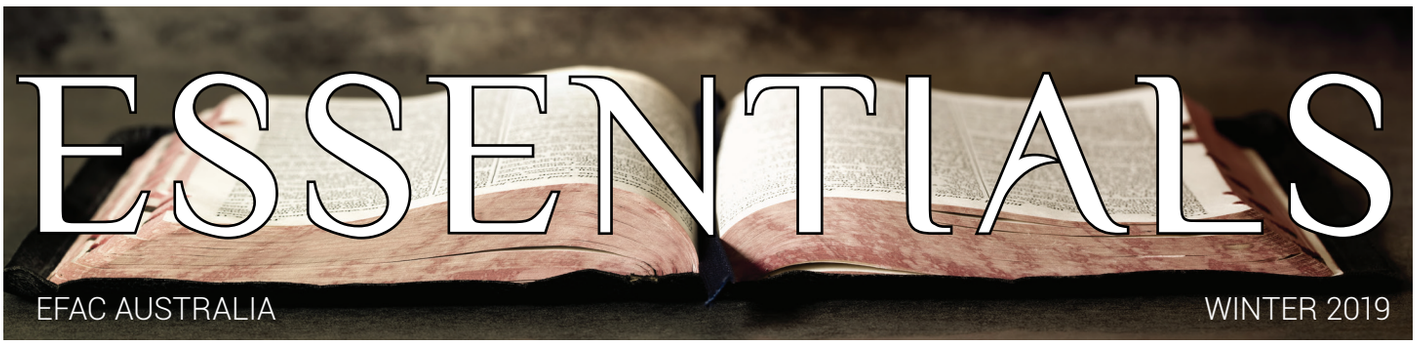

Bible Study: God's love for Cain and Abel

Ben Underwood on Genesis 4:1-10

Book Reviews

Enriching Our Vision of Reality
Scientists as Theologians
What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women
Unveiling Paul's Women

Essentials is the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. Promoting Christ-centred biblical ministry.

Gender

There has been plenty of attention given to current issues in gender and sexuality in the pages of *Essentials* in recent years. However, discussion has generally been about developments in the wider culture to which evangelicals have a more or less united attitude. But in this issue, we look at issues involving gender where unanimity does not exist amongst evangelical Anglicans, and so there will surely be things you disagree with in the pages that follow. On the whole, I aim for *Essentials* to be irenic and to stay close to the things which unite us (not always successfully) but this quarter, I'm relaxing that approach, and I think it is good from time to time to be able to include a set of articles that may not have everyone nodding in agreement together. Before we get to that, however, Chase Kuhn gives us a lovely and pithy opening piece on the late Donald Robinson's enduring influence. Once you go on, you will find a fine pair of articles on the evolution of the egalitarian-complementarian debate. First, Tim Foster gives an account of the development of these disagreements from an egalitarian perspective, and then Kara Hartley does the same from a complementarian perspective. Some of the frenzy may have gone out of the discussion, but, as Tim demonstrates, that does not mean new proposals are not being brought forth, tested and adopted or discarded, and, as Kara points out, the social context of the debate colours the issues in new and different ways.

We haven't had a Making it Work in the Parish for a while, and so I'm sharing some material I wrote to train Bible Study leaders. Perhaps you will find it helpful enough to photocopy for some of your leaders now or later. I spin off my engagement with the old and rich story of Cain and Abel in this article for the Bible Study.

In the Book Reviews, we begin with science and theology by way of Richard Prideux's review of Alistair McGrath's book *Enriching our Vision of Reality*, and John Polkinghorne's Scientists as Theologians. Then it's back to gender as Graham Hill reviews Kevin Giles's *What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women*, and I give a partial review of Lucy Peppiatt's newly published popularisation of her novel take on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

One new gender-and-Christianity thing that I stumbled upon somehow is a critique of complementarianism, not from an egalitarian perspective, but from a nascent thread of thought that rejects both egalitarianism and complementarianism. The Masculinist email newsletter is unfolding a wide-ranging critique of the takes on gender found in both secular culture and US evangelical church culture, and its author, Aaron Renn sees a dim future for complementarianism. I try to capture his drift in the Caboose.

I will be vacating the editor's chair for at least the next two issues, while Gavin Perkins and then Mark Juers get their hands on the *Essentials* tiller. I wish them well and I hope that you enjoy what they bring. I'll be back in due course.

Ben Underwood - essentialsed@gmail.com

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What is EFAC?

EFAC is a group of Anglican clergy and lay people who value the evangelical heritage of the Anglican Church, and who endeavour to make a positive, constructive contribution at local, diocesan and national levels. EFAC Australia is part of the world-wide Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

The purpose of EFAC is to maintain and promote a strong biblical witness in and through the Anglican Church so as to advance the cause of the gospel in Australia.

The aims of EFAC are:

1. To promote the ultimate authority, the teaching and the use of God's written word in matters of both faith and conduct.
2. To promote this biblical obedience particularly in the areas of Christian discipleship, servant leadership, church renewal, and mission in the world.
3. To foster support and collaboration among evangelical Anglicans throughout Australia.
4. To function as a resource group to develop and encourage biblically faithful leadership in all spheres of life.
5. To provide a forum, where appropriate: a) for taking counsel together to develop policies and strategies in matters of common concern b) for articulating gospel distinctives in the area of faith, order, life and mission by consultations and publications.
6. To promote evangelism through the local church and planting new congregations.
7. To coordinate and encourage EFAC branches/ groups in provinces or dioceses of the Anglican Church in Australia.

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The Enduring Influence of Donald Robinson

Chase R. Kuhn

That the late Archbishop Donald Robinson's thought and ministry have already had a significant influence in Australian Anglican circles is clear. Here Chase Kuhn puts his finger on the conviction at the heart of Robinson's enduring influence. Chase R. Kuhn lectures in Christian thought and ministry at Moore Theological College.

Archbishop Donald W. B. Robinson's most enduring influence has been, and will no doubt continue to be, his high esteem for the Word of God as the governing authority of all of the Christian life. This esteem for Scripture was a hallmark of his biblical theological studies, agreeable with what he believed to be the best of Anglicanism, and therefore definitive of his ministry.

The most impressive and well-known of Robinson's academic contributions (he lectured as a faculty member at Moore College 1952-1973), is the biblical theology that he developed. It must not be taken for granted that 'biblical-theology' automatically equates with a high regard for the Bible as the Word of God. But for Robinson, his approach to the Bible as a unified whole, was demonstrable of his deep conviction that the Bible is God's Word. So, his theology of the Word drove him to a reading of the Word that sought unity across diverse texts spanning millennia. The format of Robinson's biblical theology has been developed, published and popularized most notably in the works of Graeme Goldsworthy, who on a number of occasions has identified his dependence upon Robinson for his method of reading the Bible.

Another wide-reaching point of influence is Robinson's beliefs about the church, often called the 'Knox-Robinson Ecclesiology' for his work with his Moore College colleague D. B. Knox. As part of his development of his biblical theology, Robinson identified the church as a key component of God's plans for redemption. Through careful exegetical analysis, Robinson discerned that the church had a very specific purpose and function in the life of God's people. Rather than being the identity of the people of God, the church is the activity of the people of God. That is, the church is the gathering of God's people, assembled around the Word of God. Robinson wrote, 'The church is created and constituted by the Word of God. Men are drawn together by this Word, and together express their faith in confession, prayer and praise' (*Selected Works,* Vol. 1, 300). So, Robinson agreed with the longstanding Reformation belief that the church is the creature of the Word.

In close connection with his belief about the nature of the church, Robinson believed that the Word of God must be central to ministry. In fact, because the church is created by the Word, the Word holds the primary place of authority over the church. Of this conviction Robinson wrote, 'The fountain and source of all this authority [in the church] is not the congregation, nor the minister, but the Word of the living God proclaimed through faith in Christ and alive with the energy of the Holy Spirit' (Selected Works, Vol. 1, 310). As a churchman, he believed that this conviction about the Word best represented historic Anglican convictions. Take for example this excerpt from The Homilies: 'Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions, devised by man's imagination, for our justification and salvation. For in holy Scripture is fully contained what to believe, what to love and what to look for at God's hands at length' ('A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture'). In agreement with this historic Anglicanism, we can observe throughout Robinson's ministry a diligent attention to the text of Scripture, and a ministry that was disciplined by that authority.

No one person can trace the enduring legacy of Archbishop Robinson, as his influence has been on people, who in turn are influencing other people around the globe. But, characteristic of his life and his ministry amongst people, we can take notice of his deep commitment to the Bible as the Word of God. This impacted the way he read the Bible, what he believed about the church, and how he conducted himself as a minister. In everything, the Bible has the highest authority over the Christian's life.

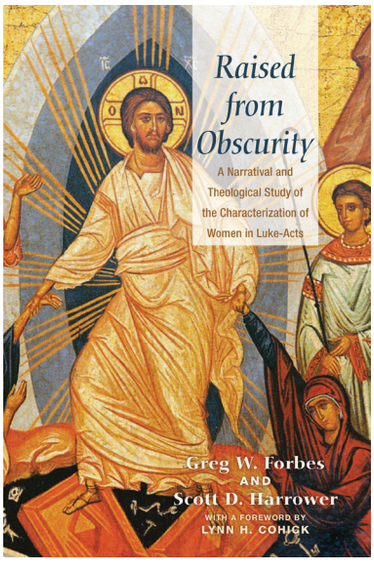
The Evolution of the Gender Debate:

An Egalitarian Perspective

Tim Foster

Although the debate between complementarians and egalitarians has not been revolutionised lately, there are still real developments that the egalitarian Tim Foster wants to draw our attention to. Tim Foster is Vice Principal of Ridley College, Melbourne.

