pushed for multiple political shifts that would grant further rights for gays and lesbians. In seeking to demonstrate the normalcy of her life and relationships, O'Donnell talked about her adopted children and her fight with Florida's then governor, Jeb Bush, over the rights of gay couples to adopt. That same spring, Angelina Jolie, noted actress, director, and humanitarian, adopted her first child from Cambodia. After shooting several films in the economically depressed country, she thought it a fitting complement to her humanitarian aid to change at least one life directly. Jolie, as a high profile star, went on to adopt two other children as well as give birth to her biological child with boyfriend, the famous actor, Brad Pitt.

In many respects, adoption went mainstream in 2002 as Hollywood brought attention to the growing need for action on the behalf of children worldwide. Actresses like Jolie and O'Donnell are applying their money and demonstrating with their lives that if people become intimately involved in a dire situation, real change can occur. Their high-profile adoptions created new interest in the plight of children worldwide and led to further adoptions by other stars like Madonna as well as raising awareness for the need of families to become involved in adoption.

Where was the church in all of this? As children suffer in Africa due to the AIDS epidemic or die from hunger or even preventable diseases, why does the cry for help seemingly issue more frequently from Hollywood than from those that Christ challenged to "suffer the children to come to me?" This complex question begs for an answer, but in the West, conservative Christians often fall strangely silent, frequently hiding behind a barrage of evangelical aid institutions that assure us that our money is well spent.

This paper issues a call for radical change. While some Christians have already stepped into the challenging arena of orphan care, there is too much at stake for us to allow the status quo to continue. In the space of the next few pages, I hope to present to you a clear summation of the biblical commands for orphan care. From that general heading, we will then turn to look at the practical, biblical foundation for adoption as one aspect of the scriptural mandate to care for orphans. Throughout the paper, we will reference moments in the history of adoption as well as illustrate ways in which evangelicals in general and Baptists in particular have sought to become involved. I also will draw attention to some of the ethical issues and concerns that must remain at the forefront of those involved in ministry.

## Orphan Care

While we will be discussing the practical and biblical nature of adoption, we need to begin by stating our case in relationship to orphan care. In Scripture, Paul restricts the usage of adoption to refer to our spiritual state, so we will return to this a bit later. James 1:27 tell the believers to "care for the widow and orphan." Expressing this command in terms of true religion and Christian practice, James is echoing the more than 30 references in the Old Testament dealing with the concept of orphan care.

In the social context of the early church, as well as in the Old Testament, orphans were part of the fabric of society. Wars, disease, or other life events isolated orphans and widows from the system of care traditionally found within a patriarchal society. Despite their isolation and certain death had they been part of a neighboring nation, the authors of the biblical text give specific commands regarding the care for the orphan. These commands fell under the general provisions of hospitality and social justice.

From the outset of the book of Genesis, we are given explanation regarding the role of the family. Married couples are to be fruitful and multiply, following the same command given to all of creation. When sin and death mar the beauty of creation, a new class of people that fall outside of the normal societal and familial bounds become the helpless victims of a broken world–namely widows, orphans and foreigners. In the text of the Hebrew Scriptures, almost every instance of the term "orphan" (*yatom*) or "fatherless" is paired with that of the widow (*almonah*). Usually their care and provision is provided under the same regulations and restrictions of the foreigner or sojourner among the children of Israel.

A key example is found in Exodus 22. Beginning in verse 21 and continuing through verse 22, the text reads as follows:

> Do not oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. Do not exploit widows or orphans.[1]

Based on the recognition that the Israelites once suffered as the lowest in Egyptian society, they must not forget that God spared them from their circumstances and redeemed them unto himself. Beyond the command to avoid exploitation of the widows and orphans comes an understanding that these individuals are so precious to God that he will personally judge those who fail to account for their needs. The discourse continues in Exodus 22: 23–24:

> If you do exploit them and they cry out to me I will surely help them. My anger will blaze forth against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows and your children will become fatherless.

This rather harsh pronouncement demonstrates a couple of key items that need to be considered. First, based on verse 23, we may discern that the widows and orphans have direct access to God. He hears their cries and appeals for help and promises swift action. Second, avoiding upholding justice for the widow and orphan secures judgment—even death—upon those who look the other way. In the prophets, this becomes one of the burning indictments against the rulers of the house of Israel as they avoided caring for the needs of the widow and orphan.

In the Old Testament, the entire community is commanded to care for the needs of the least of these in their midst. In this respect, orphan care becomes the responsibility of the entire community. There are no instructions for orphanages, not to mention homes for the aged, leading to the claim that adoption is a foreign concept to the Old Testament worldview.[2] Presumably, given the injunctions found in the text, children found homeless were taken in by extended family in order to maintain the hereditary rights of the child as stipulated in the law. Extending protection to these most vulnerable of people, Proverbs 23:10 cautioned, "Do not remove the ancient boundary stones nor encroach on the fields of the fatherless."[3]

Furthermore, the law stipulated that when harvesting in the field, the people of Israel were not to return for sheaves of grain left behind. At the

[1]All Scripture references are taken from *The Holy Bible*, New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1997).

[2]Michael J. Broyde, "Adoption, Personal Status, and Jewish Law," in *The Morality of Adotpion: Social-Psychological, Theological and Legal Perspectives*, ed. Timothy P. Jackson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 128–129.

[3]See also Job 24:2–4.

annual grape harvest, the vines were to be picked once and not gone over twice, nor were the olive trees to be beaten twice. That leftover produce served as the portion of the widow, the orphan, and the alien, who did not have formal care in the community. (Deut 24:17, 19–21). Even during the feasts of *Shevuot* and *Succot*, widows, orphans and aliens were to be taken in by individual families to celebrate the holiday. The implication was that this was to be standard practice for all holidays (Deut 16:11; 14).

Not only was it commanded that the community should protect the rights of the orphans, but the populace was taxed to support the needs of those who fell under this category. In Deuteronomy 26:12–13, the nation of Israel was commanded to take up a tithe of their income specifically for the needs of the widows, orphans, Levites, and aliens in the nation. The givers of the tithe were required to make a declaration before God that they not only had brought the tithe to support those God commanded, but that they had kept all of God's commands. They then requested His blessing on the entire household of faith (14–15).

The rationale for these, and similar, commandments derives from a theological understanding of the divine attributes of holiness and justice. According to the Hebrew Scriptures, God becomes the surrogate Father (or surrogate husband in the case of widows) to protect their rights. When the cause of the wicked oppresses the orphan or widow, God promises swift judgment against those he identifies as his children (Ps 10:14;18; 146:9; Jer 49:11; Hos 14:3). In the burning indictments the prophets brought against the chosen people, consistently God points out their absolute failure to care for the needs of widows and orphans. The curse outlined in Deuteronomy 27:19 on Mount Ebal is prominent: "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless, or the widow." Books like Job and Psalms outline a lack of care for the fatherless as a sign of absolute wickedness and upcoming judgment.

Again, as we consider the biblical model for adoption, we are not presented a picture of the modern Western view of adoption in the Hebrew Scriptures. The closest thing we may affiliate with any modern form of adoption might be God's selection of his people, Israel: "Israel I have chosen." Another example would be Hosea taking Gomer's children as his own. While that might prove an interesting case study, we are short on space and simply mentioning it here should suffice. So, when we consider adoption in the Old Testament, we are not referring to adoption in the sense that we typically understand the term today. Rather, adoption is understood in the broad terms of orphan care. To summarize, orphan care in the Hebrew Scriptures is as follows:

1. Orphan care is commanded by God for the entire community of faith.
2. Orphan care is designed to protect the rights of orphans in the hereditary transfer of land.
3. A curse followed those who did not take up the cause of the orphan and oppressed.
4. In the definition of evil found in the condemnations of the prophets that were recited against Israel and the surrounding nations, lack of care for orphans almost always appears.
5. God hears the prayers of orphans.
6. God promises to be the defender and father of orphans.

## Theological Picture of Adoption

Moving to the New Testament, Paul gives us the most vivid language concerning adoption as a theological concept. As we have seen in the prior section, the idea of adoption as a set of parents taking on the child of another, who is not closely related to the orphan, is not clearly found. Instead, the concept of orphan care in the context of working towards divinely orchestrated social justice was the main theme. Interestingly, Jesus picked up on this ancient concept when he proclaimed to his disciples that he would not leave them as orphans (John 14:18). James also carried the Deuteronomic commands into the New Testament era as he boldly proclaimed that caring for widows and orphans signifies true religion (Jas 1:27).

Knowing his Gentile audience, however, Paul shifts the image away from social justice or hospitality in a biblical framework to a theological word picture of redemption drawn for the Roman legal system. The Romans understood the nature of the need for orphan care as much as any other society, and many orphans became servants of the Empire through pressed service in the military if of age or temple prostitution if younger. Legally, Roman law made allowances for individuals who were citizens of Rome to adopt the children of slaves as their own. This legal adoption translated the adoptee from poverty and obscurity to full rights and status as heir to the adopting parents.[4]

For Paul, there was no more powerful picture of what God had done through Christ for the Gentiles in particular and all believers in general. To the church in Ephesus, Paul writes that God elected us to be the children of God before the foundation of the world. How was that to happen for

[4]Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 167. See also John Francis Brosnan, "The Law of Adoption," *Columbia Law Review* 22 (1922): 332–42.

the Gentiles? According to Ephesians 1:4–5, he loved us and predestined us to be adopted as his heirs through the work of Jesus Christ, who paid the price and freed us from slavery.

Consider the letter to Galatians where Paul writes that before Christ, we were helpless slaves to the law of sin and death. But that changed because of Christ. In powerful language, Paul paints the picture of our translation from slave to rightful heir.

> So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons (Gal 4:3–5).

Again, this is forensic language, indicating a price has been paid to change the identity of the believer from slave to heir. The text continues:

> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father!" so you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir (Gal 4:5–7).

How can the courtroom imagery be stated any more clearly? God has worked a legal transaction through the substitutionary death of his own son, Jesus Christ, to enable our adoption as his very own children.

Next, there is a key passage, where Paul extensively utilizes and underscores this concept in Romans 8:12-9:5. Here, Paul begins talking about the Christian's identity in Christ, and again testifies that we are no longer slaves, but are now children of God. Again, how does this happen? Just as Paul outlines in Galatians 4, it is through the Spirit that we receive the "Spirit of adoption" that allows us to cry out, "Abba, Father!" In fact, it is the Spirit himself that testifies that we are God's children.

In this context, I have recognized that the Pauline imagery parallels the adoption of one of my own children. At the birth of my son, his body craved cocaine. Throughout the pregnancy, his birth mother took drugs, including cocaine, to feed her personal drug addiction. This addiction passed through the uterus to my son so that, at birth, his body was filled with the poisons his birth mother introduced to her body. For three months, as his body proceeded through detoxification, he experienced tremors and other withdrawal symptoms. He had no choice about his condition or the poisons his birth mother pumped into his little body *in utero*.

Similarly, Paul paints the picture of us as depraved humans. There is nothing in us and of us that is good, holy, or deserving. In fact, much like my son, we are like "crack babies" born with the craving of evil and the depraved things of this world because it is what our bodies tell us to crave.[5] Without intervention, we will suffer and die. Without someone to break the bonds of the cocaine (i.e. the sin) we crave, our desire will continue to grow and consume us. But the shed blood of Christ breaks the power of original sin and frees us from the curse of sin and death. Even more amazing, however, is that as we stand before the almighty judge of the universe, he sees the work of Christ and makes a legal proclamation that we are his own.

I never understood this image until I stood before a judge in the Cook County family courthouse in Chicago. There, standing with our attorney (our advocate), we waited as the judge looked over the paperwork to determine our suitability as parents. Satisfied that we had met the requirements, he made a proclamation that "Baby Girl Winters" would from this point forward be known as Briley Starr Yeats, daughter of John Mark and Angela Yeats. Following his judgment, we applied for a new birth certificate for our daughter. No longer were her natural birthparents indicated as the parents; rather, her mother was now legally listed as Angela Yeats and her father, John Mark Yeats, just as the judge had ordered. Even though our daughter may not reflect me physiologically, she is by all accounts my child, and she receives all of the rights and responsibilities that her adoption entails.

