# Knights and Ladies, Women and Men

**From the "Collected Works of CJS Hayward" series**

**CJS Hayward**

CJS Hayward Publications, Wheaton

Questions and contact information:
CJSHayward.com/contact

**The reader is invited to visit CJSHayward.com.**

# Table of Contents

# Preface

The author remembers hearing that some Orthodox leaders, in the Islamic world, were "so influenced by Muslim piety" that they insisted, among other things, that the Eucharist is just a symbol and nothing like real presence, let alone specifically Orthodox teaching, is true. Furthermore, he remembers a second shock when he realized that those in the U.S. have done something similar with feminism.

Is this author to be trusted? Perhaps not. C.S. Lewis said he would rather play cards with someone who had doubts about the possibility of moral philosophy, but was taught that "a gentleman does not cheat at cards," than an impeccable moral philosopher who learned cards among sharpers. And in that comparison the author is the character who grew up among sharpers; he once considered feminism obviously non-negotiable to the core of Christianity, and he is more like the person who pauses and hesitantly says "they" when speaking of person of unspecified gender, than the one who boldly and fluently

says "he". So the author is, perhaps, not to be trusted too far.

But with that said, feminism is in the air and important, the question is an important one, even if it is a local one (like influences from Muslim piety saying the Eucharist is "just a symbol"). A couple of centuries ago there was no feminism; a couple of centuries in the future and historians may well try and fail to make sense of it, remembering its heyday as Church historians remember the heyday of Arianism, Nestorianism, or Iconoclasm. Feminism will be remembered as what was in vogue in ages past. It may be hard to think of feminism, for which no stable form has yet emerged, as a passing fashion that will someday be studied as history. But it will be.

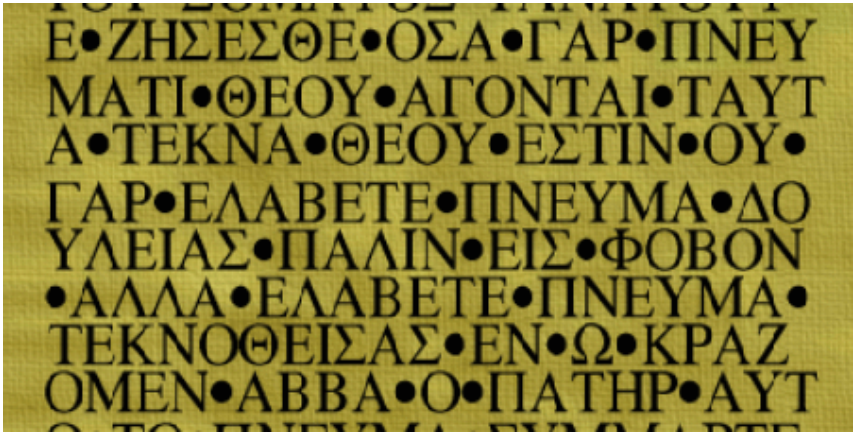
The question is important—*Vive la différence!*—and here is one modest offering to address it.

# Inclusive Language Greek Manuscript Discovered

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — There is a considerable buzz among New Testament scholars over the discovery of a near-complete Greek manuscript to the book of the Bible called Romans. The manuscript is similar to others, but is the first known manuscript to mirror the *Today's New International Version* (TNIV) in its use of inclusive language.

There is a wide consensus among both conservative and liberal scholars that most Greek manuscripts use grammatically masculine words where the original author meant to include women as fully as men. This manuscript, referred to by scholars as R221819, is similar to other such manuscripts but uses inclusive language where applicable.

*A Portion of R221819, including Romans 8:14-15*




The book of Romans was first written in Greek and is considered foundational in its treatment of what it means to be a Christian. Chapter eight is well-known among people who read the Bible; its fourteenth and fifteenth verses are shown above. *Huioi* ("sons") in verse 14 is replaced by a more inclusive *tekna* ("children"), and various word forms are adapted to a gender-neutral spelling. R221819 is thought to reflect the TNIV's distinguishing features with considerable accuracy.

Kenneth Barker, one of the leading scholars involved with the TNIV, said, "I don't think this is quite as big of a deal as people make. It's just a minor change, like other textual variations, and simply clarifies the author's intent." He disclaims any greater significance to the discovery.

The progressive element of Christians for Biblical Equality has been jubilant. One scholar said, "This is a very important step in the right direction. I look forward to when a manuscript is found where the patriarchal *Theos* is replaced by the more neutral *Theon*. It really only means changing a couple of the case endings plus the spelling of

the word that means 'the.' *Theon* would remain in the second declension. It is just a small change, but it would help Christians reach out effectively to those on the margins of society." After all, if one clarification helps, why not another?