For many the gender debate is like Groundhog Day, playing out in predictable ways, retracing old steps and unable to move forward. And yet there have been some interesting developments that may not have decided the matter, but which served to move the discussion forward. There are two major developments that I will consider. The first concerns a shift in the biblical discussion away from the Pauline corpus to consideration of how women are understood in a broader range of NT texts. The other concerns the relationship of God the Father and God the Son, whether the Son is functionally subordinate to the Father and what bearing it has on the submission of women to male authority.



I haven't undertaken a statistical analysis, but there appears to have been a significant decline in the number of scholarly articles on the Pauline material relating to gender. This debate reached fever pitch in the late 1980s and early 90s with articles, responses and rejoinders on the meaning of 'head' in 1 Corinthians 11, or the nuances of the Greek word *authentein* filling the pages of academic journals. This torrent has become a trickle. A number of factors have contributed to this, the most obvious being that there is little new to say. There is also something of an impasse. Egalitarians have failed to explain the teaching of 1 Timothy 2 by referring to the cultural context and phenomena like the 'New Roman Woman' or the cult of Artemis. The complementarian appeal to the plain meaning of 1 Timothy 2 remains unpersuasive to egalitarians who see nothing plain in the meaning of verse 15, 'she will be saved through childbirth', who question unwarranted inferences concerning primogeniture in verse 13 and the inevitable implication of the gullibility of women in verse 14.

For these reasons the biblical discussion, at least for egalitarian scholars, has shifted away from the Pauline material to the New Testament more generally, with a focus on Luke. These scholars are inclined to argue that our understanding of gender needs to consider the broader witness of the New Testament, supported by social realities, archaeological studies and theological perspectives. An example of such a work is Greg W. Forbes and Scott D. Harrower, *Raised from Obscurity: A Narratival and Theological Study of the Characterization of Women in Luke-Acts* (Pickwick Publications, 2015). This book attempts to show how women are portrayed in Luke/Acts and consider what that says about their place in the church. Women are found to be 'interpreters of salvation history, God's prophetic mouthpieces, witnesses to the resurrection, proclaimers and teachers of the gospel, and patrons and leaders of the early church.' After surveying the female characters in the infancy narratives they conclude that these figures, 'serve as a bridge between the ministry of women in the OT and the developing roles of women in the early church. In the former time female involvement was occasional and proportionally small. In the infancy narratives women are front and center in the events of God's saving purpose.' (p. 63)

This biblical material is rarely considered in the gender debate and yet offers vital data as we seek to understand the role of women in God's new community. Evangelical scholarship is able to offer a less combative, more nuanced and thoughtful approach than earlier feminist readings, offering hermeneutically responsible insights that are likely to provoke deeper consideration of the gender question. None of this is to discount the Pauline material. And no doubt complementarians will rightly insist that key texts such as 1 Timothy 2:8–15 are addressed. But it urges us to consider it within a broader frame of reference and probe the evidence from all angles. It suggests that there is a great deal of other evidence that has not been considered and seeks a better answer that is able to accommodate a wider range of biblical data.

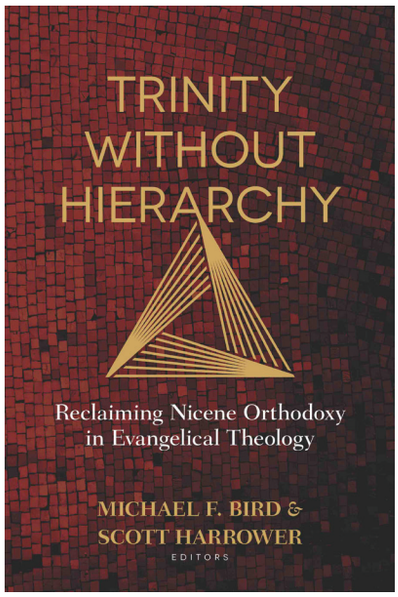
Speaking of 1 Timothy 2, I should mention one article that offers fresh approach to the passage without importing cultural

background from extra-biblical sources, even if I am its author! In the article "1 Timothy 2:13–15 as an Analogy" (*Journal of St Paul and his Letters*. 7.1, 2017) I argue that 1 Timothy 2:13 and 14 are not two arguments to support male authority followed by an obscure statement in verse 15, but that the three verses together form an analogy that draws on the narrative sequence of Genesis 2–3 to ground the commands of verses 11 and 12. Paul often uses an Old Testament analogy to serve as a warning (for example, Eve in 2 Cor 11:3). There is evidence in 1 and 2 Timothy that the heresy, espoused by a group of men (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17), has been embraced by many of the women (and only women) at Ephesus (see 2 Tim 3:6–7; 1 Tim 5:11–13, 15). If the women are now persuading the men to embrace the heresy then Paul is drawing a parallel between the events of the Garden and the experience of the Ephesian church. This alerts them to the next step in the sequence following the transgression of Eve, which was the temptation and fall of Adam. Rather than complete the pattern of the Garden in which Eve persuaded Adam to sin, the Ephesian women are to learn peaceably, refrain from teaching the men and submit themselves to duly appointed authorities. If the preceding verses, especially the demands of vv. 11–12, are grounded in this analogy then it cannot be claimed that they are based on a 'creation mandate' which permanently subordinates women or forever prevents them from teaching men. Whether this approach will get any attention, let alone further the debate remains to be seen. But it does suggest that discussion on the Pauline material is not yet exhausted.

The other area where there has been considerable development is on the question of the subordination of the Son to the Father and its implications for gender. Several leading complementarians have been arguing that the Son is eternally functionally subordinate to the Father and, according to 1 Corinthians 11:3, this establishes a pattern for the manner in which wives are to submit to their husbands. Thus, the hierarchy in the Trinity provides a basis for a hierarchy in gender relationships. While not all complementarians hold to this view, and not all express it in the same way, there have been several of its leading exponents advocating for it including Bruce Ware, Wayne Grudem and Mark Thompson. By grounding gender relations in the being of God this shift offered significant dogmatic strength to the complementarian case. However, as we will see it has ultimately failed, splitting the complementarian camp and threatening Trinitarian orthodoxy.

This debate began in 2005 with the publication of Bruce Ware's *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Crossway) in which he argued that the efficacy of the gospel is dependent upon the eternal functional subordination of the Son to the Father. This is based, amongst other things, on the Son being eternally begotten of the Father, on the Father sending the Son, the Son doing the will of the Father, and the implied asymmetry in a Father/Son relationship. It is also said to be supported by passages such as 1 Corinthians 15:28 and 1 Peter 1:20. These, he claims, establish the gender-based, hierarchically order patterns of authority in the family and ministry.

This provoked a clear and careful response from Millard J Erickson in a work entitled *Who's Tampering with the Trinity?: An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Kregal, 2009). Erickson accepts that eternal functional subordination is technically within the bounds of orthodoxy, but maintains that eternal subordination in function implies an eternal difference of nature in which function is grounded, and so undermines equality of the Father and the Son. He concludes his book with a plea: 'Please think through the implications of your view, observe the body of evidence against it, and reconsider the idea of the eternal functional superiority of the Father over the Son and the Holy Spirit' (p. 259).



That may have been the end of the matter except that in June 2016 the evangelical blogosphere exploded following a post by complementarian scholar Liam Goligher entitled, 'Is it Okay to Teach a Complementarianism Based on Eternal Subordination?' Surprisingly Goligher accused the likes of Ware and Grudem of 'reinventing the doctrine of God' and having departed 'from biblical Christianity as expressed in our creeds and confessions.' That month over 150 blog posts were published, with several leading scholars joining the fray. Many of these are Reformed complementarians who supported and extended Goligher's critique. A list of those blogs may be found at the URL below.[1]

It so happened that the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society to be held in San Antonio that November was on the theme of the Trinity. I was fortunate enough to be there and to see this debate play out. A panel discussion entitled, 'Submission and Subordination in the Trinity' was held featuring Melbourne Anglican Kevin Giles, Bruce Ware, Millard Erickson, and Wayne Grudem. This was a set piece debate with each scholar rehearsing their previous arguments and not really engaging each other. That evening a group of highly conservative Southern Baptists conducted their own panel on the issue, which consisted of seven leading complementarians including Bruce Ware and Wayne Grudem. This was an excellent discussion, with real engagement and thoughtful reflection. But the real surprise was that at the end there was a consensus that Trinitarian relations have no bearing on the issue of gender. Finally, Wayne Grudem reluctantly agreed with this conclusion. This is probably not the end of the matter, but the pause in what was such a heated debate suggests that some careful reflection is taking place. One such reflection is found in the forthcoming volume *Trinity without Hierarchy* (Kregal, 2019), edited by Michael Bird and featuring some excellent articles by both egalitarians and complementarian scholars committed to maintaining the classical Trinitarian

position.

One contribution of this debate that hasn't been sufficiently explored is its bearing on the complementarian slogan 'equal but different'. I have always found this confusing, as I believe men and women are equal but different too! But this Trinitarian debate raises serious doubts about whether a complementarian can validly make this claim. That is, is the claim that women are equal with men while being subordinate to them a coherent statement? Complementarians claim that it is, since the subordination is functional. Subordination is at the level of role and not being. However, if the relationship between men and women is hierarchical and this is grounded in an aspect of personhood (gender) then there can be no claim to equality in any meaningful sense. Calling the differences of authority and submission 'relational' or 'functional' does not solve the problem, since, as Erickson stated above with regard to the Trinity, subordination in function implies a difference of nature in which function is grounded. You can have hierarchy with equality, but not if it is grounded in an essential attribute like gender. At best the complementarian claim of equality of the sexes is partial (equally created in God's image, equally saved, equality of value and rights), but not entirely equal (unequal in power and unequal in authority). The fact that Christian men are called to subvert this through the loving leadership of the husband is irrelevant to the validity of the claim of true equality.