In the same manner, the Holy Spirit gives testimony that the requirements for adoption have been met through Jesus Christ (Rom 8:14–18). Thereby, we become the children of our heavenly Father, who in fact is also the judge. His proclamation settles the issue once and for all (incidentally, providing a strong case for the security of the believer) and legally changes our spiritual identity so we can call out, "Abba, Father!" If this grace were not already beyond comprehension, we also become co-heirs with Christ of the inheritance that our Father has laid up for us for all eternity. Paul carries this image forward in Romans 8, discussing the fullness of our adoption being revealed in heaven (8:23). He thereby sets the tone for the full outworking of this concept in Romans 9–11, particularly in Romans 9:4, where he identifies the Jews as those God adopted first (cf. Exod 4:22).

On this New Testament basis, especially as given by Paul, we may identify our heritage and adoption as God's own children. How humbling is this concept and how blessed are we that God through his Son would

[5]For a further development of this idea, see Robert A. Peterson, *Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 37–38.

testify through his Spirit that we are the children of God. As J.I. Packer eloquently defined the New Testament concept, salvation is "adoption through propitiation."[6]

## Practical Theology Lived Out Daily

In 1852, Charles Loring Brace, a Yale trained Presbyterian pastor, began working with the poor on what became known as Roosevelt Island. Seeing the need of countless children starving and without decent care, the survivors of whom were repeating their parent's social foibles (heavy drinking, crime, etc.), he decided to do something about it. He created the Children's Aid Society (CAS) and began working with evangelical churches throughout New York State in order to relocate children from their oppressed urban environment and place them with Christian families willing to take in a child. For many of these children, this was the first sight of hope that had yet appeared in their life. In fact, this early foster care system became a boon to farmers and aided many children in becoming integrated members of society in their adult years.

Brace created a movement that lasted for almost 75 years. Called "Orphan Trains," Brace and his organization would purchase tickets for children to ride the rails from New York City to far off locations in places like Kansas and Michigan to gain a new home. These "Orphan Trains" became the means for children to escape horrible circumstances and childless families or families needing extra hands to work the farm to bring more children into their life. For children without parents, Brace and the CAS would send information about the children weeks in advance to local churches, who screened the candidates for suitability. As the train would pull into the station, the parents that were deemed fit would go and look at the adoptable children who were placed on boxes so the crowd could see them, thus, the etymology of the phrase, "up for adoption." While there were some serious shortcomings and flaws to Brace's ministry, his goal was commendable: to place children without hope into evangelical families, in the hope that the new context would transform the life of the child and eventually transform society.[7]

[6]"[W]ere I asked to focus the New Testament message in three words, my proposal would be *adoption through propitiation*, and I do not expect ever to meet a richer or more pregnant summary of the gospel than that." J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 20th anniversary ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 214.

[7]For more on Brace, the CAS and the social conditions that promoted the Orphan Trains, see Stephen O'Connor, *Orphan Trains: the Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) and Marylyn Holt, *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2004).

Similarly, in the earliest expressions of evangelicalism found in the Pietistic and Moravian movements, a concern for children along with their discipleship and growth, especially those without a home, marked the movement. As historian W.R. Ward once quipped, early evangelicals could be spotted simply wherever there was an orphanage.[8] Taking the claims of Scripture seriously, the evangelical movement in its earliest days simply obeyed the commands of the text and took care of the widow and the orphan.

This, of course, provides a source of confusion for Christians today. In our day, not only do churches avoid social ministries outside of what they can give through the isolationist collection plate, but also, as those who uphold the authority of the text itself, they avoid the simple task of caring for orphans. (Dare we even mention widows here, another glaring problem!) The Old Testament mandates orphan care, and the New Testament modeled that care and bequeathed us a theological model of redemption developed from that mandate. Perhaps for all of our pro-life rhetoric, evangelicals today no longer believe what the text says.

In 2006, Democrat Representative Julie Bartling remarked that most people in South Dakota are in favor of a ban on abortions. Stunning some of her constituents, she stated, "I think South Dakota has always been what I call a pro-life state. . . . I think it's ready to step up and be in the forefront and make some of these first moves."[9] While South Dakota does not carry out that many abortions, statistically speaking, imagine if this law actually passed. First, the church would rejoice, and rightly so. Any battle won defending the lives of innocent babies deserves celebration! But, in effect, would we lose?

Let us assume that the abortion rate remained constant since the last data was taken on abortions in this one state in 1995. That year, South Dakota had 1,070 lives ended through abortion.[10] Let us assume that just over half of the birth mothers decided to parent their children, since abortion was no longer an option. What happens to the remaining children? Hopefully, the birthparents made an adoption plan. If they did, an agency would help them in placing the child for adoption. If they did not, chances are the child will become a ward of the state, joining the more than 2,000 children awaiting a permanent home in their state-run system.

[8]As cited in Brian Stanley, ed. *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 3.

[9]Michael Foust, "South Dakota House passes ban on abortion, challenging court's Roe v. Wade decision." Baptist Press, http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=22627 (accessed 10 March 2006).

[10]http://www.abortionfacts.com/statistics/age.asp (accessed 13 September 2007).

Where are the churches in all of this? Many of us assume that we are contributing to ongoing work at children's homes, something that Baptists have been doing for years. It is true that your cooperative program dollars given through your church support the ministries of several children's homes in several states. Frequently, our children's homes work closely with their respective state governments to take on those children who are not adoptable due to severe emotional trauma or other issues. Many of our Baptist men's groups and women's groups work diligently to support the ministries of these vital organizations in our states.

But do not breathe easy, yet. In Florida last year, the Florida Baptist Children's Homes assisted with 85 foster homes, 38 adoptions and the placement of 182 children in residential care. They were able to do this while reaching some 2,000 people through their various ministries and, as a result of these ministries, Florida Baptists saw 50 people accept Christ as their Lord.[11] In Oklahoma Baptist Children's Homes 2006 annual report, they served 309 children, placing approximately 150 of them in residential care.[12] This is great and sacrificial work on the part of both of these states, but the cost to run these programs entered into the tens of millions of dollars in order to aid a limited number of children.

To demonstrate the desperate need of a new approach, consider the following facts:[13]

1. There are 3.5 million orphans in Asia.
2. 1.5 million orphans in Eastern Europe are without a home.
3. Over 400,000 orphans in Latin America overwhelm their social services.
4. 5.5 million orphans fend for themselves in Africa and this number is set to double in the next 5 years due to the AIDS crisis.
5. 135,000 children are available for adoption in the United States foster care system. The methamphetamine crisis is flooding many states with even more children on a daily basis.
6. In the state where I live, a social worker stated that there are over 5,000 kids whose parental rights have been terminated by the courts and are awaiting adoption.

[11]"2007 Report to the Associations" by the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, http://fbchomes.org/html1/download.html#reptassn (accessed 7 September 2007).

[12]"2006 Annual Report" by the Oklahoma Baptist Children's Homes, http://www.obhc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=727&srcid=508 (accessed 7 September 2007).

[13]Statistics provided by Hope for Orphans, a ministry of Family Life, http://www.familylife.com/hopefororphans/overview.asp (accessed 18 October 2007).

The statistics are overwhelming, are they not? But wait, there is yet more. Since the 1980s, Americans have consistently adopted between 118,000 and 125,000 children per year. But these numbers are a bit deceiving. Until the mid-1990s, over 70% of adoptions were kinship adoptions. This means that out of that 118,000–125,000 adoptions, the vast majority were step-parents adopting step-children or uncles and aunts adopting their nieces and nephews. At best, only 40,000 children were being brought home in a traditional adoption per year![14] Thankfully, some of the percentages have changed, but the number of actual adoptions remains steady.[15]

To further complicate the problem, infertility is on the rise across America. Doctors do not know why, but the numbers of those actually able to carry a child to term is falling rapidly.[16] Infertility hurts. It hurts in an indescribable way. It creates an ever-present ache of longing combined with the blackness of despair to the barren parents. Few rays of hope dare penetrate into this maze of confusion. It seems as if all hope is infinitely trapped in the black hole of pain and hurt. One in five couples know this hurt. My wife and I know this hurt. People in your church are currently feeling this hurt.

Yet seeking the counsel of Scripture in this maze of confusion and doubt is often the last place many hurting couples turn. Trusting in science and technology, they seek medical remedies to their issues. These remedies are not only costly, but physically dangerous and ethically questionable, if one believes that life begins at conception. The processes of super-ovulation and *in vitro* fertilization often result in 10 or more embryos being formed outside of the womb. Frequently, physicians look at the babies, decide which appear most viable and inject those, arbitrarily tossing the rest away. For some people, the thought of tossing the fertilized eggs away is immoral, so they cryogenically freeze the eggs. This has led to a new dilemma since the freezers of fertility clinics run over with the conceived children of many couples that are sustained in a frozen purgatory of our making.[17] For

[14]For more data, see the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services statistics from 2001, http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/s_adoptedhighlights.cfm (accessed 24 February 2006).

[15]Ibid. In 2000, just over 54% of all adoptions in the states shifted to traditional adoptions.

[16]George Creatsas, George Mastorakos and George P Chrousos, "Setting Reproductive Health Priorities to Meet the Needs of the New Millennium," in *The Young Woman at the Rise of the 21st Century: Gynecological and reproductive issues in health and disease*, eds. George Creatsas, et al. (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 2000), xiii.

[17]John C. Mayoue, "Legal and Ethical Challenges of Embryonic Adoption," in *The Morality of Adoption: Social-Psychological, Theological and Legal Perspectives*, ed. Timothy P. Jackson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005): 262–282. For more on adopting these cryogenically preserved embryos, see www.snowflakes.org (accessed 24 July 2007).

those who are injected with the fertilized eggs, doctors frequently inject six to eight embryos to ensure success of at least one attaching to the uterine wall. Most of the embryos do not attach. In fact, there is only a 33% chance that the embryos will attach, leading many couples to repeat this process multiple times at a cost ranging from $10,000 to $12,000 per cycle, in a non-insurance covered process.[18]

Occasionally more than one of the embryos will attach to the uterine wall and most fertility doctors will evaluate the progress of the children until the eighth or ninth week, at which time most will counsel their patients to abort all but one or two of the embryos. This is done in the hope of ensuring a successful completion of the pregnancy. Christians should be appalled. At some level, we should question where we are within the providence of God. On another level, we should be concerned about our culture's understanding of the ethics of life itself.

## A Vision for Revival

With the Scriptural mandates in mind, what is the church to do? Please allow me to offer eight suggestions for how we might bring about a revival in the biblical practice of adoption:

1. Recognize that adoption is a calling. Not every Christian will adopt nor should every Christian adopt. That being said, every Christian can and should help in some way. Doctors may help families with the burdensome medicals and physicals that must be accomplished before bringing a child home. Churches may create adoption friendly atmospheres where adopted children are welcomed. Sunday School classes and friends, through adoption showers, may help meet the sudden needs of families bringing a child home. Unlike a typical birth, there is not always a nine-month gestation period in which to prepare for a new family member. For those families adopting older children, they often do not know the needs of the children

[18]Gilbert Meilaender, "A Child of One's Own: At What Price?" in *The Reproductive Revolution: A Christian Appraisal of Sexuality, Reproductive Technologies and the Family*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000): 36–45. For the financial and rate of success, see www.socialfertility.com/ivf-cost-information.html (accessed 15 January 2008). According to Dr. R.E. Anderson of the Southern California Center for Reproductive Medicine, the younger the patient undergoing the IVF process, the greater the opportunity for success. In the under 35 bracket, Anderson's group saw 62% carry an infant to term or longer than 12 weeks. But the number drops from there with only 43.2% in the 35–37 age bracket, 30% in the 38–40 age bracket and 11.8% in the 40 and older age bracket, www.socialfertility.com/ivf-success-rate.html (accessed 15 January 2008).

(clothing, school supplies, etc.) until the child enters the home. Even then, it may be financially unfeasible to meet those needs immediately.

2. Get involved in the world of orphan care. Take mission trips to other countries and work with their orphanages. See what you and your church can do with your regional Baptist Homes for Children.
3. Become an advocate for adoption from your pulpit and from your study. Take this brief study on adoption and examine it from a scriptural standpoint. Teach your people about the scriptural images of adoption and orphan care. Know where to refer couples considering adoption. Of the five pastors from whom my wife and I sought counsel, after discovering we were unable to conceive, not one knew anything about adoption, the biblical framework for adoption, or even where to obtain such information. Pastors and church leaders *must* learn about the infertility issues effecting thousands of young adults across this country. Incorporate infertility and adoption issues into at least one session of your pre-marital counseling. Be certain that your preaching reflects the realities, hopes and fears of infertility and adoption as you preach through the text of Scripture exegetically.
4. Get involved financially. Currently, it costs an average of $4,000.00–12,000.00 to adopt domestically through an agency, and $7,000.00–25,000.00 or more to adopt a child internationally.[19]
5. Know that Christian churches are now in competition with the world for the hearts and souls of the orphans. The Gay and Lesbian lobby groups are working hard to legalize adoption for same-sex couples and are more than happy to take in children while the church sleeps. Rosie O'Donnell boldly stated on her show in 2002 that if the nation would allow gays and lesbians to adopt, they would alleviate the strain on the system.[20] Could this be yet another role of the church we allow others to fill?