# Un-man's Tales:

## C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra*, Fairy Tales, and Feminism

The two C.S. Lewis scholars cited and discussed below are two of the greatest around. One of them I know. But as Lewis said, "A small man may avoid the error of a great one."

## A first clue to something big, tucked into a choice of children's books

I was once part of a group dedicated to reading children's stories (primarily fantasy) aloud. At one point the group decided to read Patricia Wrede's *Dealing with Dragons*. I had a visceral reaction to the book as something warped, but when I tried to explain it to the group by saying that it was like the Un-man in *Perelandra*. I was met with severe resistance from two men in the group. Despite this, and after lengthy further discussions, I was able to persuade

them that the analogy was at least the best I could manage in a tight time slot.

I was puzzled at some mysterious slippage that had intelligent Christians who appreciated good literature magnetized by works that were, well... *warped*. And that mysterious slippage seemed to keep cropping up at other times and circumstances.

Why the big deal? I will get to the Un-man's message in a moment, but for now let me say that little girls are sexist *way* too romantic. And this being sexist *way* too romantic motivates girls to want fairy tales, to want some knight in shining armor or some prince to sweep them off their feet. And seeing how this sexist deeply romantic desire cannot easily be ground out of them, feminists have written their own fairy tales, but...

To speak from my own experience, I never realized how straight traditional fairy tales were until I met feminist fairy tales. And by 'straight' I am not exactly meaning the opposite of queer (though that is close at hand), but the opposite of twisted and warped, like *Do You Want to Date My Avatar?* (I never knew how witchcraft could be considered unnatural vice until I read the witches' apologetic in Terry Pratchett's incredibly warped *The Wee Free Men*.) There is something warped in these tales that is not covered by saying that *Dealing with Dragons* has a heroine who delights only in what is forbidden, rejects marriage for the company of dragons, and ridicules every time its pariahs say something just isn't *done*. (And—and I don't see this as insignificant—the book uses, just once, the word 'magicked', a spelling of 'magic' reserved mostly for real occult practice in life and not metaphorical magic.)

Seeing as how the desire for fairy tales is too hard to pull out, authors have presented warped anti-fairy tales.

*Ella Enchanted* makes it plain: for a girl or woman to be under obedience is an unmixed curse. There is no place for "love, honor, and obey."

The commercials for *Tangled* leave some doubt about whether the heroine sings a Snow White-style "Some day my prince will come."

# The Un-man's own tales

One question that can be fairly raised is how far this might just be Lewis's creative imagining for one story—and it would be a brave soul who would deny Lewis can be imaginative. Whether *this* point is just imagination, or something Lewis would say in a nonfiction essay, can in fact be seen from a nonfiction essay, “Priestesses in the Church?”

*Perelandra* has a protagonist who visits Venus or Perelandra, where an unfallen Eve is joined first by him and then by the antagonist, called the Un-man because he moves from prelest or spiritual illusion to calling demons or the Devil into himself and then letting his body be used as a demonic puppet.

How does the Un-man try to tempt this story's Eve?

> [The Lady said:] "I will think more of this. I will get the King to make me older about it."
>
> [The Un-man answered:] "How greatly I desire to meet this King of yours! But in the matter of Stories he may be no older than you himself."

"That saying of yours is like a tree with no fruit. The King is always older than I, and about all things."...

[The Lady said,] "What are [women on earth] like?"

[The Un-man answered,] "They are of great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does..."

...The Lady seemed to be saying very little. [The Un-man]'s voice was speaking gently and continuously. It was not talking about the Fixed Land nor even about Maleldil. It appeared to be telling, with extreme beauty and pathos, a number of stories, and at first Ransom could not perceive any connecting link between them. They were all about women, but women who had apparently lived at different periods of the world's history and in quiet differences. From the Lady's replies it appeared that the stories contained much that she did not understand; but oddly enough the Un-man did not mind. If the questions aroused by any one story proved at all difficult to answer, the speaker simply dropped that story and instantly began another. The heroines of the stories seemed all to have suffered a great deal—they had been oppressed by their fathers, cast off by husbands, deserted by

lovers. Their children had risen up against them and society had driven them out. But the stories all ended, in a sense, hapily: sometimes with honours and praises to a heroine still living, more often by tardy acknowledgment and unavailing tears after her death. As the endless speech proceeded, the Lady's questions grew always fewer...