The fact that this debate has dragged on for so long may lead many to despair and move on from the issue. But both sides have significant questions to answer—biblically, theologically and practically—and there is plenty more ink to be spilled. I hope that in doing so we come to a deeper understanding of the questions, of each other's perspectives and of what it means to be men and women in ministry together.

References

[1] https://www.booksataglance.com/blog/thirty-first-updated-edition-trinity-debate-bibliography/

The Evolution of the Gender Debate:

A Complementarian Perspective

Kara Hartley

The basic positions may not have shifted in the ministry-and-gender conversation, but the cultural context around it has. Kara Hartley looks at it from the complementarian point of view. Kara is the Archdeacon for Women in the Diocese of Sydney.

When it comes to the ongoing disagreements in evangelicalism about the Scriptural teaching on the roles of women in Christian leadership the phrase from Ecclesiastes 1:9 comes to mind, 'There's nothing new under the sun.' That is not to say nothing has been written. On the contrary, over the last 20 years there have been numerous books, blogs, articles, and talks given to the topic. Commentators from both sides continue to advocate their position with passion and vigour. I have been asked to write about whether there have been any new developments in these debates, without necessarily repeating all that has gone before. My conclusion is that despite all the ink that's been spilled (or keyboards that have been thumped) no real game-changing arguments have emerged. The disagreements so passionately debated are generally a rehash of what has been said already. Yet while the arguments haven't necessarily changed, the context in which we have them has. Various conversations around sexuality and gender, movements like #metoo and issues relating to domestic violence have certainly placed a renewed spotlight on Scripture's teaching on roles of men and women, in both the home and in the church.

Given these cultural shifts and conversations, it is now as important as ever to be clear on how both to read and to apply the Bible to all aspects of life. Evangelicals are, of course, committed to the final and absolute authority of the Bible as the written word of the living God. We read the Bible with confidence, knowing that what God teaches us there is good and for the lasting benefit and enrichment of his people. We believe that the loving God who addresses us here is able to do so effectively. We seek to let the words of the text determine our theologising, rather than possible extra-biblical historical reconstructions or lived experience, and we read each text within the context of the chapter, book and the whole of Scripture. We also pay careful attention to how each particular text contributes to the Bible's

testimony to Christ. We believe that the sacred writings (in the original context the Old Testament but clearly extending to the New Testament even as it is being written) are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:15).

Appreciating this establishes the way we need to approach the ongoing differences between egalitarian and complementarian views on the roles of men and women in relation to leadership in the church, and headship and submission in marriage. What is clear as the debates continue is that neither side has changed the fundamental arguments for their respective positions. The theological principles foundational to the complementarian framework remain unchanged. These include the following,

1. Complementarians affirm the equality of women and men, made in the image of God (Genesis 1-2) Women and men are equal in essence and worth.
2. Complementarians believe that while there is equality between men and women they exercise some distinctive roles in the church and family life.
3. Complementarians continue to affirm that the gifts of women and men are to be used for the building and benefit of the church, in ways that reflect their gender distinction.
4. Very importantly, complementarians continue to repudiate the misuse of Scripture to promote, justify or condone any inappropriate, evil, and sinful behavior of abuse within marriage.

Historically some of these principles have been debated and lived out differently in different places. For example, in some parts of US evangelical culture, there have been expressions of complementarianism which have gone beyond Scripture to posit one-size-fits-all prescriptions for 'manhood' and 'womanhood', rather than focusing where the Bible does, on godliness for all in our diversity, and specific roles and functions for some within certain relationships.

In Australia, particularly in the last 10 years, positive steps have been taken in complementarian thinking and practice to enable and explore the biblical model of women and men ministering together and alongside each other in partnership. One example is the Priscilla and Aquila Centre at Moore College. Its mission is giving a renewed focus on how to promote and celebrate the ministries of women, in partnership with, rather than in isolation from, men and the ministries of men. There is a deep commitment to encourage, strengthen, and improve the practical expression of complementarianism, teaching and modeling biblically faithful patterns of men and women in partnership in ministry.

In recent years the doctrine of the Trinity has been a locus for debate on the roles of men and women. Despite there being differences of thought amongst complementarians, most particularly in Australia, they do not rely upon the doctrine of the Trinity as a basis for this teaching. It is anchored more in what we see as the consistent teaching of Scripture about the nature of male and female relationships and in particular the teaching of the New Testament in places such as Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Timothy 2. However, in the last ten years a debate has arisen about the way some have appealed to the doctrine of the Trinity. The debate is more complex and nuanced than many people realised (and some blog posts on either side were decidedly unhelpful), especially since on both sides there is an insistence upon the absolute equality of the divine persons. The Father, Son and Spirit are one in being and are worthy of the same honour and worship. However, the question remained as to whether that absolute equality entailed reciprocity of relation or whether it could coexist with asymmetrical relations. Complementarians insist that the Father and the Son are not simply interchangeable. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. There is something about sonship which properly attaches to the second person of the Trinity but not to the first person of the Trinity. Could absolute and entire equality within the Trinity coexist with the voluntary submission of the Son in eternity? The debate continues, with both sides appealing to ancient and modern theologians whose arguments resemble their own. Sadly, far too often caricature and misrepresentation has distorted the conversation.

As mentioned earlier there are some cultural changes and conversations, which have also caused some to question the legitimacy of a complementarian reading of the Scriptures. Domestic abuse is one such matter. Complementarians have been accused that teaching headship and submission in marriage empowers abusers, particularly husbands, to be violent towards their wives. Calls to remove teaching on male headship and female submission have grown louder. There have been attempts to argue for direct causal links between this teaching and domestic abuse. There are several comments to be made. Firstly, The Bible is God's good word to us and passages like Ephesians 5 need to be handled carefully and wisely, but not ignored. Secondly, to suggest causal links between the teaching on headship and submission and abuse means that logically there shouldn't be domestic abuse in egalitarian churches. But of course this is not the case. Thirdly, and following on, domestic abuse exists fundamentally because of sin and this sin requires true and sincere repentance. It could not be clearer that God's word offers no comfort, justification or cover for anyone to get their way through violence or threats. Instead, violence and

threats, especially against those without power and authority, are expressly and repeatedly condemned. In addition to these specific sins, God explicitly forbids abuse within marriage: in particular, the misuse of his pattern for marriage as an excuse for abuse (Col. 3:19; Mal. 2:14–16 NIV; Prov. 11:29 ESV). Indeed, in the same two passages where Paul instructs wives to submit voluntarily to their husbands, Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5, he speaks forcefully to husbands about their responsibilities to their wives, and forbids them from being harsh and commands them to love their wives as they love their own bodies—nourishing and cherishing them, not hating them (Col. 3:19; Eph. 5:28–29).

Additionally, suggesting a causal link between this teaching and domestic abuse ignores the reality of male victims in domestic relationships. While statistically they make up a much smaller representation than women, in a community of men and women we must give attention to men who suffer in this way. To suggest headship and submission are the reason domestic abuse exists in the church fails to account for male victims. In the development of the Sydney Diocese Domestic Abuse policy we provided comments on various passages of scripture, rejecting their misuse and providing explanation of the correct way to understand and apply them. What is clear from this report is that using the Bible to justify abuse is a great evil. A complementarian framework for understanding the Bible does not promote, endorse or allow for abuse from men to women. Any suggestion that it does is at best, misunderstanding the issue—or at worst, mischievous.

safeministry

PROTECTION AND CARE FOR EVERYONE

Overall, the debates continue but the main arguments behind them don't change. Perhaps that's because the hermeneutical methods behind them haven't changed either. Whatever avenues our culture goes down on issues concerning men and women, as evangelicals we must continue to humble ourselves before God's word and allow it to be our final authority on all matters of life and doctrine. This is the non-negotiable.

Becoming a better reader of the Bible:

An approach to Bible Study preparation

Ben Underwood

We have about 4 different names for small group Bible studies at my church. I mostly call them growth groups, and I regard them as the backbone of the congregations. What follows is part of training I ran focussed on the core of the activity of such groups: helping others engage with what the Bible says. Ben Underwood is Associate Minister at St Matthew's Shenton Park.

Pastoring through helping others read the Bible well.

Since pastors teach the Bible as a central act of leadership, the best resource we have to be pastors and teachers, is the word of God written in the Bible. Thus we read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

[16] All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17] so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This does not mean that to exercise pastoral oversight begins and ends with being teachers of Scripture. Not at all. Pastors must build others up by their example of life and govern the congregation, amongst other things. But the central, powerful and foundational service ministers perform is to help their people devote themselves to the teaching of the prophets and apostles, set down in the Old and New Testaments. This does mean that better growth group leaders strive to become better readers of the Bible, and more confident that they can prepare to lead other people in their reading of the Bible.

I have three stages I work through as I prepare to teach a passage. These stages are governed by three kinds of questions. First, the question: What is this text saying? Second: How does it connect to the big picture of the Bible? Third: So what? What does that have to do with me? How does this passage serve the big purpose of the Bible? I hope that whether you are writing a sermon or preparing to lead a Bible Study, this process will serve you well.

Stage I – What is this text saying?