[19]Groups like Stephen Curtis Chapman's Shaohanna's Hope help fund adoptions for those who want to adopt but have little means but there are many more requests than available finances. For information on wide range of adoption costs, see the information provided by the Evan B. Donald Adoption Institute, "Costs of Adoption," www.adoption-institute.org/factoverview/costs.html, (accessed 26 August 2007).

[20]Dan Allen, "The adoption option: Rosie O'Donnell and tens of thousands of other gay people have chosen to adopt children—but how many roadblocks stand in the way of others who want to follow their lead?" *The Advocate* (May 28, 2002), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1589/is_2002_May_28/ai_86128324, (accessed 28 July 2007).

6. Teach your people about the power of divine sovereignty and the destructive power of our expectations in relation to procreation. God is the God of life.
7. Listen for God to call you to do more.
8. Pray.

The world of orphan care challenges all who decide to hear the scriptural mandate given to the people of God. Adoption is frequently romanticized and idealized without consideration of the real costs. The challenges and concerns are real, but the purpose of this essay is simply to aid church leaders in beginning the consideration of the scriptural role and mandate God instituted for his people to be involved in orphan care. What if the churches in America would wake up and realize that our walk does not correlate with our talk in relation to pro-life issues. What if 5,000 Christian couples in the metro area where I live raised their hand and said they believed God was calling them to adopt and they adopted unwanted children from the state. What if those same Christian couples raised those 5,000 children and they became Christians, who in turn raised Christian families with Christian children? Do you catch the impact here?

Christopher Padbury caught the vision. He and his wife began the adoption process in their church years ago and saw how central their community of faith was during the emotional ups and downs of the process. As the pastor, he began to call on his church to consider adoption as a call from God and a mandate from Scripture. As such, he and his church family founded Project 127 and began to help members of their church adopt children that needed homes. Despite a monster snowstorm the night of their first formal meeting with the state's welfare workers, 250 people turned out in January of 2005 to hear about what God was doing through this unique ministry of adoption. At that point, God turned the heart of that church around and they began to adopt children from the county where they are located. To date, they have 206 families involved in the process of adopting with 68 actually adopting over the last two years. What is their goal? It is quite simply the eradication of the fact that there are 875 children who are still in Colorado's social system.[21]

As the number of homeless children grows in Africa, China and around the world, what would God have you do? Scripturally, we already have a mandate and an example. At some point, we must say enough is enough. We must begin to question if God will continue to move through our churches, our missions, and our ministries when we do not fulfill the basic social ministries he has provided for us. The problem of orphan care

[21]Interview with Christopher Padbury, June 21, 2006. See also http://www.project127.com/about/allabout1.htm (accessed 24 July 2007).

is global and we need to stand against the rising tide of commercialism and individualism and put our focus where God has had his focus all along: the eyes of God are upon the children. What will we do?

## The Biblical Picture of Orphan Care and Adoption

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Warning not to oppress and condemnation for those not caring for orphans | Exod 22:22<br>Deut 27:19<br>Lam 5:3<br>Isa 1:23; 9:17; 10:2<br>Jer 5:28<br>Ezek 22:7<br>Zech 7:10<br>Ma. 3:5 | Cursed for not caring for orphans |
| Not taking care of orphans is a sign of wickedness | Job 6:27<br>Job 22:9<br>Job 24:3<br>Ps 94:6 | |
| Taking care of orphans is a sign of righteousness | Job 29:12<br>Job 31:17–18<br>Job 31:21 | |
| Command to take care of orphans and laws regulating orphan care | Exod 22:22<br>Deut 16:11, 14<br>Deut 24:17, 19–21<br>Deut 26:12–13<br>Jer 7:6; 22:3<br>Ps 82:3<br>Prov 23:10 | Bring the orphans in to celebrate the feasts<br>Leave the fields to provide for the needs of orphans<br>Tax to meet needs of orphans<br>Condition for staying in the land<br>Must do justice |
| God's role in orphan care | Deut 10:18<br>Ps 10:14, 18<br>Ps 146:9<br>Jer 49:11<br>Hos 14:3 | God defends<br>God defends<br>God protects<br>God as Father<br>God as Father |
| New Testament passages carrying the Old Testament theme | John 14:18<br>Jas 1:27 | Disciples not orphans<br>Care for orphans mandated |
| Adoption as theological identity | Rom 8:15, 23<br>Rom 9:4<br>Gal 4:5<br>Eph 1:5 | |

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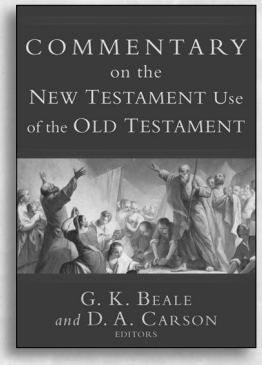


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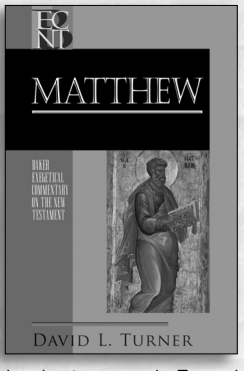


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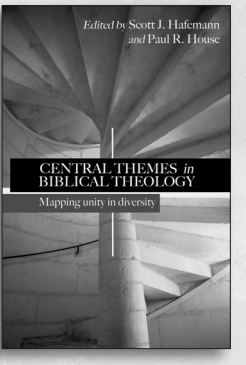


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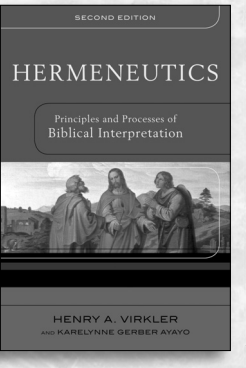


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# *It Is Not Hillary's Fault: A Discussion of Godly Male Leadership*

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## Introduction

Many years ago, before I had opportunity to learn about the intricacy of automotive technology, I experienced a problem with my truck. My battery died. I looked at the date on the battery and realized that I purchased this fine piece of equipment three years ago. Amazingly, the battery had a three year warranty. As I went to the store to purchase a new battery, I wondered how much time it took to develop batteries that die days after the warranty expires. Not that those pro-rated warranties are worth much anyway, but imagine the brain power expended on maximizing profits by having batteries expire just days after the warranty does.

While at the store, I purchased another battery with the same three year warranty just to test my theory. After installing the battery, within two days this battery died. Being the shade tree mechanic that I am, I immediately went to the specialist to discover that one auto shop wanted me to pay hundreds of dollars to diagnose and fix a "complicated electrical problem." I decided to get a second opinion before spending more money than the truck was worth.

I went to a member of our church who worked as a mechanic and always had grease under his fingernails. If anyone would know what to do, he would. His response was, "Let's get it to the shop at my house, and I will show you how to fix it." I was amazed that just by hearing the problem he apparently knew what was wrong. When I arrived, a little skeptical I admit, I found that he wanted me to replace my alternator. As many of you know, the alternator replenishes power to the battery, allowing the motor to run without a constant drain on the battery. A faulty alternator, the real problem, created the other symptoms that was noticed. Until we fixed the problem, the symptom would remain.

Modern society has a similar situation. We continually diagnose a secondary problem in our society rather than addressing the root problem. The majority of the books written, sermons given, and papers presented concern the improper role of the woman in the male/female relationship. I submit to you that the heart of the gender problem begins with a loss of biblical male leadership. When males fail to understand the biblical mandate for leadership, they fail to fulfill the biblical role. When they fail to fulfill their role, women experience greater difficulty fulfilling their biblical role. Or when the alternator fails to recharge the battery, the battery cannot start the car. We see this situation played out in the home, in the local church, and in society. We must begin to recognize that it is not Hillary's fault.[1] She is merely a visible symptom of the male's problem beginning with biblical illiteracy. Our real sickness comes from a loss of biblical manhood.

Said another way, the symptoms most often associated with improper roles emerge in the form of female pastors, females teaching men in Sunday School classes, females possessing authority over men in the church, females controlling husbands in the home, or females spiritually leading in the home. In some cases, females do not intentionally assume improper roles. These frustrated females fill the void left by apathetic men. When the man follows the biblical model, then the woman has an easier time filling her God-given role. Surely, you will still find the occasional feminist, seeking to ignore the biblical mandate in favor of a personal preference, represented in statements like, "But I have a desire to do this," or "I am only doing what God has called me to do." These experiential statements fail to give proper weight to the fact that God never calls anyone to act against his written revelation. This, however, is another point for another presentation. In this presentation, I contend that until men understand their biblical mandate and fulfill their biblical role, we will continue to see women filling unbiblical roles.

Throughout the remainder of this presentation, we will discuss three poor examples of male leadership. Those examples include absentee male leaders, abusive male leaders, and acclimatized male leaders. After discussing these negative examples, we will positively construct the correct biblical model of appropriate male leadership.

[1]Hillary Rodham Clinton was born October 26, 1947. She is the wife of former President Bill Clinton, has served as a United States Senator from New York since November 7, 2000, and at the time of this writing, she was a candidate for the 2008 presidential election. Some have made her the focal point of improper female leadership in our country because of her prominence. This author contends that it is not her fault but that she is merely a visible symptom of a deeper religious problem.

## The Absentee Leader

> Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:1–6)[2]

These verses establish the first biblical example of the absentee male leader. While Scripture does not explicitly tell us that Adam stood right beside Eve during the entire event, Scripture states in Genesis 3:17 that God said to Adam, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you." Perhaps Adam stood by while the serpent and Eve carried on a conversation. Perhaps Adam allowed Eve to incorrectly answer the question from the serpent. Eve responded by adding that the fruit should not even be touched. The Bible does not indicate whether Adam poorly performed the role of teaching God's command to Eve or whether Eve legalistically added to Adam's teaching. Perhaps Adam stood by while the serpent challenged God's command and authority. The serpent responded with a direct contradiction to God's command by stating, "You will not surely die." The serpent continued and stated that eating of this fruit would make one like God himself, knowing good and evil. Adam never corrected this accusation. He never defended God's truth nor took his rightful place as the spiritual leader.

Perhaps Adam stood by while Eve ate of the fruit. Perhaps he did not intervene to protect his wife from danger. It is from this point that we move from the realm of what probably happened to the realm of what we know happened. After Eve ate the fruit, Adam faced a choice. He could choose Eve's way or God's way. Adam, without being deceived, chose to follow Eve and, by doing so, he abdicated his leadership responsibilities

[2]All Scripture references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

and disobeyed God. Adam became an example of the absentee male leader. We know he was the leader because it was not until Adam ate that both of their eyes were opened (Gen 3:7). If Eve had been the representative her eyes would have been opened when she ate. In addition, in verse 9 the Lord called out to Adam and not Eve to address the matter of sin. The beginning of God's curse pronounced on Adam indicates that he failed because he "heeded the voice of his wife," which contradicted God's established order and represents the first biblical example of abdication of male leadership responsibilities.

Our society at large struggles more with this issue than with any other. When we look around at our church attendance to notice that more women than men fill the pews, we know that we have absentee males. When we listen to men claim that they can worship God anywhere but most often choose to do so from the seat of a fishing boat or while sitting in the woods with a hunting rifle, we know that we have absentee males. When we observe the statistics, which tell us that on average an American father spends less than 3 minutes of undivided attention with his children per day, we know that we have absentee males.[3] When males care for hobbies or sports more than the home or the church, we have a society of absentee males. When we no longer hear discussions of family devotions or family worship, because the spiritual leader's absentee ballot has been lost in the mail, we know that we have absentee males. I fear that God is looking for a few godly men and cannot find them. Are we any better than Sodom and Gomorrah when Abraham searched for a handful of righteous men?