The expression on [the Lady's] face, revealed in the sudden light, was one that [Ransom] had not seen there before. Her eyes were not fixed on the narrator; as far as that went, her thoughts might have been a thousand miles away. Her lips were shut and a little pursed. Her eyebrows were slightly raised. He had not yet seen her look so like a woman of our own race; and yet her expression was one he had not very often met on earth—except, as he realized with a shock, on the stage. "Like a tragedy queen" was the disgusting comparison that arose in his mind. Of course it was a gross exaggeration. It was an insult for which he could not forgive himself. And yet... and yet... the tableau revealed by the lightning had photographed itself on his brain. Do what he would, he found it impossible not to think of that new look in her face. A very *good* tragedy queen, no doubt, very nobly played by an actress who was a good woman in real life...

A moment later [the Un-man] was explaining that men like Ransom in his own world—men of that intensely male and backward-looking type who always shrank away from the new good—had

> continuously laboured to keep women down to mere childbearing and to ignore the high destiny for which Maleldil had actually created her...
>
> The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy's true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.

*Not to put too fine a point on it,* but the Lady is complementarian to the point where one wonders if the label 'complementarian' is sufficient, and the demon or Devil using the Un-man's body is doing his treacherous worst to convert her to feminism. Hooper says he is trying to make her fall by transgressing one commandment, and that is true, but the entire substance of the attack to make her fall is by seducing her to feminism.

# A strange silence in the criticism

Quoting a friend, "Also, just a side note and not about your writing, but I find the criticism of Lewis rather comical since Sarah is represented as a model of discernment, which is above intellectual virtue and includes it. This idea is part of what sparks the 'huh?' response from me at any rate."

Walter Hooper's *C.S. Lewis: Companion and Guide* treats this dialogue in detail but without the faintest passing reference to feminism, men and women, sex roles, or anything else in that nexus. It does, however, treat the next and final book in the trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*, and defend Lewis from "anti-feminism" in a character who was

a woman trying to do a dissertation on Milton: Lewis, it is revealed, had originally intended her to be doing a dissertation on biochemistry, but found that he was not in a position to make that part of the story compelling, and so set a character whose interests more closely paralleled his own. So the issue of feminism was on his radar, possibly looming large. But, and this is a common thread with other examples, he exhibits a mysterious slippage. His account gets too many things right to be dismissed on the ground that he doesn't know how to read such literature, but it also leaves too much out, mysteriously, to conclude that he gave anything like such a scholar's disinterested best in explaining the text. (It is my own opinion that Hooper in fact *does* know how to read; he just mysteriously sets this ability aside when Lewis counters feminism.) And this slippage keeps happening in other places and context, always mysterious on the hypothesis that the errors are just errors of disinterested, honest scholarship.

Jerry Root, in his own treatment in *C.S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil: An Investigation of a Pervasive Theme*, treats subjectivism as spiritual poison and problem of evil Lewis attacks in his different works: Root argues it to be the prime unifying theme in Lewis). But with slight irony, Root seems to turn subjectivistic, or at least disturbing, precisely where his book touches gender roles and egalitarianism. In his comments on *The Great Divorce*'s greatest saint-figure, a woman, Susan Smith, is slighted: among other remarks, he quotes someone as saying that women in C.S. Lewis's stories are "he neglects any intellectual virtue in his female characters," and this is particularly applied to Sarah Smith. When he defends Lewis, after a fashion, Root volunteers, "a book written in the 1940s will lack some accommodations

to the culture of the twenty-fist century." But this section is among the gooiest logic in Root's entire text, speaking with a quasi-psychoanalytic Freudian or Jungian outlook of "a kind of fertile mother-image and nature-goddess," that is without other parallel and certainly does not infect the discussion of Lewis's parents, who well enough loom large at points, but not in any psychoanalytic fashion. Root's entire treatment at this point has an "*I can't put my finger on it, but—*" resemblance to feminists disarming and neutralizing any claim that the Catholic veneration of the Virgin Mary could in any way, shape, or form contribute to the well-standing of women: one author, pointing out the difficulty of a woman today being both a virgin and a mother, used that as a pretext to entirely dismiss the idea that She could be a model for woman or a token of woman's good estate, thus throwing out the baby, the bathwater, and indeed the tub. The Mother of God is She who answered, “Be it unto me according to thy word,” an answer that may be echoed whether or not one is a virgin, a mother, or for that matter a woman.