Step 1 – Print it out broken up clause by clause in a couple of translations

I use Bible Gateway (www.biblegateway.com) to get the text of the passage I'm looking at. You can get many translations there. We use the New International Version at St Matthew's which aims for rendering the meaning of the original into readable English. I suggest the NASB (New American Standard Bible), which is often less readable, but sticks closer to the grammatical structure of the underlying language. It is the comparison and contrast of the two which is valuable. I get rid of the headings (and footnotes) and paste each translation into a Word doc, where I break up the passage clause by clause (even phrase by phrase) and put the two versions in facing columns on one page. I do this because it makes me look at the text freshly, it gives me opportunity to scrawl on the text, and to break it down to see how it all really hangs together.

Step 2 – Sit with the text, record your initial responses, and then discern its structure

The next task is to slow down with the text and sit with it. Read it over carefully. Write down questions that occur to you. Write down the things that strike, puzzle you, that you think will be controversial or important to people. Your first, fresh responses are important and you won't be able to recapture then once you have spent lots of time in the text, unless you have written them down, so you are drawn back to them again. Apart from noting whatever strikes you or occurs to you, you should begin to look for the structure of the passage. It should have a unity to it (otherwise someone has chosen the wrong boundaries of the passage). But this unity will be made up of sections and subsections which may be usefully divided off from one another, and which have their own unity. Different kinds of writing have different kinds of sub-sections. Narratives have scenes, which involve different characters and settings. Dialogue or speeches may form subsections. Epistles have paragraphs, where topics, images or arguments might set some parts of the passage off from others. Little transitions of address may indicate structure. Look for the places the readers are addressed ('Brothers and sisters…'). Look for changes in the kind of address to the reader (when does exposition give way to exhortation, for instance?) Poetry has stanzas. It is part of becoming a good reader that you can discern the structure of a passage well. I will often try to summarise my view on the structure of a passage by writing out an outline, such as this one for Genesis 4:1-16, a narrative:

1-2	Introduction to the sons of Eve
3-5a	The offerings and their acceptance: Abel favoured, but Cain not favoured.
5b-7	Cain's angry response and the Lord's warning to him
8	Cain, mastered by sin, kills Abel his brother.
9-15	The Lord calls Cain to account and judges him
9-12	The Lord exposes Cain's guilt and condemns him to wander

13-15 Cain, despairing, protests that he'll be killed, and the Lord undertakes to protect him
16 Cain goes out to live in Nod

Apart from just mapping the structure, note the way the structure maps the development of thought, feeling, action, argument in the passage by word choice, dialogue, rhetorical device, reasoning, exhortation, evocation of sympathy or distaste, omission, repetition or whatever. Note what you think, and are being taught to think, how you feel, what you are being led to desire and what you are being called to do.

Step 3 – Answer two questions: What is this text about? And: What is this text saying about what it is about?
Now comes the hard work of trying to express the unity at the heart of the whole passage. You must try to say what one thing this text is about, what is the single subject which it speaks about. Then you must say what this text says about its subject. There may be more than one thing that is said, but try to boil it down to as few things as possible. There should be no more things said of the subject than there are major divisions of the text. So our example text today should have one or at most two things said about its subject. What is said about the subject we call the predicate. You can join the subject and the predicate into a sentence which is called the Big Idea of the passage. Here's my attempt for Thess 4:13-5:11:

Subject: The hope of Christ's return
Predicate: encourages believers because that return will unite them with Christ and with believers now dead and because they will then receive salvation through Christ

and here's my attempt for Gen 4:1-16:

Subject: When Cain is mastered by sin
Predicate: the Lord judges and punishes him, but does not abandon him to despair.

Now this second Big Idea is not technically in the form of a subject and a predicate, but I think this sentence does attempt to capture what the story is materially about (i.e. what situation it discusses) and what it says about what it is about (i.e. what happens in that situation).

During stage I, it may be very helpful to consult some books. Not before you have done all you can to get to the end of at least step 2, but after you have done some hard thinking, it might help you to read what others have found. You might like to have some help in understanding the literary, historical or theological aspects of what features in the passage you are studying. Happily there are tons of books at all levels available to the reader who'd like to know more. If you are going to lead a growth group, I would encourage you to build up your library with reference books and commentaries.

Stage II - How does this text connect to the big picture and the big purpose of the Bible?

In the Bible we encounter hundreds of stories, characters, commands, prophecies, images, themes, promises, visions etc. How am I meant to read these things? Are they connected? Coherent? If so, how? And what are they supposed to do for me?

When we read a passage of the Bible, we will make sense of it by understanding it as part of some bigger picture, and as useful for some purpose. The question is, what bigger picture, and for what bigger purpose? Here is a summary of the big picture of the Bible, as formulated by me:

The Bible reveals God's long and gracious faithfulness in redeeming his fallen creation through Jesus Christ.

And here is a summary of the big purpose of the Bible, as formulated by me:

The Bible is given to us that we might be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and live by faith in him.

This summary of what the Bible is about is one gained by the careful reading and reflection of many people. It is the work of a lifetime to grasp for yourself, ever more thoroughly, directly and subtly, through reading and study, the big picture and the big purpose of the Bible. We can advance this understanding through getting to grips with Biblical Theology. Biblical Theology paints the big picture of the Bible through its unfolding story of promise and fulfillment. If you have not read a book like Alan Chapple's *GPS: God's Plan for Salvation,* or Vaughan Roberts' *God's Big Picture* or Graeme Goldsworthy's *According to Plan* or *Gospel and Kingdom or Reading the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* then you should pick one of these and invest in what they teach you. They all introduce you to the idea that the Bible is a book relating how God's kingdom is promised to us and fulfilled among us at various times and in various ways.

The treasure is in the text
What I mean is that we should work from the particularity and detail of the passage to make connections, not from broad concepts. Every text will have its individual, characteristic contribution to understanding God's Kingdom and our salvation, and every text will say it in its own particular way, through the links between words, phrases, characters, images, details of passages throughout the Bible. Commentaries and concordances, chain references in Bible margins, or computer searches can help with discovering these links.

In doing this you discover that Abel has an interesting afterlife in the New Testament. In Luke 11:51, Jesus classes Abel among the prophets. This suggests Abel has something to say (despite having no recorded words in Scripture). Hebrews 11:4 underlines this idea that Abel speaks, locating what he has to say in the message that his actions encapsulate—that his offering and its favourable acceptance testify that the righteous are in the world, despite its fallenness. Hebrews understands Abel's faith as the hidden factor that made Abel's offering acceptable, but not Cain's, and that made his life a continuing word speaking to others. Finally, in Hebrews 11:24, it is the *blood* of Abel that speaks, and this accords with Gen 4:10, where Abel's blood calls to God (presumably for justice, but perhaps also a sheer lament for life lost). In Hebrews, Jesus' blood speaks a better word than Abel's blood. We should reflect on why that might be. Abel's blood cries for justice, for sinners to be called to account and punished. It is the occasion for exile, wandering and loss, as well as grief and fierce indignation. Jesus' blood cried for mercy, for

sinners to be pardoned and washed clean. It is the occasion for reconciliation, homecoming and gain, accompanied by joy and great satisfaction.

In Gen 4 as it stands alone, Cain is the more richly considered character. But in the sweep of the Bible, Abel has just as much to say. When we add in the observation that his name probably means 'breath' in the sense of a passing puff of air, we can see him as the type of the righteous in the world – those who live by faith and yet are cut down by the wicked in their envy and anger at their own failure to receive God's approval. Such a righteous life speaks of the need for judgement, of the perversity of sin, of the hidden, inner reason for God's favour, of God's ear sharply attuned to the fate of the righteous. Jesus then provides God's answer to the call of Abel's blood, an answer that establishes justice and hope for both Abel, and even for Cain, the sinner, who may repent and trust in Christ.

Reflecting on the way Gen 4 sits in the whole story of the Bible we could even shift our take on the Big Idea of the story to read it in the wider context of the New Testament:

Subject: The blood of Abel
Predicate: was spilt when Cain could not master sin, reveals that the righteous will suffer at the hands of the wicked, and is answered by the shed blood of Jesus which speaks a better word for both the righteous and the sinner.

Connect to the Creed
Another way to connect a passage to the big picture and purpose of the Bible is to find a point of connection to a gospel summary like the Apostle's Creed. Creedal statements begin to give weight and proportion and 'system' to the whole teaching of the New Testament: they will help you see which dimensions of the gospel your passage articulates and enriches.

In the case of Genesis 4, we have several options. We might connect to the creed via the death of Christ as compared to the death of Abel. We might also connect via the communion of saints—our sharing the faith and the pattern of life of Abel (that of the righteous sufferer, the martyr, perhaps). We might also connect via the forgiveness of sins—that Cain was not abandoned but protected and preserved in hope of the coming of Jesus, whose blood speaks a word of hope and grace to sinners. Finally, we might connect via the resurrection of the dead, that Abel will have life restored to him, as will all God's holy church. Once we see how the passage we are looking at serves the preaching of the gospel, we are well placed to move to the final stage of preparation.

Stage III – So what? What does that have to do with me?