## The Abusive Leader

Our second example of failed leadership is the abuse of male leadership, which can be first seen in the curse declared after the Fall. Scripture states in Genesis 3:16, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your *desire* shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." The curses pronounced on the woman include pain in both of her important relationships. First, the woman will struggle in her relationship with her childbirth through pain in childbirth. Second, the woman will struggle in her relationship with man through an affinity to usurp proper authority and for the man to abuse his authority through harsh rule. The same word "desire" occurs in Genesis 4:7, which

[3]Weldon Hardenbrook, "Where's Dad? A Call for Fathers with the Spirit of Elijah," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 379.

indicates that the desire is to control.[4] Genesis 4:7 says, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

One can interpret the comment that "he shall rule over you" in two different ways. First, this could mean that the woman's desire will be to usurp the authority of the man given by God but that the man "must rule over you" by design, which would represent the establishment of a godly order.[5] There is another option, which states that the woman will attempt to usurp the authority and the man will by force "rule over you." This interpretation presents an image of an overpowering abusive man.[6] No matter which way one interprets the results of the fall, one cannot deny that God has ordained male headship. The curse on the man rests upon the work of providing, a role given to the male along with protection and spiritual leadership.

Male headship that rules by brute force or by verbal or physical intimidation by no means models God-ordained leadership. The image we often have in mind is of the pudgy man drinking beer and sitting on a stained 1950s couch with a white "wife beater" tank top adorning his bulging, hairy, and unflattering flesh. The typifying television characters may be Archie Bunker from "All in the Family" and Al Bundy from "Married with Children." These images demonstrate the ungodly abuse of leadership more common in past years but still present in some situations. For the man who wishes to exhibit godly leadership, the abusive leader cannot be his trademark.

Consider 1 Peter 3:7, which states, "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them [your wives] with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." Furthermore, Ephesians 5: 25–29 states, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

[4]Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 201.

[5]For a discussion of the various positions on this verse, see Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 250–52.

[6]Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 202.

Finally, Colossian 3:19 states, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them."

Feminists often caricature the abusive leader as representing all those males who hold to biblical role distinction. They create this straw man to win the battle of public opinion. However, this type of leader finds no friend among complementarian godly leaders. While feminists often try to paint all godly male leaders as abusive men who beat their wives and children, this portraiture is simply not the case.[7] Rather, godly male leaders should treat their wives better because we do not operate on a system of fairness, but on a system that says, "love your wife as Christ loved the church."[8] Other feminists paint any form of male superiority, including marriage, as part of the Fall and something to be overcome. Sheila Cronan states in the book, *Radical Feminism,* "Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the Women's Movement must concentrate on attacking this institution. Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage."[9]

## The Acclimatized Leader

The acclimatized leader adjusts to the temperature of the culture around him. Place him in a hot climate and eventually he adapts to become comfortable with the heat, but drop him in the middle of Alaska and given enough time, he will find great comfort in the cold. This type of leader follows the lead of Hollywood with movies and television setting the pace for popular culture. You might find this leader at the other end of an opinion poll attempting to discover the most popular position. Such leaders do not stand on principle but on popularity. Such men as these have embraced the position known as mutual submission. They have been told that women are equal, which ontologically is true. They have been told that a woman can do everything a man can do, which is partially true. They have been told that any distinction in roles violates equality, which is completely false. They have swallowed this logical fallacy hook, line, and sinker by jumping into the popular boat of feminism.

[7]Some feminists make this claim, such as Carolyn Holderread Heggen, "Religious Beliefs and Abuse," in *Women, Abuse and the Bible,* ed. Catherine Kroeger (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 15–17. Cf. James and Phyllis Alsdurf, *Battered into Submission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989). For a response, see Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2004), 490–96.

[8]In August 1995, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood published a statement against abuse in all forms. Ibid., 494.

[9]Sheila Cronan, "Marriage," in *Radical Feminism*, eds. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), 219.

These men, the acclimatized leaders, are analogous to thermometers. They merely take the temperature of the culture and adjust to reflect that degree. They can change quickly, when needed, in order to register a new cultural change. Thermometers are useful only for registering the state of affairs, but they cannot bring about change or lead the way forward. They are reactionary by nature. Christians need more thermostats and fewer thermometers. A thermostat can change the temperature. The situation then adjusts to the setting that is controlled by the master. Unfortunately, some oppose any form of masculinity or differentiation in roles. For example, in *Mutuality*, an egalitarian publication, Jim Banks suggested that a better title for John Gray's book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* would be "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus, but Some Men are from Venus and Some Women are from Mars, and All of God's Children Have Both Mars and Venus Qualities Within Them So Why Not Just Say That Men and Women are from the Earth and Let's Get about the Business of Developing the Unique God-given Mars/Venus Qualities That God Has Given All of Us for the Sake of the Kingdom."[10]

The most common defense of mutual submission begins with 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."[11] The argument for using this verse to support mutual submission relies upon the early dating of the book of Galatians, and believes that if Paul did indeed write Galatians first, then all else that he wrote concerning women's roles must be interpreted in light of this work. This misguided presupposition exalts Galatians 3:28 to the level of the lens through which all other Pauline verses must be viewed. The key phrase to them in this verse, of course, is "there is neither male nor female." Although this verse relates to equality in salvation and not roles in the home and the church, some view this as the key verse establishing that differing roles no longer exist. Those supporting this viewpoint often identify themselves as egalitarians and agree with the concept of mutual submission.

Others holding to the concept of mutual submission will use Ephesians 5:21, "submitting to one another in the fear of God," as the key to unlock the interpretation of Ephesians 5:22 and following. With this concept in mind, the position of mutual submission believes that everyone

[10]Jim Banks, "Science Fiction," *Mutuality* (March 1998), 3. Available at http://pages.prodigy.net/nedesautels76/faith/marsvenus.htm (accessed 27 December 2007).

[11]For example, see Rebecca Groothuis, *Good News for Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 25–26. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 126–28. Wayne Grudem agrees with the current author when he states, "This claim is probably the most common one made by egalitarian writers." See Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*, 183.

should submit to each other. Rebecca Groothius states concerning this passage: "The call to mutual reciprocal submission in Eph. 5:21 establishes the framework for the instructions to wives and husbands that follow. . . . Wives are to submit to their husbands in the same way that all believers are to submit to one another. This text is not advocating a unilateral female submission to male authority."[12]

This viewpoint fails to take into account the threefold submissive relationship established in the context passage regarding the submission of wives to husbands, children to fathers, and slaves to masters. The other relationships in this passage are not mutually submissive. Parents are not required to submit to children, nor are owners to slaves. It should be noted that using Ephesians 5:21 to interpret the remaining portion of the passage was not used before 1968.[13] This being the case, you must decide which generation has given into culture—our generation or every generation before us! Another consideration must be that husbands are never told to submit to their wives anywhere in Scripture. Taking a high view of Scripture means the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Scripture overcomes cultural situations. There are three final reasons this view is wrong: (1) this view depends on giving *hupotasso* a meaning it has never been shown to have; (2) the term translated "one another" often means "some to others" and not "everyone to everyone;" and (3) Colossians 3:18, Titus 2:5, and 1 Peter 3:1 do not allow an egalitarian sense of mutual submission.[14]

A third argument for acclimatized leadership states that women can teach men under the authority of the pastor. I would encourage you to consult Wayne Grudem's book entitled *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* on this issue. Even devout feminists do not agree with this as they desire for women to be pastors. This position rears its head in churches that wish to accommodate or acclimatize to the culture of our age by letting women teach men without allowing them to be pastors. It is not allowable for three reasons: (1) pastors or elders cannot give someone permission to disobey the Bible; (2) Paul does not provide the exception, "unless you are under the authority of the elders," but simply says "I do not permit;" and (3) this interpretation sets up an unbiblical authority, which could undermine other scriptural principles. Would it ever be allowable to fornicate or commit adultery under the authority of the elders? Would it be allowable to gossip, dress immodestly, or glutton oneself as long as they are under the authority of the pastor?

[12]Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, 164–65. See also Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 153 ff.

[13]Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*, 190.

[14]Ibid., 198.

Another, and in my opinion more dangerous position, for us, is what may be called "functional egalitarianism." This idea involves the exaltation of servant leadership and would be presented similarly to the following logic: "Because husbands must love their wives as Christ loved the church and because Christ gave up everything for the church, then husbands should give in to their wives, thus demonstrating servant leadership." Perhaps the position may come across as jokes from the pulpit, such as, "My wife told me what to preach today," or "Check with your wife and see if she will let you come to the men's breakfast." In many different ways, conservative churches communicate that the decision-making process lies equally between the husband and the wife, that the responsibility for leadership in the home lies equally between the husband and the wife, and that the opportunities for all ministerial positions in the church avail themselves equally to men and women.

Unlike the theologically egalitarian position of misinterpreting Galatians 3:28 and 5:21, this position demonstrates functional egalitarianism by the misapplication of Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." The misapplication comes from stating that males should serve and love to the point of giving in to their spouse's desires. Examples of this error may include Abraham giving in to Sarah's decision to give him Hagar in Genesis 16:2–5, or Ahab's description of giving in to Jezebel in 1 Kings 21:25. This position could also be categorized as abdicating leadership through a false application of servanthood. Functional egalitarianism with this misapplication cannot be supported from a biblical foundation. While Christ came to earth and gave his life for the church, he still demands holiness and purity from his church. Christ neither gives into the church's every request nor negotiates the rules of holiness. In fact, our prayers often result in the answers of "No," or "Wait." The church cannot force Christ to act sovereignly by giving revival, money, blessings, or anything else at its whim. Thus, to become a husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church does not mean that he grants every request, but that he loves his wife unconditionally and would willingly lay down his life for her.

## The Appropriate Leader

The first step in demonstrating the biblical model of male leadership is to build the biblical foundation for male headship. This pattern of male headship begins in creation for the following reasons.

1. The order: Adam was created first, and the story of Genesis centers on Adam. Adam being the first-born would have pre-

cedence over Eve. Eve was later formed, but this is not as central to the story (note the sequence in Gen 2:7, 18–23, and 1 Tim 2:13).

2. The representation: Adam, not Eve, had a special role in representing the human race (1 Cor 15:22, 45–49; Rom 5:12–21).
3. The naming of woman: Adam named Eve, and Eve did not name Adam (Gen 2:23).
4. The naming of the human race: God named the human race "Man," not "Woman" (Gen 5:2).[15]
5. The primary accountability: God called Adam to account first after the Fall (Gen 3:9). In fact it is not until Genesis 3:7, after Adam eats of the fruit, that both of their eyes were open.
6. The purpose: Eve was created as a helper for Adam, and Adam was not created as a helper for Eve (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:9).
7. The conflict: The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles (Gen 3:16).
8. The restoration: Salvation in Christ in the New Testament reaffirms the created order (Col 3:18–19). Jesus is listed as the second Adam and not the second Eve (1 Cor 15:45; Rom 5:17–21).
9. The mystery: Marriage from the beginning of creation was a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church, and the church submits to Christ (Eph 5:32–33).
10. The parallel with the Trinity: The equality, differences, and unity between men and women reflect the equality, differences, and unity in the Trinity (1 Cor 11:3).[16]
11. The source: Woman was created from man, and man was not created from woman (1 Cor 11:8, 12; cf. Gen 2:22).[17]

With the presupposition that God intended for male headship, one may wonder what male headship encompasses. A complete presentation could be given merely on the positive aspects of the appropriate male leader but for the purposes of this presentation, I will point out three areas where the

[15]For more information, see N.P. Bratsiotis, "*'ish*," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament,* eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. by John T. Wells. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 224, 229.

[16]For more information on this topic, see Peter R. Schemm Jr., "North American Evangelical Feminism and the Triune God: A Denial of Trinitarian Relational Order in the Works of Selected Theologians and an Alternative Proposal" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001).

[17]This list borrows heavily from, but is not identical with the one found in Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*, 109.

appropriate male will lead. These three include the family, the church, and society.

**Family**

An appropriate godly leader must lead in the home. First, the Bible describes the husband as the provider and wife as the caregiver. From the very beginning Adam was to till the ground in order to provide food, while Eve was responsible for childbearing (Gen 2:15; 2:18–23; 3:16–19). Second, the husband is to protect the family. Joseph was commanded to protect Mary and the baby Jesus by taking them to Egypt (Matt 2:13–14). The husband should be willing to give his life for his wife as Christ gave his life for the church (Eph 5:25). The wife should be considered the weaker vessel (1 Pet 3:7). Moreover, the Bible provides no evidence that the wife should fight for, provide for, or protect her husband.[18] Third, in addition to serving as the provider and the protector, the male is called to be the priest or spiritual leader of his family. This means that the male will be held responsible for the spiritual life of his family. The male will answer to God for what occurs spiritually in his family. You can see from 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 that man is the head of woman, and from Ephesians 6:4 that fathers are to rear their children in the training and admonition of the Lord. Just as God called for Adam in the garden, one day God will call for the man of each family to give account for his leadership. If all families operated with the appropriate biblical model, then you would have no need for further discussion of the roles of male leaders. With the basic building blocks working correctly, then outside the family there would be revealed healthy churches and a healthy society.