It is worth focussing now on how the passage and its message may be received by those you will be leading, and how it might be seen to be a word that addresses the problems and challenges of their lives as they experience them. Here are two

Try to discern a real, owned and live Big Question
One way to help people engage with a passage is to create some tension and a target to hit by framing some Big Question which the passage is centrally concerned to answer. The Big Question has to be real, owned and live to do its best work. If the question is 'What was the evil Cain did?', then while the text does answer that question, it is not a question, and not an answer, that the average person might feel is of any consequence to them. A real question is a question someone in your group might actually ask of their own initiative, out of their own experience. An owned question is a question that people in your group might care about the answer to, it is a question they genuinely own themselves, not one the leader lends them for the purposes of the study. A live question is a question that people do actually face, and an answer to a live question would help me today, if I could get it. One of the virtues of the Bible Study format is that the group members can ask questions and therefore influence the discussion towards the questions that are real, owned and live for them. We should embrace this quality that small groups have and prepare to take advantage of it as much as possible.

What must I think? Feel? Want? Do?
This set of questions is one kind of 'application grid'. It gets you to consider the ways that this passage should shape, first, my thinking. What truths must I take on board and integrate into my understanding of God, myself, other people or the world? But don't stop with thinking: second, what must I feel? That is, how does this passage work emotionally? What does it evoke and towards what or whom, and how does it model an emotional response to God? To the world? To sin? To others? Any narrative will have an emotional life and structure. A narrative like Cain and Abel is brief, but we should not fail to enter imaginatively into the drama, and feel its emotional dynamics. How does the Lord's acceptance of Abel but rejection of Cain play in our hearts, given that they both brought sacrifices? How do we react to Cain's anger, and then to the fact that God comes to speak to Cain and to what God says to him? What do we feel at Abel's murder? What do we feel about the way God handles his meeting with Cain? How does all this encourage us to shape our own emotional responses to disappointment, envy, anger, temptation and fall, judgement of the sinner and the tempering of that judgement? Who are we to identify with and what does the story say to us in that identification? Hopefully you have paid attention to this in stage I above, but it can also really help forge points of compelling connection and application at this end stage. This leads in to the third question: what must I want? How does this passage model right desire to me? What does it teach me to love? To hate? To aspire to? To oppose? And lastly, what must I do, or cease doing? What action might this lead to in my life? In this way we make the journey from mind and heart to will and deed.

Conclusion

I hope this three stage method of preparing helps! The best foundation you can lay for leadership is becoming a better reader of the Bible. Still there is more to teaching in the small group context than getting all this under your belt. Actually running the discussion is also an important set of skills. Do you use a written study? How much do you talk and how much is it about others talking? Do you need to cover everything you prepared and wrap up neatly with personal application each time? What do you do about people who talk too much? Or who don't talk at all? Maybe there's more we could do in this leadership training area…..

God's love for Cain and for Abel

Genesis 4:1-10

Ben Underwood

The story of Cain and Abel speaks to guilty people who have screwed it up, and to innocent victims. It speaks to those who are tempted to resentment and bitterness, and to those who despair when believers fall prey to evil. It speaks most fully when seen together with the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

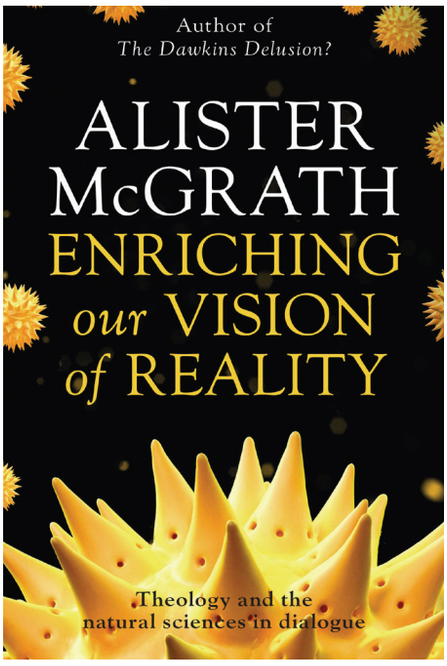
When considered on its own, Genesis 4:1-10 is a story about Cain, and how the LORD deals with him as he becomes a murderer and an outcast. Cain is angry when God favours Abel's sacrifice, but not Cain's. Perhaps Cain felt he was the victim of some divine unfairness. Perhaps he wanted to be lord of his brother, but God's favour threatened this aim. The LORD draws near to Cain, precisely because he is in this sullen, angry state, and asks him some hard questions: 'Why are you angry? … If you do what is right, will you not be accepted?' These questions challenge any assumption Cain may have that he has a reason to be angry, or that God is treating him unjustly. The LORD does not explain the favour thing to Cain. He simply but earnestly warns Cain that he is at a crossroads. Will he do what is right, despite being the unfavoured one, or will he let the vampire sin in, and become himself one who crouches to spring, and take the life of another? This is not perhaps, what Cain would have liked from God, but it is, nonetheless, the good gift that the LORD has for Cain on the verge of Cain's self-destruction; it is what he needs.

After the killing, God again draws near and asks Cain hard questions: 'Where is your brother Abel? … What have you done?' Cain lies and counter-questions God, but for nothing. God knows, and announces the curse and exile that Cain's sin has brought. Cain breaks: 'My punishment is more than I can bear … whoever finds me will kill me.' The LORD does not reply, 'Away from me, you who are cursed', but reassures Cain that he himself will protect his life. It is striking how much God is on Cain's side through all this, even though he does not favour Cain's sacrifice, and cannot leave his sin unpunished. The LORDis gracious and compassionate, even towards sinners who make all the wrong choices. Without endorsing his sin, God loves the sinner.

Abel seems incidental in Genesis, but the New Testament makes more of him. Abel probably means 'breath'—a passing puff of air—and that, it seems, is all he is: favoured by God, but cut down too soon in a nihilistic act of violent bitterness. Over him rises the cry for justice, for judgement. He is lamentable, a wound in the world. Jesus classes Abel among the prophets (Luke 11:51). What is the word he speaks? On one hand he sets the pattern of life for those who live by faith. Hebrews 11:1 understands faith as the hidden factor in Abel's offering, that makes his life a prophetic word. He is the type of the righteous in the world, so those who live by faith should not be surprised to be cut down before their time by the wicked in their envy. 'The world was not worthy of [him]', says Hebrews 11:38.

On the other hand, when we set Jesus alongside Abel, a word of hope succeeds Abel's cry of indignation. Like Abel, the righteous Jesus was cut down too soon by the bitterness of envious men. But Jesus shows that God will not abandon his holy one to the grave, and when Jesus' disciples receive him back with joy from the dead, we see the final end of the story of the righteous. We can look back at Abel and be comforted, for we see in Jesus what was not visible in Genesis 4: that Abel will walk the way that Jesus pioneered and perfected: the way, not simply of death, but of death and resurrection. God will not abandon the rightous.

Jesus also expands the story of Cain. Jesus' shed blood cries for the sinner, not against the sinner, and so Cain may find hope too. There is a deed that will undo his, and a way back, even for a murderer. If the Cains of the world ask it, they are marked with Jesus' blood and find protection and favour too. They are reconciled both to God and to their victims as well, in the end. Whether you have wronged or have been wronged, the God of Cain, Abel and Jesus has a word of hope for you.



Enriching our Vision of Reality:

Theology and the Natural Sciences in Dialogue
Alister McGrath, SPCK, 2016

Molecular-quantum-theorist-turned-theologian Alister McGrath is a prolific writer with 42 major works to his name in the Wikipedia article under his name (which is current only to 2015). He has written several books since that date including this one. The relationship between Christian faith and science is a major pre-occupation of McGrath's and this book is one of the best of many which he has written in my view. It is more personal than many of his previous works and it describes something of the progression of McGrath's understanding of Christianity throughout his eventful career so far. The book is in three distinct parts: first, an opening essay on The Christian Vision of Reality. Second, a comparison of the work on science and religion produced by three major influences on McGrath's life and thinking, namely chemist and physicist Charles Coulson, Thomas Torrance (a Scottish theologian with a scientific bent), and Oxford professor of mathematics (and later Oxford professor of theoretical physics) John Polkinghorne, who also turned to Christian theology later in life. The final part of McGrath's book is a series of 'parallel conversations' between theology and science including topics such as ways of seeing reality, the legitimacy of faith, models and mystery, religious and scientific faith and natural theology as well as an interesting study of Darwin's religious thought. The book has detailed explanatory references and notes, a core reading guide and a more specialist reading guide.

In brief the book's target is Scientism—an Enlightenment-based understanding of reality and meaning which takes account only of phenomena which can be understood by certain current scientific rubrics. McGrath is a staunch defender and explicator of science but is critical of current metaphysical interpretations of science (p.177). This is a passion he shares with English philosopher of the mind Michael Scruton. McGrath notes that neither science nor theology can ever hope to attain or establish a 'logically coercive proof of the kind that only a fool could deny' (p. 65). Ways towards knowledge in these circumstances include the notions of 'warranted' or 'justified' belief (A. Plantinga) and also 'personal knowledge' (M. Polanyi). McGrath further notes that 'both science and theology deal with beliefs that are sufficiently well motivated for us to commit to them, knowing that they may be false but nevertheless believing that they may be the best explanation presently available to us' (p.66). Supporters of radical empiricism 'limit reality to what can be observed' (p. 81). In the quantum age this sort of approach becomes meaningless.

McGrath further notes that 'both science and faith are prone to exaggerate their capabilities. Religion cannot tell us the distance to the nearest star, just as science cannot tell us the meaning of life. But each is part of a bigger picture, and we impoverish our vision of life and the quality of our lives as human beings if we exclude either or both' (p. 161). McGrath explains that 'in science, the criticism of a justified or motivated belief is not whether it conforms to rational preconceptions of what things ought to be but whether this is what the evidence requires.' (p.97) His implication is that the same principle applies to theological beliefs such as belief in the resurrection of Jesus. McGrath further notes that 'the first great enemy of science is not religion but dogmatic rationalism which limits the reality to what reason determines is acceptable'. Quantum physics, of course, 'is counter-intuitive and bears little relation to what reality ought to be like.' The question becomes, 'who decides when there is enough evidence to justify a belief?' (p. 98). The most popular method today is called 'inference to the best explanation' (p. 101).