**The Church**

Because all families do not properly understand the biblical model, the church must teach and often confront improper models of role distinction. The church, in addition, should mirror the relationship established for the home. This means that men should be the elders or pastors. Timothy and Titus both include the qualification, "husband of one wife," which necessitates a male for the position of pastor. In addition, 1 Timothy 2:12 states that a woman should not teach, nor should she have authority over a man. Thus, appropriate male leaders must be in the roles of teachers and in the roles of authority over the other men in the church. An additional admonition often overlooked for the church reinforces the proper role distinction. Scripture states that the church should care for widows but does not provide for widowers (1 Tim 5:10; 1 Tim 5:3–16; Titus 2:5). Why should the church not care for widowers? Because they were intended to

[18]Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*, 44–45.

function as providers. The church needed to step into the situation when the male provider was no longer present. For those who are thinking this is a cultural phenomenon, I remind you that the Holy Spirit inspired all Scripture, which means that his revelation is eternal, and eternal principles transcend culture. He knew and intended these words for all times as part of his plan.

**Society**

Men should also set the appropriate example by being godly leaders outside of the home. In my opinion, any man who allows his wife to work outside the home has set his wife up in a position of being under the authority of another male influence, whether that is the boss or a supervisor. This relationship is not the way God intended. Necessity may create these situations, but where they can be avoided, they should be. I do not intend these words to condemn widows or to prohibit temporary necessity, but the Bible does intend for the home to be a priority in married women's lives (Titus 2:4–5). In society, men are commanded to go to war and not women (Deut 20:7–8; 24:5; Josh 1:14). Barak did not get the glory, because he insisted on a woman accompanying him into battle in Judges 4:8–10. Nehemiah 4:13–14 states that people fight for their brothers, homes, wives, and children, but it does not say they are to fight for their husbands.

Moreover, the Bible indicates that we should protect the weak. Psalm 68:5 says that, "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation." Isaiah 1:17 states, "Learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." Godly male leaders in their desire to be like God should be fathers to the fatherless, defenders of the weak, and protectors of the widows. Lastly, appropriate male leaders should take the initiative to lead in society. The prophet Isaiah characterizes a weak nation by saying in Isaiah 3:12, "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths." A society marked by women rulers demonstrates a weak society. Why is this, you ask? Strong societies are built upon a strong foundation, which is the foundation of the family. Without strong families, you cannot have a strong society and you cannot have strong families unless those families understand their God-given role distinctions. Proper families lead to proper churches, which in turn lead to a strong society.

The Bible indicates that all people have sinned and will one day be responsible to God, the righteous judge, for their actions. This means we are all under authority to one degree or another. The church is under authority, men are under authority, women are under authority, workers are under authority, and citizens are under authority. We must learn to embrace our

God-given roles as defined by God's authority and live as though we will one day be judged. A society with women rulers demonstrates a society that is losing some major battles. A society that has women rulers is losing the battle in the home and is losing the battle in the church.

## Conclusion

Godly men of the world must recognize that we are in a spiritual battle. Our problem is that many of our troops are AWOL (Absent Without Leave). In fact, many of our troops have yet to recognize that a war even exists. We fight against spiritual terrorists seeking to destroy the infrastructure of God's design. If we correct the families, then the churches will in time follow. It will take a revival or the conversion of much of society to fix the cultural problem. However, a revival will likely not occur until Christians get their own homes in order. Until men enlist and engage in the spiritual battle occurring in their own homes, there is little hope of winning battles in the churches or in society. With that I issue a call to each and every man to fulfill his God-give role. Perhaps you have been beaten and did not know it. You now recognize the seriousness of the battle and the strategic arms of our spiritual foe. Now is the time to change things.

Where I grew up, on occasion, a new horse or two would need breaking. A few of us boys had bigger egos than we had brains and desired any opportunity to prove ourselves. I remember one particular occasion where a new horse needed breaking. Confident and eager to demonstrate my ability, I decided to wage war with a particular demon-possessed equine. As happens on occasion, this particular horse possessed an equally independent spirit, beginning with breathing and expanding the belly while the saddle was tightened, and proceeding to quick turns and sudden bucking even before both of my feet rested in the stirrups. As the saddle began to slip off the side of the horse, a sudden kick, while my weight resided improperly on the horse, resulted in an Olympics-worthy dismount from my leather perch. I landed firmly on the ground where the thud of my arrival was only engulfed by the momentum causing me to roll uncontrollably on the dusty ground.

I remember looking up after my fall to see nothing but the blue sky fighting off the cloud of dust stirred by my recent arrival. Suddenly, the thought of my unforgiving and less-than-encouraging friends entered my mind. I looked to see the group riding the fence in anticipation, and heard these words, "Cowboy up!" I am not sure of the origin of the words, but we all knew their meaning. "There ain't a horse than can't be rode and ain't a cowboy that can't be throwed." When that phrase eventually comes, "Cowboy up!" means one should get up and get back on the horse. It means you

cannot afford to let the horse win, because too much is at stake; if allowed to triumph, the horse could be ruined for life.

My final word to those of you who did not understand you were in a battle, or who have not been fighting is, "Cowboy up!" The lives of our children, the establishment of biblical homes, the maintenance of biblical roles in biblical churches, and the future of our society depends on it. There is too much at stake to continue with absentee, abusive, or acclimatized leadership. Men must rise to the challenge. We must stand for biblical principles against the drifting tide of cultural influence and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. We must partner with Christ to win a war waged not with guns but a spiritual war waged by principalities and powers. We serve a master who holds all the power, the Lord of hosts, controller of thousands upon thousands of mighty angels, and it is time we began acting like it.

It is not Hillary's fault that our families, our churches, and our society are in bad shape. Her leadership and power in our society represent a symptom of what we find in far too many homes in America. It is the fault of every male. It is my fault, and it is your fault, and it is time we do something about it. Cowboy up!

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# *Book Reviews*

***1 Peter*. By Karen H. Jobes. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. xviii + 364 pages. Hardcover, $29.99**.

The BECNT is an excellent commentary series, and Karen H. Jobes gives a well-researched, fresh look at 1 Peter in her contribution to this series. Jobes is Associate Professor of New Testament at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

Jobes' expertise in both New Testament and Septuagintal studies clearly shines through in this volume. She emphasizes the LXX origin of the Scripture Peter quoted, a point sometimes missed in other commentaries (xi, 55). Yet, her most interesting contribution to 1 Peter studies is the theory that the recipients of this epistle were Jewish converts to Christianity, displaced from Rome to Asia Minor (xi, 23–33, 61), rather than indigenous Gentile converts in Asia Minor. Coupling this idea with the possibility that Peter went to Rome in the A.D. 40s (although not necessarily permanently), and was therefore connected with these converts, Jobes presents an intriguing idea that is worthy of more study (33–41). She rightly presents her ideas simply as possibilities due to the lack of historical background references in 1 Peter (41).

The single excursus is another area in which Jobes successfully challenges a belief found in most studies on 1 Peter (325–38). Her examination of the syntax of 1 Peter lays the groundwork to help dispel the assumption that the Greek in 1 Peter is too good for Peter to have written. Using a quantitative model she developed for her dissertation, Jobes demonstrates at the syntactical level (which is typically subconscious) the writer of 1 Peter shows enough Semitic interference to indicate the writer was *not* a native Greek speaker (328–29, 337). Rather, the writer was a native Semitic speaker—as Peter was. Jobes rightly calls for more objective literary analysis to be done beyond the syntactical level, and her work gives a viable foundation for this process (338). Earlier in the commentary, Jobes does an excellent job in answering objections to Petrine authorship of 1 Peter (6–11), thus allowing it could have been Peter with the possible help of an amanuensis (11).

There are a few minor problems in the commentary. Sometimes Jobes relies simply on secondary sources (1, 15, 22), and there is a missed citation for Calvin (23). Yet, considering her citations easily run into the thousands, her accuracy is commendable. This reviewer disagrees with Jobes' contention that pseudepigraphy can be part of an inerrant writing (14). Misrepresentation is wrong even if it is culturally accepted at the time.

The perceived value in a commentary today is not in dishing out dogma but in describing and critiquing various interpretations while ultimately advocating the position consistent with the beliefs and objective research of the writer. Jobes does this well in a clearly evangelical framework. She handles the difficult-to-interpret 1 Peter 3:18–22 with thorough research and accurate analysis (235–60). However, considering Jobes' theory that the recipients were converted Jews, it would have helped to tie in the application of 1 Peter 2:4–10 to these Jewish Christian recipients in contrast with non-believing Jews (144–64).

One wishes Jobes had written an excursus analyzing the use of the LXX in 1 Peter, drawing upon her expertise in this area. Textual comments refer to this subject (e.g., 117–18, 137–41, 220), but a summary and separate analysis would strengthen the commentary in the niche Jobes created. Still, this is a fine commentary, with rich exegesis and exposition, good food for thought, and plenty of citations to aid the reader in further study.

James R. Wicker
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***From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile*. By James C. Vanderkam. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004. xix + 548 pages. Hardcover, $35.00.**

Covering an important facet of Jewish background to the Old Testament and New Testament, *From Joshua to Caiaphas* is an important and comprehensive examination of the fifty-one high priests of the Second-Temple period. An expert in the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as early Judaism, James C. Vanderkam is the John A. O'Brien Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and he is eminently qualified to write this excellent study.

Jewish high priests had various responsibilities in the four periods of Second-Temple Judaism (Persian, Early Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Herodian)—sometimes taking on the role of ruler in addition to being spiritual leader. Examining the individual priests—their accessions, important acts, and death or removal from office—gives important insight into the Judaism of the Old Testament, intertestamental period, and the

New Testament. The personal focus keeps this study interesting even as it covers almost six hundred years of history, until the "high priesthood whimpers to a sad end (490)."

The challenge Vanderkam faced in his research is the lack of historical sources and the necessary heavy dependence upon Josephus, who occasionally gave contradictory (viii–ix, 331) or wrong information (138, 174, 434) in his writings. At times Josephus was confusing (183, 203–04) or mischievous (331), and sometimes he had dubious motives which colored his writings (462, 482). Yet, Vanderkam is careful and judicious in handling historical sources. He consistently urges caution when speculating beyond where the evidence points (123, 218–22, 478). For instance, following John Hyrcanus (134–104 BC), there is no extant evidence of a subsequent high priest being a Sadducee until Ananus (Annas) the younger (AD 62) (430, 477–78).

Vanderkam handles primary and secondary sources well, and he effectively interacts with conflicting viewpoints—often hypothetical reconstructions (23, 46–47, 59–62, 85–99, 143–53, 445–47, 466–75)—with Vanderkam usually siding with traditional interpretation and chronology (47, 62, 97–99, 153, 447, 475). He deals with the biblical material with fairness and respect (4–18). His numerous content footnotes are valuable. The indices in the back are also helpful; however, an additional index of modern writers would improve this section, as Vanderkam interacts much with Emil Schürer (vii, 260, 272, 339–40, 412, 453, 464), Daniel R. Schwartz (441, 443, 445, 450, 469, 472–75), and a host of other scholars throughout the book.

One could find a certain subject and wish more information were present in this volume, such as wanting more about the debate over whether or not the Hasmoneans were Zadokites (Vanderkam gives it a 66% chance and says the likelihood should be emphasized, 270); however, when covering six centuries of history, a writer cannot be comprehensive on any one topic. Vanderkam is to be commended for presenting an excellent, scholarly, well-organized, readable, indispensable, and unique look into the high priesthood of the Second-Temple period.

James R. Wicker
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***Handbook on the Wisdom Books and Psalms*. By Daniel J. Estes. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. 448 pages. Hardcover, $34.99.**

Students, pastors, and lay leaders who have been introduced to the Old Testament books of poetry will find this handbook helpful. Daniel

Estes guides his readers through a scholarly discussion of the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs, and he lists resources at the end of each chapter which provide an important bridge for those wanting to further explore wisdom literature.

Each of the five chapters covers a book of wisdom and is comprised of three parts—summary of introductory issues, exposition of the book, and bibliography. Primarily, Estes presents insightful quotations from commentaries and other scholarly studies and knits these opinions together with his own summary and opinion in a discussion type of format.

The exposition sections receive most of the focus of each chapter. The books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are covered in their entirety. For the exposition of the Psalms, Estes defines and explains ten types of psalms, such as descriptive praise psalms, nature psalms, lament psalms, songs of trust, messianic psalms, etc., and then follows his descriptions with an example. For instance, after spending a few pages discussing the components of lament psalms, he discusses the three strophes of Psalm 13. For the exposition of Proverbs, the author chooses a topical approach. Topics—such as cheerfulness, purity, righteousness, etc.—were selected based on a careful synthesis of key Hebrew words and based on the individual meanings of sayings as they contributed to the topic as a whole. In addition to standard works and major commentaries, the bibliographic material at the end of each chapter includes selected English articles, essays, and monographs from 1992–2004.

The main strength of this handbook is the clarity of writing and the author's ability to integrate citations from commentaries and other scholarly research into a didactic discussion that both informs the reader and maintains the reader's interest. While this approach allows for the author to succinctly express his interpretive positions, detailed support for conclusions is not given (11). For example, after reviewing the overall arguments concerning the genre of the book of Job, Estes concludes that the book is not a record of actual conversation, but it is a case study of the ideal, an inspired piece of "imaginative" literature which explores the problem of evil (19). The reader here is invited into the debate, interest is created, but for a complete argument, the reader would need to explore other resources.

Of all five books, the exposition of Ecclesiastes receives the most thorough attention, which alone is worth the price of the handbook. Overall, Daniel Estes accomplishes his purpose in familiarizing students, pastors, and teachers with scholarly opinion, and he gives the reader an excellent guide to understanding the wisdom books and Psalms.

David Wallace
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***Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus*. By Allen P. Ross. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. 496 pages. Softcover, $34.99.**

Commentaries on the book of Leviticus do not always inspire interest or ignite a passion for further study of God's Word. However, this one is an exception. In this well-written and engaging work, Ross has presented a comprehensive, thoroughly annotated, biblically-based, and exegetically sound presentation of this highly significant book of the Bible.

Ross admits that his volume is not meant to be "an exhaustive commentary on Leviticus." Instead, he establishes as his goal, "to show the expositor how to bring all the material together in the development of the exposition, formulate theological principles from the text, and correlate the derived meaning of each subject in Leviticus with the fuller revelation of the New Testament" (9). In the end, readers will agree that the author has accomplished his goal and presented the book of Leviticus as rich in expositional truths that both inspire and instruct.

Ross has structured the fifty chapters of his commentary into five parts: the laws of the sacrifices, the laws of the priesthood, the laws of purification, instructions for holiness, and redemption of vows. Part of the uniqueness of Leviticus, Ross notes, is the topical structure of the book which is reflected in the organization of the commentary.

Each chapter includes a general overview of the passage under discussion; the theological ideas presented in the text; a synthesis, including a summary and outline of the passage; and a section dedicated to the exposition of the pericope. The expositional section includes a sample outline for preaching through the text. Preachers and teachers alike will find this component especially useful.

For each division, the background of the passage is carefully presented and supplemented by interaction with scholarship and skillful use of the Hebrew text. The author explains that Leviticus is not just a book written for priests and religious leaders, but for the whole nation. Moreover, Ross highlights the application of the text for believers and the church today. He disagrees with those who dismiss the Old Testament law as anachronistic, yet points to its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

Ross reflects a refreshing humility when dealing with difficult passages, often avoiding dogmatic conclusions where no compelling evidence for clarity of interpretation is available. On the other hand, he competently examines critical issues of the text presenting a consistently conservative view of the text and its authorship.

This book is more than a commentary, it is a resource. It is guaranteed to be referred to again and again by those interested in faithfully presenting the text.

Deron J. Biles
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***Is Jesus the Only Savior?*** **By James R. Edwards. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005. 250 pages. Softcover, $16.00.**

Can a Christian still present Jesus as the only Savior of the world to a contemporary society where exclusivism is considered a social evil violating the peace of the community? James R. Edwards, a New Testament scholar and an ordained minister of the PCUSA, argues that the particularity of Jesus is not a hindrance to, but rather, a necessary means for accomplishing God's plan for salvation. If God truly became incarnate in a real person, the chronological and geographical particularity of that divine activity matters. According to Edwards the incarnation of God in history supports the universal sufficiency of God's salvific event in Jesus. Salvation through Jesus of Nazareth is available to all human beings, because they can exercise faith in him regardless of race, gender, possession, age, intelligence, and so on.

Edwards' target audience is the Christian whose faith is being disturbed by a postmodern criticism of the uniqueness of Jesus and the non-Christian who simply desires to discover whether Christianity has any rationale for its belief in Jesus as the only Savior. In order to accomplish his task, Edwards first exposes the methodological and theological fallacies of the Quest for the Historical Jesus in all of its variations and then provides evidences of the historical credibility of the New Testament by comparing it with other ancient historical or philosophical writings in terms of manuscripts.

In response to Bart Ehrman's thesis that high Christology is the product of the early church, not Jesus himself, Edwards asserts that the Jewish monotheism of the apostles could not allow any deification of a human. If high Christology did not result from Jesus' self-awareness, the church would not have made "the scandal of equating Jesus with God," because her confession of Jesus as Lord and the only Savior was the very cause of the persecution of the early church by the Jews and the Roman Empire (46). Like C.F.D. Moule's *The Origin of Christology*, Edwards' book contends that a high Christology is what Jesus presented and what the later church councils affirmed. Christ's exclusive relationship with God in Matt. 11:25–27 and Luke 10:21–22, Christ's authority over the Torah—"You have heard . . . but I say to you,"—and Christ's reference to God as

his father attests that a high Christology was also found in the synoptic Gospels whose writers belonged to the first generation of Christianity.

Edwards reminds his readers that, the mission of the church to preach salvation as found only in and through Jesus in a pluralistic world is not a new issue. The writers of the New Testament also faced various religions promising differing soteriologies and cosmologies as an alternative to those of Christianity. It is worth noting, however, that the early church successfully carried the exclusive gospel of Jesus to the world. Edwards suggests that contemporary Christians not diminish the seriousness of sin in dialogues with other religions, for the divine condemnation of all sinners requires them to rely on Christ's atoning death on the cross. At the same time, however, Edwards urges Christians to be humble in their presentation of the gospel, since the truth of God revealed in Jesus has been given to them, not because they are worthy, but because God graciously decided to reveal himself to them. Therefore, Christians should not act as if they are morally superior to the practitioners of other religions.

Despite his helpful suggestions, there are sections of the book where conservative, evangelical Christians might not be able to agree with Edwards. First, Edwards denies the notion of hell as a place. Second, he describes the atonement of Christ only as expiation, not as propitiation. Third, he opens the possibility of the postmortem chance to respond to the gospel, although insisting that inclusivism might endanger the efforts of the church to evangelize the world. Fourth, his desire for interfaith dialogue leads him to contend that the difference between Christianity and other religions is on the cognitive, rather than moral and spiritual, level of the mystery of God for the salvation of humankind.

Edwards' book should be commended to seminary students, pastors, and laypeople. Seminary students will gain excellent critiques of the Jesus Seminar from the perspective of biblical theology. Pastors and laypeople can utilize Edwards' apologetic approach to the New Testament and the uniqueness of Jesus in their personal evangelism and mission. Edwards' personal illustrations help readers to understand certain theological issues more easily. This book is also helpful for those seeking an introductory work that supplies both a brief explanation of postmodern objections to the particularity of salvation in Jesus and biblical critiques of them based on evangelical New Testament scholarship.

Dongsun Cho
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***Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God*. By Josh Moody. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005. 203 pages. Softcover, $33.95.**

Jonathan Edwards continues to attract the attention of excellent scholars who wish to sharpen their skills by scaling the heights of his Everest-like mind. Josh Moody, a Cambridge trained pastor-theologian who is the senior pastor at Trinity Baptist Church in New Haven, Connecticut, has written a fine work tackling a question that has intrigued scholars for some time: What is the relationship between Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment? Was Edwards a pre-modern, Reformed thinker who stood strong against the theological infidelity of modernity, or did he drink deeply from the wells of modern thought? Was Edwards perhaps so far ahead of his time that he can even speak to our intellectual, postmodern situation today, not just to a group of Puritan and Edwardsean lovers? With the recent rise of the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment these questions have drawn the attention of Edwardsean scholars.

Josh Moody argues rightly that Edwards appropriated key aspects of Enlightenment thought in order to critique it. Edwards advanced a "re-formation of the Enlightenment," and a "deliberate reworking" of Enlightenment thinking (156) in such a way that strengthened Christian orthodoxy (in his case Reformed, Puritan orthodoxy) while at the same time remaining in a position of dialogue with modern thought. Edwards thus offers contemporary thinkers and theologians a model for engaging modern thought in a creatively Christian way that neither call us back to "pre-critical" days nor to isolate ourselves from modern intellectual currents. Moody clearly is aware of the postmodern critique of Enlightenment and modern thought, and while he feels there is much bite to this critique, there is still much to be salvaged. Edwards, for Moody, provides the key for how one could salvage that which is of value in modern thought.

Moody proposes that the organizing principle in Edwards' theology is simply making known the presence of God. "The communication of the presence of God in response to the Enlightenment is the axis around which Edwards' globe spins" (8). Such a "center" has the advantage of necessarily including his revivalistic work in his theological vision, a point that has been overlooked by a few scholars in the past who have tried to drive a wedge between Edwards' brilliant intellectual pursuits and his pedestrian work as a revivalist. In the first chapter, "True Salvation," Moody surveys Edwards' theology of making the gospel "real" to his parishioners and all the mechanics that entails (the theology of salvation, faith, preaching, prayer, etc.). The goal is to show how central the evangelistic mandate was to Edwards, a mandate that deeply shapes his intellectual pursuits. In

the second chapter, "True Experience," Moody explores the dimensions of Edwards' spiritual epistemology, his theology of authentic religious experience, and how Edwards' views measure up against the current religious epistemologies of Hebblethwaite, Hick and Alston. Chapter three, "True Reality," is Moody's exploration of the Edwardsean vision of ideal reality, Edwards' theocentric response to the mechanistic universe of Enlightenment science. The last chapter, "True Light," treats Edwards on the relationship between reason and revelation.

This book is a fine work that needs to be read by Edwards scholars and theologians who are interested in the potential that a redeemed form of modern thinking presents us today. Key to the book's strength is the way that Moody canvasses the literature on numerous topics in Edwards scholarship—the analysis of revival, Edwards' theology of preparation for salvation, and Edwards' relationship to covenant theology for instance—all within a short span of pages. The extensive footnotes promise fruitful trails of inquiry into numerous issues. Moody also briefly brings Edwards into conversation with current philosophical and theological issues in an attempt to show the potential that Edwardsean lines of thought could offer to current discussions. I highly recommend this work.

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Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Learn New Testament Greek*. By John H. Dobson. 3rd ed. with accents. CD-Rom. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005. xii + 384 pages. Hardcover, $29.99.**

"Start reading meaningful verses from the Greek New Testament after just ONE HOUR of study!" touts the front cover—sounding like a weight-loss ad: "lose thirty pounds in one week with no exercise!" Interestingly, the front covers of the first two editions both say: "Begin reading the Greek text in 10 days." Evidently, this third edition is turbo charged.

Yet, "an innovative, original way to learn!" on the back cover is on target in describing this course by long-time Greek teacher, Rev. John H. Dobson. This is not your father's Greek course! It is, however, reminiscent to this reviewer of a somewhat similar method in *Greek Signals: The Door to the Greek New Testament* (1978) by Lacoste Munn and Bruce Corley. At the heart of Dobson's method is an attempt to get a student to learn meanings from Greek words in various forms through repetition, with morphological terms and concepts not introduced until late in the course.

Innovative and different are not necessarily bad in learning Greek, and Dobson's teaching approach evidently has merit and has born fruit.

Thousands of students have learned Greek by this method, including those whose first language is not English, and this book has survived into a third edition. It has been translated into five languages, and there are plans to translate it into Chinese and Urdu (ix).

Changes in the third edition include more readable English and Greek fonts as well as the addition of Greek accent marks. Dobson added more reading material and training exercises—the third edition is seventy-one pages longer than the second edition. The audio CD-ROM now contains more material, covering lessons one through twenty-one (ix).