Another characteristic of McGrath's writing is his determined distinction between theology and religious studies: 'Theology is distinct and cannot be collapsed into some generic concept of religious studies' (p. 58). McGrath takes particular aim at the term 'secular humanism': 'Any form of humanism ultimately rests on an understanding of what human nature is, including what longings, desires, and aspirations are naturally human. A Christian humanist declares that humanity finds its true goal in discovering God. A secular humanist declares that humanity finds its true goal in rejecting God. But to pretend that "humanism" is necessarily "secular humanism" is indefensible' (p. 161).

Two recent psychological explorations

in this area include first, Justin Barrett's work on the cognitive science of religion investigating 'the natural tendency of the human mind to desire or be inclined towards God' (p.168); and secondly the work begun by Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Heidt on the psychology of awe. (p. 179).

A strength of McGrath's writing is his vast research and reading. He digs up quotations and arguments from many quarters including psychology, sociology, the history of science, philosophy and theological writers ancient and modern. Some examples include Einstein, never short of a quote: 'the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible' (p. 64) Or, American theoretical physicist Richard Feynman: 'the scientific imagination finds itself stretched to the utmost, not, as in fiction, to imagine things which are not really there, but just to comprehend the things which are there' (p. 81). Philosopher Alfred North Whitehead was critical of 'one-eyed reason, deficient in its vision of depth' (p. 82). Noble laureate, biologist Peter Medawar, was a powerful critic of over-confident science in his book *The Limits of Science*. McGrath quotes him as follows: 'Scientific reasoning is therefore at all levels an interaction between two episodes of thought—a dialogue between two voices, the one imaginative and the other critical' (p. 82f). McGrath also notes Augustine: *si comprehendis non est Deus* ('if you can understand it, it's not God' (p. 130).

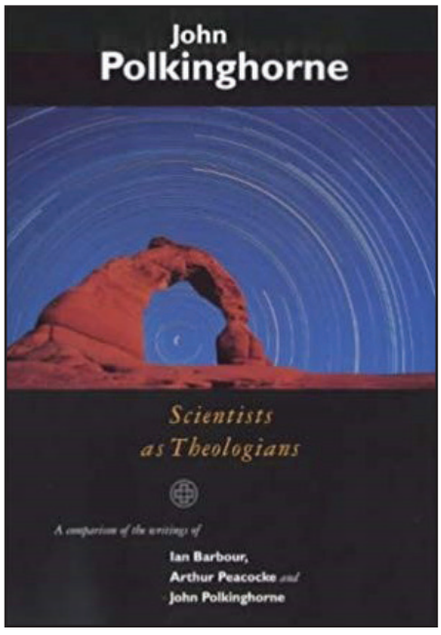
In the area of biological evolutionary theory McGrath stresses that 'we are right to be suspicious of reductionist accounts of human beings' (p. 156). For a start is the fact that 'humans can (and regularly do) affect their own evolutionary development' (p. 150). He is scathing about writers who overplay the fact that homo sapiens and pan troglodytes (chimpanzees) share 98 per cent of their DNA, pointing out that homo sapiens and pan troglodytes 'last shared a common ancestor somewhere between five and seven million years ago' (p. 155).

All in all this is a highly entertaining and challenging book which mounts a powerful case for the legitimacy of Christian theology and Christian experience as an authentic and truth-seeking experience and a valid mode of human expression. At the same time as it challenges the claim of some scientists that the only valid form of knowledge is that which emanates from a scientific view of the world. 5 stars.

Richard Prideaux, Vic.

Scientists as Theologians

A Comparison of the Writings of Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke and John Polkinghorne, John Polkinghorne, SPCK, 1996



This is an unusual book in that a commentary on a group of writers would normally be written by someone outside the group, but in this case Polkinghorne includes himself as one of the authors under discussion. On Polkinghorne's own admission (p. x) this is problematic and he owns that inevitably he gives greater space to his point of view in those areas where there is a difference of opinion amongst the three. I have been reading all three of these authors throughout most of my academic life, and I need to declare my own bias that I find Polkinghorne's theology far more congenial to my evangelical and Biblical understanding of the Christian faith than the more liberal/process theological approach of Barbour and Peacocke.

Having said that, Ian Barbour was really the doyen and creator of the science and faith dialogue in the 20th century and until his death in 2013. His massively influential works—including Issues in Science and Religion, the Gifford Lectures Religion in an Age of Science (revised and reprinted as Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues) and Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion—are all must-reads for anyone wanting to get a handle on the key issues in the science and religion debate. Likewise Oxford biochemist and ordained Anglican priest the late Dr Arthur Peacocke has been equally active in writing about the life sciences, in particular his two major works: Creation and the World of Science and God and the New Biology. All of these books have been referenced in Polkinghorne's analysis in this book. John Polkinghorne himself has been a prolific author in this area since resigning from his position as Oxford Professor of Mathematical Physics and becoming ordained as an Anglican priest. He has written 34 books on science and faith seeking to communicate the notion that there is no fundamental difficulty for Christians in the world of science.

Polkinghorne notes that Ian Barbour identified four models in the area of joint reflection on issues of science and religion, first conflict (e.g. creationism—Henry Morris et al.; the New Atheism—Dawkins, Dennett et al., p. 5). Second, independence (e.g. Stephen Jay Gould's 'non-overlapping magisteria', p. 5). Third, dialogue (e.g. Barbour, Peacocke, the cosmological anthropic principle etc: 'religion has to do what science has to tell it about the nature and history of the physical world' but also, 'religion can offer science a deeper and more comprehensive account of reality' p. 5f). Fourth, integration ('a still closer relationship', e.g. Theilhard de Chardin p. 6).

Polkinghorne prefers a two-fold classification. It is either consonance ('Science does not determine theological thought but it certainly constrains it. Physics provides the ground plan for the edifice of metaphysics'; Polkinghorne seeks to find a 'causal joint' of providential interaction between science and theology. p. 6f); or it is assimilation ('a greater degree of merging of the two

disciplines'). Polkinghorne would place himself in the consonance category and Barbour in the assimilation camp with Peacocke somewhat unhappily in the middle. Polkinghorne also notes, however (p.12f) that 'all three authors agree that science and theology are indispensable partners, together with other forms of enquiry such as aesthetics and ethics, in the even-handed exploration of reality and in the search for a unified account of resulting human knowledge'. All three are opposed to the reductionism that often emerges with unbelieving scientists who 'often espouse a covert scientism that attributes subjective experiences of beauty and moral imperative to the contingent "hard wiring" of the human brain, developed to implement a portfolio of strategies for survival'. He notes with approval philosopher Nancey Murphy's 'contrast arising from the difference between widespread participation in the common Christian life and the specially contrived experience created in the scientific laboratory'. 'In physics, nearly all knowledge comes from the professional to the amateur. In the case of theology … knowledge of God begins with the amateurs … and the professional theologian is dependent on the findings of this community.' (p. 13f)

Polkinghorne identifies his philosophical position as 'critical realism' (p. 14) 'the rooting of knowledge in interpreted experience treated as a reliable guide to the nature of reality… motivated belief is held to afford an insight into what is actually the case', and cites Barbour: 'existence is prior to theorising'. Polkinghorne notes that 'epistemology models ontology… intelligence is the key to reality … God is not available for inspection but then neither are quarks or gluons … entities with explanatory power are candidates for acceptance as components of reality'. Polkinghorne notes 'the stable existence of diverse faith traditions' (p. 18) amongst many cultures which could be said to contrast with the constant changing of scientific theories as new discoveries, approaches and evidences are developed and observed.

'Science appears to describe an all-embracing and self-contained causality a work in forming the future from the present … religion, on the other hand, wishes to speak of divine activity in response to prayer … there must be a way out of this dilemma … while philosophers may question free will, it seems to me to be the basis for rationality as well as action … What would validate human utterance it it were merely the mouthing of automata' (p. 30).

In the area of mathematical quantum physics Polkinghorne's major research area, he notes that 'the existence of intrinsic unpredictabilities within the account of the observable world which does not permit the determination of a specific outcome on numerous occasions' (p. 34). When combined with the discovery of chaotic systems the two developments challenge the notion of scientific certainty. Equally, early church thinking on the two natures of Christ arose out of the struggle with experiences of the divine, not, as outsiders might think, out of unbridled speculation without evidence. Polkinghorne wrestles with the problem of differing religious approaches to God in the world religions and accepts that some elements of religious faith are culturally limited and determined. Whilst Barbour and Peacocke are happy to find God's truth in other religious faiths, Polkinghorne is in favour of an inclusivity which he describes as 'recognising the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions while still maintaining Christ as the definitive and authoritative revelation of God.' (p. 60)

In relation to the Bible, Polkinghorne recognises the efforts of outstanding biblical scholars over the years nevertheless he has a view that, 'the meaning of the biblical text cannot be left in the hands of the scholars' (who in any case often disagree with one another p. 67). He notes '[l]ike Peacocke, I incline to "an a priori more trusting" attitude to the scriptures, though neither of us wishes to be credulous' (p. 67).