Greek teachers who employ the classic method of teaching Greek—using ending charts and paradigms—can benefit from using exercises from this book as well as Dobson's clever Word Fun sections, using puns or plays-on-words to introduce vocabulary words (39, 47). Dobson gives a good emphasis on translating the meaning of the Greek phrase or sentence rather than striving for a simple word-for-word correspondence (14, 31, 83). His humorous warning against a naïve rush to find root meanings in Greek words for preaching and teaching is well taken (282). His hints for teaching biblical languages are insightful and helpful (351–57), even if occasionally cheesy: "Measure your forward progress in smiles per hour" (351). Unfortunately, there is an unnecessary emphasis on the need for gender-neutral translation (55).

How well a teacher favors this innovative approach to teaching Greek will no doubt be tied to how one learned Greek originally and how tied the teacher is to the classical method of teaching Greek. There are fifty-two lessons, and there are no grammatical terms or concepts introduced until lessons thirty-one and thirty-three (180–83, 198–99)! Other radical differences from the classical method include: (1) little or no homework is expected (descriptive page 2, xi), which seems a dubious way to learn, (2) no rote memory of vocabulary is suggested, and nowhere do vocabulary words appear in the traditional lexical form (such as: nominative form, genitive ending, and gender indicator for nouns), (3) morphological explanations are not fully given until the end of the book, and they are inadequate and sparse (Reference Grammar and Accents, pp. 335–50), (4) tables and charts are almost non-existent, and noun cases are given in an unusual order: nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive, and then dative (pp. 337, 339), and (5) the Index of Greek Words (typically a mini-lexicon in most Greek Grammars) is cumbersome: neither giving the typical lexical entries (such as giving the six principal parts of a verb) nor a helpful definition; instead, it gives page numbers to refer the student back to the word's first appearance in the text (pp. 369–84). This reviewer uses the classical method in teaching Greek, and sees these differences as likely problematic; however, other teachers may find them refreshing, helpful, and effective. Surprising

for a third edition: two descriptive pages prior to the cover page contain four grammatical errors and a preponderance of passive verbs.

James R. Wicker
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seventeenth-Century England*. By Dennis C. Bustin. Studies in Baptist History and Thought, Vol 23. Carlisle, Cumbria, United Kingdom: Paternoster, 2006. xvi + 380 pages. Softcover, $42.00.**

While English Baptists in the nineteenth century had Spurgeon, and in the eighteenth century had Fuller and Carey, few names are as well known among English Baptists in the seventeenth century. To date, much of the work that focused on the early days of English Baptists has examined the circumstances of Baptist origins or Baptist denominational developments. This has left open the opportunity to investigate the lives of the men behind the developments, and a work on one of the preeminent leaders, Hanserd Knollys, is long overdue.

Along with William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys is arguably one of two founding fathers among the Particular Baptists in London. Where the General Baptists were inaugurated by the influence of Smyth and Helwys, the Particulars were served well by the lengthy pastorates and civil lives of Kiffin and Knollys. Kiffin's life and work has yet to find a definitive and detailed treatment, but Dennis Bustin has thankfully provided such for Hanserd Knollys in *Paradox and Perseverance*. In fact, Bustin's historical and biographical work is a strong compliment to Barry Howson's theological treatment of Knollys in *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions* (Brill, 2001), which, when combined, give a thorough reading of Knollys for the twenty-first century.

A sprawling seven chapters buttressed by an introduction, epilogue, conclusion, and five appendices, this volume uses Knollys' 82 years as a window through which to view the political machinations, theological developments, and denominational progress of English Baptist citizens in the seventeenth century. The first chapter provides an overview of the secondary literature to date that aside from misspelling the name of Southwestern historian, H. Leon McBeth (MacBeth), is quite helpful (19). Published in the same year as Stephen Wright's *The Early English Baptists*, it would have been fascinating to see Bustin's interaction with Wright's new thesis that reclassifies General and Particular Baptists, especially as it relates to Knollys.

One unique chapter in Bustin's volume discusses Knollys' eschatology. Living in an era of multiple plagues, the English Civil War, the fire of London in 1666, and later monarchical restoration it is no surprise that many were prone to claim that the end of the world was near. In chapter six, Bustin interacts with Knollys' eschatological works and metaphorical treatment of apocalyptic biblical literature. Further, Bustin traces Knollys' understanding of four eschatological themes. First, Knollys identified the beast in Revelation 13, or the antichrist, as many Protestants did with the Pope in Rome. Second, Knollys understood the second coming of Christ to be a warning for spiritual preparation and a life of faithfulness rather than naming or predicting a time and place. Third, with regard to the millennium, Knollys shifted in his views as he aged. Initially, he believed that Christ would return physically after the millennium, but in his later works he seemed to favor a pre-millennial view. Finally, Knollys believed the *eschaton* to consist of the resurrection of the dead, followed by the final judgment, and then "Christ shall deliver up the Kingdom unto God the Father" (230). This chapter alone reveals the wealth of material yet to be discovered among the early English Baptist forefathers. Dennis Bustin has done all students of Baptist history and theology a great service with his work on Hanserd Knollys.

Jason G. Duesing
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***The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 1–15*. By Bruce K. Waltke. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. 693 pages. Hardcover, $50.00.**

Bruce K. Waltke, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Regent College, Vancouver and Professor of Old Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Florida, is perhaps best known for his contributions in the field of Hebrew language studies. He brings to whatever project he is tackling an impressive reserve of linguistic knowledge and insight. In producing his two volume commentary on the book of Proverbs, he does not disappoint in this regard and also succeeds in bringing a pastoral perspective in relating the importance of the contents of this oft used, but also often misunderstood, book of the Bible.

Proverbs carries with it distinctive problems and issues involving its authorship, genre, and purpose. To each of these issues, Waltke has spoken with the caution of a scholar, but the conviction of a believer. He appropriately highlights the multilayered status of the book in its compilation and construction, yet argues forcefully for the scholarly unpopular inclusion of

Solomon as a major force behind the book. Furthermore, while carefully noting that proverbs as a genre is not strictly promissory in nature, he correctly notes that it is much more than a category of "pithy sayings" that is often applied to any text that is considered proverbial in nature. As a result he has composed a commentary that is lucid, helpful and a great addition to both the pastor's and the scholar's library.

If there is one qualm to be had regarding the work, however, it is that Waltke sometimes seems to forget that not all of his readers have the depth of understanding of Hebrew that he possesses. This despite the fact that he highlights in the author's preface that he is attempting to address the "average Bible reader." Certainly, there are whole discussions within which such a reader will be totally lost and wondering exactly what it is that Waltke is arguing as he presents the nuances of certain Hebraic constructions and relationships.

Proverbs requires a gentle hand in navigating the path between oversimplification and obfuscation through examination of minutiae. For the most part, Waltke applies such a touch to his interpretations and discussions. In those places where he wanders into the latter, he is to be excused because seldom does he do so without good reasons. In the end, this first volume is very helpful to all those who are interested in understanding the nature of wisdom and in understanding a book that still has much to say to modern churchgoers who are looking for biblical answers to living a godly life.

Timothy M. Pierce
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

***The Perfect Prayer: Search for Kingdom through the Lord's Prayer*. By Philip Mathias. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2005. xiii + 159 pages. Hardcover, $16.99.**

When one quotes the Lord's Prayer or plumbs the depths of its petitions, it is typically to the more well-known version in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:9–13) to which one looks rather than Luke 11:2–4. However, journalist Philip Mathias much prefers the version in Luke, which he calls "the perfect prayer" and an "exquisite homily on the spiritual life" (1–2). Mathias believes the search for the kingdom of God is the core of Christianity, and he says the Lord's Prayer in Luke aptly expresses this search (xii).

Mathias readily admits he has no systematic theological training and is "not a particularly devotional person" (xiii)—ironic, since this book is a spiritual reflection on the Lord's Prayer! However, Mathias is an accomplished writer, and he does present some interesting insights in a well-

written manner. For instance, his description of why God set up a kingdom and how both a king and a kingdom works is helpful to readers, such as this one, who have little firsthand knowledge of an earthly kingdom (72–76). He uses some engaging illustrations, such as the brave Spartans at Thermopylae (74), the heroic efforts of the Santa Marija Convoy taking desperately-needed supplies to the island of Malta in World War II (105–9), and an altruistic cheese maker (147).

Perhaps it is to be expected that Mathias is overly exuberant about this prayer, but some statements clearly go too far. He claims this prayer contains *all* that a Christian ever needs to pray to God (2); yet, in this prayer Jesus was more likely being illustrative rather than exhaustive. There are other New Testament prayers that cannot fit in any of its petitions, such as Paul's request for God to remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:8) or James' admonition to ask for wisdom (Jas 1:5). Mathias advocates using the prayer as a mantra (2), which certainly goes against Jesus' prohibition of "meaningless repetition" in Matthew 6:7. At times Mathias seems to attribute mystical qualities to this prayer—as if it is a magical incantation (19), but the Lord's Prayer is not a divinely-sanctioned hocus pocus.

Unfortunately, Mathias' basic linguistic analysis of the prayer is flawed—arriving at a rigid parallelism in the prayer. Not only is this structure tenuous at times (as are the alleged parallels with the Ten Commandments, 86–89), its "pure" structure is postulated by criticizing Matthew's allegedly bloated version that has words Mathias claims Jesus never said (4–6)! Also problematic is Mathias' tendency toward universalism (19, 21, 40, 44, 91–97—in this latter section he includes Muslims in the kingdom of God!). Other problems include: (1) he reflects a typical mainline liberalism, believing Genesis 1–11 is myth (pp. 26–27, 48–49, 110) and condemning homophobia but not homosexual practice (p. 21), and (2) he condones praying to the saints and Mary (pp. 2, 109), both non-biblical practices.

James R. Wicker
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***Philippians*. By Moisés Silva. 2nd ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005. xx + 248 pages. Hardcover, $29.99.**

This commentary is an update of the volume originally in the Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary in 1988. Four years later it was reprinted with a few corrections as the inaugural volume of the excellent Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (xi). This second edition in

2005 updates the volume to reflect the last thirteen years of scholarship on Philippians as well as conforms it to the style of other BECNT volumes.

Moisés Silva is a noted scholar with an expertise in Pauline writings as well as hermeneutics. He has taught New Testament at Westmont College, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. A real strength of this commentary is that Silva's interpretation of each passage is carefully connected to the context of the letter—which, importantly, Silva views as a cohesive whole (104, 117, 134–35, 143–44). This interpretive method is especially helpful in dealing with highly-debated passages such as Phillipians 2:5–11 (92–3).

While this commentary delves deeply into textual matters, it is geared both to the pastor/teacher as well as the scholar. Common to the BECNT, when Silva addresses the text, it appears in Greek, English transliteration, and English translation throughout the "Exegesis and Exposition" sections (e.g., on almost every page of 38–53). However, there is no transliteration in the "Additional Notes" sections (e.g., 53–58), presumably because one should know Greek to take this deeper step. The Works Cited and four indices are very helpful (214–48).

Silva stays within the objective of the BECNT, dealing with important textual and theological matters, but not giving a verse-by-verse exegesis nor an exhaustive treatment of any textual question (ix). Silva uses "exegetical essays" (xiii) to accomplish this mandate, but the reader may feel slighted, desiring more comments than the "Additional Notes" afford. Another weakness of this volume is the lack of application, which would certainly have been of benefit to pastors and teachers.

The exegesis and exposition is excellent, the interaction with other important commentaries on Philippians is admirable, and the handling of difficult passages is careful and commendable. Silva does not hesitate to differ with other scholars, but he does so respectfully, and he stays within an evangelical framework (e.g., his disagreements with Fee: 139, n. 6, 147, 159, n. 8, 164, n. 17, 178, n. 10). Unfortunately, most references to scholarship since the first edition (1992) appear only in footnotes, so this was not a thoroughgoing revision of the commentary. The one excursus (211–13) is short but excellent; one wishes there were more. Yet, this book remains an excellent commentary on Philippians and is worthy of the BECNT series.

James R. Wicker
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***Scripture Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine*. By R.C. Sproul. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005. 210 pages. Hardcover, $15.99.**

Is the Bible truthful? Is it reliable? Is it without error? These are among the most critical questions facing the church and believers today. R.C. Sproul, in his book *Scripture Alone*, has presented a convincing case for the inerrancy of Scripture and its reliability for believers today.

The book is composed of a collection of his earlier articles written in defense of the inerrancy, infallibility, inspiration, and authority of Scripture. Its appendices include a copy of "The Ligonier Statement" and "The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy." The book is divided into two parts. The first part explains the history of the debate in the church on biblical inerrancy as well as Sproul's argument for it. The second part is an explanation and commentary on the nineteen articles in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Because the book is composed of some of Sproul's previously written articles on the subject, it tends to be redundant at times. However, Sproul explains in the introduction that his purpose is to assist a new generation in understanding the history of the debate over the Bible and the defense of its truthfulness.

Sproul does an excellent job defining inerrancy and infallibility. He addresses the different beliefs concerning infallibility and also discusses the dangers of limited inerrancy. Sproul concedes that a person's salvation does not depend on a right interpretation of these terms but does assert that right doctrine does. Moreover, even a belief in "inerrancy is no guarantee of biblical orthodoxy" (35), but Sproul rightly insists that there is a correlation.

One of the strongest discussions in the book is Sproul's explanation of the problems of limited inerrancy. He explains how a limited view of inerrancy is subjective, artificial, and dangerous. He also notes how some have even justified sin by avoiding or reinterpreting clear biblical teachings.

Sproul admits that there are difficult passages in the Bible and even some "as yet unresolved discrepancies" (161). He allows the possibility that copy errors may exist between the original documents and the versions that we currently have. However, he asserts that "for more than ninety-nine percent of the cases, the original text can be reconstructed to a practical certainty" (147). In addition, Sproul maintains that where difficulties exist, "no essential article of the Christian faith is affected" (148). Moreover, he explains that a great deal of progress has been made recently to resolve many of these questions. It should be understood that archeological dis-

coveries and other efforts are proving fruitful in continuing to shed light on the Scripture and resolve previously-thought irresolvable questions.

A final word that Sproul emphasizes is worthy of note. The Bible is true whether or not a person chooses to believe it. A person accepting it does not make it more true, and his or her failure to believe it does not make it any less true.

Sproul's work is an excellent resource for anyone interested in learning about the history and critical importance of biblical inerrancy. His work should be read, studied, and digested in hopes that the next generation re-learn the lessons from this generation that God's word is ultimately, reliably, and undeniably true.

Deron J. Biles
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***Spiritual Landscapes: Images of the Spiritual Life in the Gospel of Luke*. By James L. Resseguie. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 195 + xi pages. Softcover, $19.95.**

This thought-provoking and highly practical book is one of three such fruits from James L. Resseguie's studies that began while teaching literary theory as Fulbright Professor at the University of Iceland in 1990. Resseguie is the J. Russell Bucher Professor of New Testament at the Winebrenner Theological Seminary.

His thesis is as simple as it is applicable: "Luke uses the physical, social, and economic landscapes of the Gospel to develop and elaborate the contours of the spiritual life. Luke challenges us to think critically about the spiritual life and its implications for everyday living (ix)." Thus, Resseguie examines topographical settings in Luke's Gospel—lake, mountain, desert, river—as spiritual watershed experiences: the testing of one's faith (chap. 1). Yet, claiming *every* topographical setting has religious meaning, as Resseguie seems to do, likely leads to the claim that some settings are contrived—which they are not! Next, a physical journey indicates a spiritual journey, such as Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem in Luke (chap. 2). Certainly, social landscapes of meal hospitality, family relationships, clothing, and financial decisions are strong indicators of a person's spiritual condition, as the author plainly points out (chaps. 3–6).

A refreshing benefit of Resseguie's tools of literary criticism and narrative criticism (with a dash of social-scientific criticism) is his sole focus on what the text says and what meaning can be drawn out of it. Unfortunately, other higher criticisms can become sidetracked in seeking sources of the text that the exegete misses the actual message of the text. Gladly,

Resseguie's mission is both to understand the text and apply it to the life of the modern disciple.

Good wordsmithing makes interesting reading, and Resseguie does not disappoint. For instance, "Simon's spiritual constipation" (71), the "impotence of abundance" (103), the "propinquity of the poor man" (107), and "peril of plenty" (108) wed both good word economy with vivid word pictures.

Some of this ground has been well-traveled today: Luke's emphases on the themes of general reciprocity (4, 11, 26, 110–12) and reversal of fortune (47–49), as well as his use of such literary tools as chiasm (31, 62, 106) and parallelism (48, 57). Yet, the author draws insightful observations on the use of a number of literary tools, some lesser known: rhythmic pattern (38–39, 64–65), repetition (40), rhetorical strategies (47), asyndeton (64), parataxis (65, 71), and a preponderance of pronouns (104). However, Resseguie weaves these emphases well into his study of spiritual meaning found in topographical and social landscapes.

Interestingly, the most applicable and potentially convicting chapter—chapter six on conspicuous consumption—seems to be the one most indebted to other sources. The first endnote of this chapter credits the author's indebtedness to George Ritzer and Juliet B. Schor (155). However, Resseguie does cite a number of other sources in this chapter and every chapter in this book—making good use of today's major Lukan scholars.

James R. Wicker
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***The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*. By Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004. xxxiii + 494 pages. Softcover, $24.99.**

For just over ten years the controversy of a gender-neutral NIV has raged in the USA. Although some other Bible translations had already gone gender-neutral (the ICB in 1986, the NCV in 1987, the NRSV in 1990, and the CEV in 1995) (121–4), it was not until the widely-popular NIV appeared as the *NIV-Inclusive Language Edition* in Great Britain in 1995 that both Christian scholars and laity took notice and the debate began, especially among evangelicals in the USA (125).

This volume is essentially a major update of the 2000 book, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words*, by Poythress and Grudem, which appears as chapters 7–21 and appendices 1–6 in this present book. The first six chapters consist of material that Poythress, Grudem, and others wrote in 2002, when Zondervan and the

International Bible Society made the stunning revelation they were going to publish the TNIV in the USA even though they previously said they would not do so (xxvii, 132).

Vern S. Poythress is professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary. Wayne A. Grudem is professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Phoenix Seminary. Both scholars are prolific writers, experts in their respective fields, and outspoken critics of gender-neutral Bible translations.

Written for the general reader, this volume uses non-technical language, transliterated Hebrew and Greek, and purposefully simplified arguments (xxix). The authors clearly and respectfully present effective arguments against gender-neutral translations, and this book is a must-read in this ongoing debate. They are fair and balanced, avoiding pejorative language and treating their opponents with respect. They present a running "dialogue" by extensively citing and effectively answering D.A. Carson (*The Inclusive-Language Debate*, 1998) (31–34, 51–60, 66–69) and Mark Strauss (*Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy*, 1998) (9–10, 91–92, 116–17), noting agreements, disagreements, and misunderstandings. Interestingly, this volume presents an in-house "debate": all four of these scholars are complementarians (as opposed to egalitarians) who believe in biblical inerrancy (8).

Poythress and Grudem present a compelling case "against the systematic and unnecessary removal of male-oriented components of meaning that are there in the original text (53)." Examples of unacceptable changes (213–21) include: (1) changing a historic reference to males (Greek ἀνήρ) to a generic meaning, such as "choose *someone*" (TNIV) rather than "choose one of the *men*" (NIV) to be a replacement disciple for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:21) (p. 213), (2) omitting "he/him/himself/his," such as "speak to God when alone" (TNIV) rather than "speak to *himself* and God" (NIV), which changes the meaning of 1 Corinthians 14:28 (p. 2), and (3) changing "father" to "parent" and changing "son" to "child" (Heb 12:7) (p. 1). Yet, the authors also propose acceptable changes (203–11), such as: (1) using "people" rather than "men" when no masculine term is in the text (Matt 5:15) (p. 205), and (2) using "people" or "person" rather than "men" or "man" when translating the plural and sometimes the singular use of ἄνθρωπο" (Rom 2:16) (p. 205). The full text of the Colorado Springs Guidelines in Appendix 1 (411–31) is quite helpful.

The eclectic nature of the opening chapters results in some repetition of material; yet, the plethora of biblical examples throughout the book is both helpful and enlightening. Poythress and Grudem do the evangelical world and Christianity in general a great service with this needed book. They clearly illustrate the problem with gender-neutral translations, such

as the TNIV, is the interpretive damage such translations do to the text. They are clearly *not* Don Quixotes chasing windmills because of a blind insistence that English never changes (66), an ignorant misunderstanding of dynamic equivalent translation (170–79), a misogynistic backlash against feminism (66, 247–73), nor a naïve concept of word-for-word translation (194–202)—all allegations masterfully expelled by Poythress and Grudem.

James R. Wicker
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***Where is the God of Justice? Biblical Perspectives on Suffering*. By Warren McWilliams. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005. 259 pages. Softcover, $16.95.**

All of us have either experienced the topic of this book or someday will. That relevance makes this book immediately enticing. Growing out of his background as a university professor, McWilliams addresses many of the common sources suffering people experience from an objective view. The title of the book comes from the question of the struggling post-exilic Jews in Malachi 2:17. That question serves as the foundation of the book. McWilliams admits that many today struggle with the question, "How can a good, loving God allow suffering in His world?" (ix) Hence, he attempts to present a "biblical perspective on suffering" (ix) toward the purpose of helping "Christians think about the issue of suffering and respond creatively." (x)

The book is organized in two parts. The first part deals with four questions people often ask about suffering: Is suffering a punishment for sin? Does God cause suffering? Does my suffering affect God? And is there an end to suffering? The second part of the book focuses on specific issues related to suffering. In this section, the author deals plainly with common sources of suffering. Although McWilliams tries to distinguish his study, which he calls a theology of suffering, from traditional theodicy, which he sees as more philosophical, the distinctions are often blurred.

The issues related to the different types of suffering tend to fall into two categories: either God causes suffering either as a consequence of sin, a testing or learning opportunity, or for some reason known only to God; or God allows suffering either as a natural consequence of the created order, or as the work of Satan. Though, McWilliams admits that human experience does not always fit into logical doctrinal categories. Ultimately, the author asserts that God alone holds the key to the answers to the ques-

tions many sufferers ask. He describes mankind's actions as penultimate, whereas God's are ultimate.

McWilliams presents various viewpoints on each issue he addresses, but concludes each chapter with his personal view which emphasizes God's grace and hope. One chapter that seems a little out of place is the chapter on animal suffering. The discussion is informative, but very speculative and seems incongruent with the stated approach of the second part of the book. The final chapter presents his appeal for "reverent creativity" (174) in our response to the struggles God allows in our lives. He highlights those who creatively responded to their suffering "from the resources of their faith in God" (174).

This book is an enjoyable read. Its strength is its practical focus and honest assessment of issues all of us face. Throughout the book, McWilliams maintains a strong biblical focus and steadfast faith in God. In the end, he allows that it is not wrong for sufferers to ask questions, and in fact, even the asking of them may be part of our spiritual growth process.

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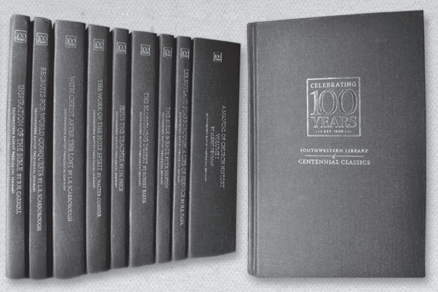


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# *Books Received*

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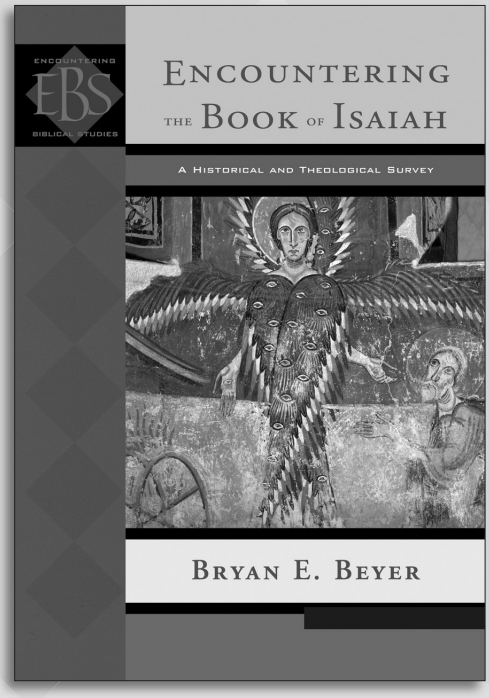


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