In relation to the incarnation Polkinghorne rejects Barbour's idea that the human Christ was simply a human being in whom the Holy Spirit was intensified to the highest possible degree, arguing that Christian 'experience demands divine presence rather than divine inspiration … so that the incarnation must be expressed in ontological rather than functional terms. However mysterious and difficult to articulate … it seems to me that an indispensable Christian insight is that in Christ the Creator actually shared in the travail of his creation.' (p. 70)

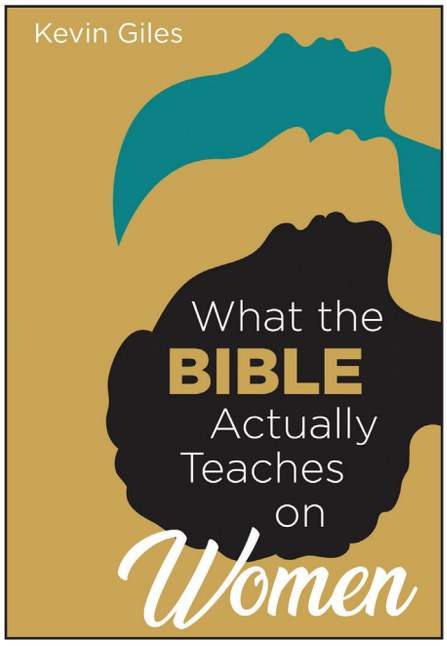
Thus Polkinghorne ends up stressing the importance of Chalcedon and the doctrine of the two natures of Christ (p. 71) and further notes 'it is the work of Christ which is the key to the nature of Christ.' (p. 71)

All of this starts to sound very complex, and Polkinghorne remarks disarmingly that, 'like quantum theory Christian thought cannot be reduced to the banalities of common sense' (p.74). Likewise, regarding the resurrection, Polkinghorne remarks—accurately I think—that, 'it seems entirely possible that if Jesus had not risen from the dead we would probably have never heard of him' (p. 74). Polkinghorne and Peacocke both grapple awkwardly with the actual nature of the resurrection body—as to an extent Paul also does in 1 Corinthians 15. Polkinghorne notes that Peacocke's view is effectively totally reliant on the American theologian Phoebe Perkins who writes of the resurrection body as 'a new kind of reality, previously unknown' (p. 74). Polkinghorne himself notes that 'in Christianity there is a destiny for matter as well as humankind' (p. 77). He is not troubled, unlike Peacocke, by the problem of different atoms in the resurrection body, escaping the issue by the simple statement, 'we shall be resurrected, not reassembled' (p. 78). My own view of this is that our personal atoms are regularly changed over many times in our lifetime and it does not seem to affect who we are, so I doubt it will trouble the resurrection body! Re the virgin birth and X and Y chromosome problems Polkinghorne's view is that it was a miracle, Peacocke's that the story was a myth. Barbour does not deal with it.

In general this is an engaging, if at times quite difficult, read. Polkinghorne does not have McGrath's fluency of expression, but on the other hand he gets right down to real details that real questioners would ask about apparent conflicts between science and Christian faith. In particular, he writes especially for those who, like me, want to hold on to both the validity of a scientific world view

as well as a faith in Christ that is centred on the revelation of God's incarnate Word in faith experience, the life and history of the church universal and in a written scripture inspired by God. This book comes with an excellent index and some notes along with copious references to the primary sources of the three authors. A minor weakness is that there is no separate list of books referred to. Much ground covered with three major authors in view and much to think about. 5 stars.
Richard Prideaux, Vic.

What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women
Kevin Giles, Cascade, 2018



This book is, in my opinion, the best book available today on the controversial topic of the status and ministry of women. It is wide-ranging in scope, very well researched and easy to read. The book is the fruit of Kevin Giles' forty years of careful study of the scriptures and of debates with those of counter-opinions both in Australia and on the international scene.

In *What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women*, Giles makes his debating opponents Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger, the authors of the definitive complementarian book, *God's Design for Man and Woman*. While Giles and the Köstenbergers arrive at different conclusions, they have much in common. Alike they have a high view of the authority of scripture. Alike they have a high view of marriage and family life. Alike they make the scriptures their primary focus in seeking God's design for the man-woman relationship. Alike they care deeply for the wellbeing and witness of the church to the world. I found Giles's engagement with the work of the Köstenbergers to be rigorous, yet respectful, gracious, and honouring. He strongly disagrees with them on many matters, but he does this in a way that acknowledges their scholarship and academic brilliance (p. 3). I would like to see all complementarian and egalitarians learn from Giles's approach when debating with other Christians on what the Bible actually teaches on the man-woman relationship.

Kevin Giles structures his book carefully. First, he asks why the equality of the sexes is so vigorously debated today. Giles considers the impact of feminism, women's educational advances, the increase in women in leadership positions in society, socially conservative evangelicalism, and the culture wars. Second, Giles outlines how the complementarian position as it is known today was invented by George Knight in 1977. In this, the creation-given 'roles' of men and women are made the central issue, which sounds innocuous until it is discovered that what is being argued in coded language is that God has assigned to men the ruling role and women the obeying role, and this ordering of the sexes can never change. Third, Giles works his way through the key biblical texts and passages. He moves from God's ideal for essential gender equality in Genesis 1–3, to the way Jesus treated women with honour and respect in the Gospels and finally to Paul's affirmation of women in leadership. As Giles does this, he highlights the ministries of significant women in the Gospels, in Acts, and in the Pauline writings—including Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junia, the woman apostle). When Giles gets to Paul, he naturally focuses on debates about the much-disputed meaning of the Greek words *kephalē* and *authentein* and on 1 Timothy 2:12-14. Fourth, Giles documents how the Bible has been used in an identical way to uphold and defend oppression in the past, giving the examples of slavery and apartheid. Finally, Giles explores the sociological and institutional reasons why complementarians reject the biblical egalitarian position when it would be expected that all Christians would delight to see women set free by the gospel and empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel.

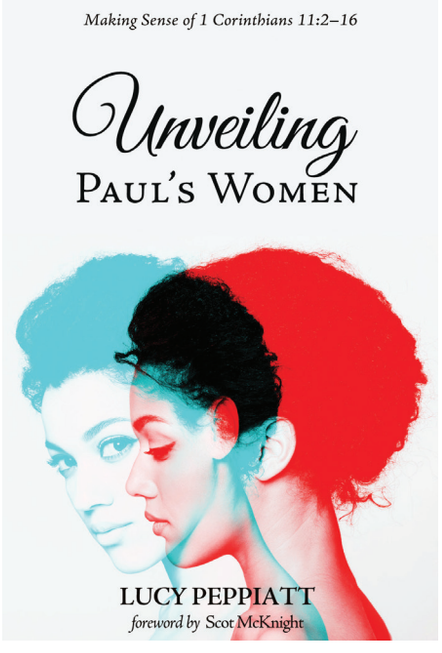
Foundational to Giles' case for the substantial equality of the two sexes are the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. What God puts first in the Bible, he makes of first importance. For him, these chapters, more than anything else in scripture, reveal the God-given ideal for the man-woman relationship. He persuasively argues, with widespread scholarly support, that Genesis chapters 1 and 2 teach the substantial and essential equality of man and woman. It is only as a consequence of the fall that the man begins to rule over the woman (Gen 3:16). This means that the subordination of women is not the creation ideal but a reflection of sin. It speaks of the fallenness and brokenness of human relationships, not of the new creation in Jesus Christ. Giles says, 'This is not an idiosyncratic egalitarian interpretation of Genesis 1–3. It is what the majority of contemporary scholarly Protestant commentators conclude and what all Roman Catholic theologians and biblical scholars teach' (p. 66). Giles argues that a 'hermeneutical rule' is implied in these chapters, a way to interpret all that is said in scripture on the man-woman relationship. It is this:

'All texts that imply or speak of the substantial and essential equality of the two sexes reflect the creation-given ideal; all texts that imply or speak of the subordination of women reflect the fall. They are not the God-given ideal. They either mirror the culture of the time or give practical time-bound advice to women living in a world where their subordination is assumed, or address an exceptional situation where the behaviour of some women is causing offence.'

He then adds, 'All evangelicals who want to uphold the theological unity of

Scripture should be pleased to embrace this rule' (p. 67).

What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women is a robust, scriptural, and systematic examination of what the Bible teaches on women. This book should be read by everyone who cares about the wellbeing, integrity and witness of the church and wants to see the leadership abilities of women unequivocally affirmed. It is undeniable that Jesus and Paul affirmed the dignity and leadership abilities in women in ways hitherto unknown and foreign to all forms of patriarchy. Their words and example are a challenge for the church today as we seek to be faithful witnesses to the gospel. **Graham Hill, Vic.**



Unveiling Paul's Women:

Making Sense of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Lucy Peppiatt, Wipf and Stock, 2018

In her recent book, *Unveiling Paul's Women,* Lucy Peppiatt writes with reference to 1 Corinthians 7-10, that 'The only real application of these verses, if we think that Paul wrote them, and we think that he is an authoritative voice for the church, is that women should wear head coverings in church when they pray and prophesy' (p. 55). She had just pointed out that 'there are no cultural reasons given in these verses for the shame that an uncovered woman and a covered man causes … the disapproval comes from God and the angels' (p. 54). To deal with this Peppiatt proposes a bold re-reading of the passage. By an act of interpretive judo, she flips everything around and finds that Paul is actually arguing *against* the practice of women's head covering. She writes, 'Paul was faced with a group of domineering, gifted, prophetic men who had implemented oppressive practices for women in Paul's absence. They constructed a theology to support their practices that was a blend of Paul's original thought and their own distorted view of the world' (p. 86). Paul is presenting their thinking (not his own) in vv4-5 and 7-10, which Paul then opposes with his own corrective in vv11-16. Verse 13 expects the answer 'yes', and the uniform custom of the churches is to allow women to pray and prophesy without a head covering.

Now, this neatly solves many problems. It takes all that modern sensibilities find difficult out of Paul's mouth and puts it in the mouths of his opponents. Paul is the friend of women, in an even more thorough way than he has been understood to be hitherto. In the spirit of contemporary feminism, he stands up to controlling men and asserts the freedom and radical equality of women. However, whether this reading is convincing, and will carry us over a watershed in the exegesis of this passage remains to be seen. I'm a bit uneasy with such a novel and radical take on such a long passage, so let me, in my cautious and critical way, set out a few hurdles I face to embracing Peppiatt's approach.

First, where Paul is understood to be quoting a Corinthian slogan earlier in the letter, the quotes are short, and Paul does not really reject their claims as utterly misguided, only needing to be set in a larger context or qualified by other considerations: '"I have the right to do anything" —but not everything is beneficial'. Even if Paul is quoting a Corinthian view, why should we not see him as not so much utterly opposing it, but setting it an a wider context, and qualifying it with other considerations? It is worth reflecting here on the conjunction (*plen*) that Paul uses in verse 11, at the point Peppiatt sees him pivoting to repudiate the Corinthian position. Peppiatt glosses this here as, 'What I am saying to you, though, is' and takes it as a strong adversative, introducing an entirely new and contrary take on the question. But this seems questionable. Plen is used mainly to introduce a thought that accepts what has come before it, but draws an important inference out of it, or describes a restriction or qualification of or exception to the generality what precedes. It is usually glossed 'however' or 'nevertheless', or 'in spite of that' or 'except that', and where it is glossed 'but' it often carries the sense of 'sure, but'; accepting rather than overturning what precedes. On a usual understanding of plen, even if what vv7-10 say is the view of his opponents, we should most likely understand Paul as accepting the position in some sense, but wishing to remind his readers of some other truths which qualify and balance what vv7-10 says. Peppiatt's take on the meaning of plen here is a weak point in her reading.

Further, where Paul really opposes a view he presents in his letters, he makes his rejection of the view represented clear—think of Romans 3:3-4 or even 1 Cor 1:12-17. And when he wants to correct the Corinthians he makes plain statements of the behaviour that he wants: 'flee from idolatry … you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too … eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience … if anyone invites you to a meal … eat whatever is put in from of you without raising questions of conscience, but if someone says (etc) …' (1 Cor 10:14, 21, 25, 27-8). Or: 'So then my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together' (1 Cor 11:33) Or:

'if anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one a at a time, and someone must interpret' (1 Cor 14:27). It seems strange that Paul would want to correct the Corinthians' head covering thought and practice, but never come right out and state plainly what he wants. But the fact is we do not read any unambiguous direction of Paul along such the lines as, 'so, drop your insistence on female head coverings' or 'I want women to be free to cover their heads or not, as they please' or 'since everything comes from God, and in the Lord there is neither male and female, head covering is theologically unimportant—just don't behave in a way that would scandalise others, for decorum is important.' Some may argue that that is exactly the import of v10 'a woman ought to have authority over her own head' and v 15 'long hair is given to her as a covering', but these verses have generally not been taken as instructions against female head coverings in the past, and so they are hardly as plain as Paul could have been, and usually was. The absence of such a plain instruction makes Peppiatt's reading less plausible.

As of today, I find Peppiatt's reading somewhat forced and too convenient and congenial to our age. It is powerfully grounded in the conviction that Paul could not have believed or taught what vv4-5 and 7-10 say, because that would make him inconsistently egalitarian, rather than radically and thoroughly egalitarian. But I wonder about the premise that Paul must be an egalitarian of some kind. And I wonder that Paul's true point here been so entirely misunderstood for so long? Could he so completely fail to convey his intention in writing this passage to all the generations until now, such that readers have taken away precisely the opposite conclusion to the one Paul meant to communicate? If it were a couple of cryptic verses, perhaps (and 'because of the angels' surely does fall into the category of 'we don't know what Paul had in mind here'). But three paragraphs? Read Peppiatt for yourself, and see if you think she has cut the knot. Or, perhaps better, read her larger and more technical work *Women and Worship at Corinth: Paul's Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians*. Maybe that should be my next stop. **Ben Underwood, WA**

Is complementarianism on the way out?

The Masculinist thinks so.

Ben Underwood

In an issue largely themed on the state of the Christian discussion on gender, it might be worth finishing by noticing emerging energy for critiques of complementarianism from quarters which are dissatisfied with the character and direction of the cultural take on gender, and dissatisfied with egalitarianism and complementarianism as faithful and viable roads to walk.

Aaron Renn is an evangelical Christian living in New York, *au fait* with Tim and Kathy Keller's thinking on these issues, as well as the complementarianism of Piper and Grudem and The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. He writes an email newsletter called the Masculinist. His explanation of his project goes thus: 'The Masculinist is motivated by problems facing men and the church in our society, including failure of too many young men

to launch, the failure of the church to attract men, the huge recent draw of secular men's self-help figures like Jordan Peterson (and some more unsavory people), and the frequent complaints pastors have today about young people not being abe to find spouses. [1]

Issue #30 of the Masculinist was devoted to a critique of complementarianism. The basic story of the critique is that complementarianism is a 1970s-80s reaction to feminist inroads into evangelicalism, but that, because the complementarians could not, or did not wish entirely to repudiate the feminist agenda, complementarianism has tried to accept as much of the modern take on women's freedoms, rights and equality as they can, while preserving a male prerogative in church and home. However, this prerogative has become thin and detached from anything in the wider world that helps it make sense, other than as an adherence to what the Bible has been understood for centuries to say. A coming generation with no cultural memory of traditional sex roles will not receive it, and it has no obvious young champions. Essentially, complementarianism is an unstable and increasingly untenable attempt to become as egalitarian as possible without wholly abandoning the traditional Christian conviction that the leadership of churches is the work of men. Complementarianism as a force will die with those who forged it.

Renn is no egalitarian, though. He's concluded 'that both complementarianism and egalitarianism are modern doctrines that are in significant error and should be rejected.' He does predict that, 'egalitarianism, as an accommodationist theology in tune with the spirit of the age, appears to have a bright future.' Egalitarianism will benefit from an influx out of complementarianism and, further, as egalitarianism comes under continuing pressure to accommodate further changes to our culture's vision of gender and justice, the egalitarian space will continue to liberalise. This will leave some of some of today's egalitarians as tomorrow's conservatives—holding out on gender as binary, rather than non-binary, for example. Finally, he says, 'a small but not insignificant group of people will move in a reactionary reaction, embracing a thicker, more substantive sexual complementarity and even a patriarchal vision. […] People attracted to this will be those who are embracing, knowingly or not, a Benedict Option approach and would be the American Protestant equivalents of the energized young French Catholics Rod Dreher likes to talk about. The people attracted to Jordan Peterson or other secular online men's gurus are the most likely candidates to join this group.'

Obviously anyone who starts an email newsletter called 'the Masculinist' is indicating that they believe some kind of counterpoint to feminism, or interpretation of the times for the benefit of men, is needed today. This is not to say he is an outspoken advocate of the patriarchy (he's hard to read on this), but he does lament the lost culture of the household,[2] and the 'neoliberalisation of the sexual, dating and marriage markets', which he regards as a disaster for both men and women. He feels that American church pastors feel set free by the culture to castigate and denigrate men, but could never do the same to women, that the dating advice American evangelical leaders have promoted is blind to the real dynamics between men and women, and that the churches need to stop and rethink a great deal about gender. He ends his critique of complementarianism with a 1987 quote from James Davison Hunter about complementarian doublespeak. This doublespeak is the expectation that men can indeed exercise authority in marriage and family, but without the social distance that authority usually requires. Social distance between a husband and a wife is collapsed by the expectation of love expressed as emotional support and empowerment given to the wife. This leaves complementarianism 'hierarchical in principle only.'

Jake Meador wrote a response to Renn's piece at Mere Orthodoxy.[3] He generally agreed with the critique of complementarianism (although he made no comments on egalitarianism), but wanted to nuance Renn's analysis, distinguishing between a minimalist complementarianism (a la the Kellers) and a maximalist complementarianism (a la Dorothy Patterson's essay in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood).* Apart from their pessimistic predictions

Flatiron Building, by Rodrigo Paredes
www.flickr.com/photos/rodrigoparedes/ 21054855505

for the future of complementarianism, both writers believe that we face a liberal cultural context that is in some way at war with nature, with the reality of who we are as men and women, and that that culture invades the churches too. Meador writes: 'the minimalist [complementarian] solution will fail because one cannot preserve Christian practice in the home and family if liberalism is designed, as our iteration of it is, to undermine and destroy both. If the scriptural norms about gender are to be preserved, then we must also preserve the natural order in which those norms are seen to be coherent and lively.'

Obviously this kind of critique is friendly to neither of the established camps; the egalitarians have no reason to welcome this kind of attack on the complementarians (as it essentially comes from the right of complementarianism). But what with the global village and the rapid flows of ideas and attitudes around the Anglosphere, and the evangelical world, new voices may emerge quickly onto our scene, travelling in a rather new trajectory. You read it here first.

References:

1https://www.aaronrenn.com/masculinist/

2 see also Meador (n. 3 below), and 'Reclaiming the Household' in First Things, Nov 2018

3 https://mereorthodoxy.com/complementarianism/

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