The critique Root repeats, on reflection, may meet an Orthodox response of "Huh?", or more devastatingly, "Yes, but what's your point?", not because Lewis portrays a saint as "no model of intellectual virtue," but because Orthodox sainthood is not a matter of intellectual virtue. Among its rich collection of many saints there are very *few* models of intellectual virtue, admittedly mostly men, and usually having received their formation *outside* the Orthodox Church: St. John Chrysostom was called "Chrysostom" or "Golden-Mouth" because of his formation and mastery of pagan rhetoric. But intellectual virtue as a whole is not a

central force in the saints, and Bertrand Russell's observation that in the Gospels not one word is put in praise of intelligence might be accepted, not as a weakness of the Gospel, but as a clarification of what is and is not central to Christian faith. And in terms of what is truly important, we would do well to recall the story of St. Zosima and St. Mary of Egypt. If Lewis's image of sainthood is a woman who is not an academic, this is not an embarrassment to explain away, but a finger on the pulse of what does and does not matter for sainthood.

> **Humankind**, *n*. Mankind, as pronounced by people who are offended at "man" ever being inclusive language.
>
> *Hayward's Unabridged Dictionary*

Root mentions the Un-man briefly, and gives heavy attention to the man who would become the Un-man as he appears in the prior book in the trilogy, but does not reference or suggest a connection between the Un-man and feminism. Root became an egalitarian, and shifts in his book from speaking of "men" to saying "humankind". And this is far from one scholar's idiosyncracy; a look at the World Evangelical Alliance's online bookstore as I was involved with it showed this mysterious slippage not as something you find a little here, a little there, but as endemic and without any effective opposition.

# Un-man's Tales for Grown-Ups

During my time as webmaster to the World Evangelical

Alliance, the one truly depressing part of my work was getting the bookstore online. Something like eighty to ninety percent of the work was titles like *Women as Risk-Takers for God* which were Un-man's Tales for adults. I was depressed that the World Evangelical Alliance didn't seem to have anything else to say on its bookshelves: not only was there a dearth of complementarian "opposing views" works like *Man and Woman in Christ*, but there was a dearth of anything besides Unman's Tales. The same mysterious phenomenon was not limited to a ragtag group of friends, or individual scholars; it was dominant at the highest level in one of the most important parachurch organizations around, and not one that, like Christians for Biblical Equality, had a charter of egalitarian or feminist concerns and priorities.

# Conclusion

G.K. Chesterton said, "Fairy tales do not tell children the dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed." That might hold for Chesterton's day, and classics like Grimm and MacDonald today, but today's fairy tales, or rather Unman's tales, do not tell children the dragons can be killed. Children already know that deep down inside. They tell children dragons can be befriended and that dragons may make excellent company. For another title of the myriad represented by *Dealing with Dragons*, look at the tale of cross-cultural friendship one may look for in *The Dragon* and *the George*. When first published, *Dealing with Dragons* might have been provocative. Now Tangled is

not. And reading *Perelandra* leaves one with an uncomfortable sense that C.S. Lewis apparently plagiarized, in the Unman's tales, works written decades after his death.

This issue is substantial, and Lewis's sensitivity to it is almost prophetic: sensibilities may have changed, but only in the direction of our needing to hear the warning more. And it is one Christians seem to be blind to: complementarianism seems less wrong than petty, making a mountain out of a molehill. But the core issue is already a mountain, not a molehill.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Aim for something better than Unman's Tales.

# The Commentary

Memories flitted through Martin's mind as he drove: tantalizing glimpses he had seen of how people really thought in Bible times. Glimpses that made him thirsty for more. It had seemed hours since he left his house, driving out of the city, across back roads in the forest, until at last he reached the quiet town. The store had printer's blocks in the window, and as he stepped in, an old-fashioned bell rung. There were old tools on the walls, and the room was furnished in beautifully varnished wood.

An old man smiled and said, "Welcome to my bookstore. Are you—" Martin nodded. The man looked at him, turned, and disappeared through a doorway. A moment later he was holding a thick leatherbound volume, which he set on the counter. Martin looked at the binding, almost afraid to touch the heavy tome, and read the letters of gold on its cover:

**COMMENTARY**
**ON THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

**IN ONE VOLUME**
**CONTAINING A CAREFUL ANALYSIS OF**
**ALL CULTURAL ISSUES**
**NEEDFUL TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE**
**AS DID ITS FIRST READERS**

"You're sure you can afford it, sir? I'd really like to let it go for a lower price, but you must understand that a book like this is costly, and I can't afford to sell it the way I do most other titles."

"Finances will be tight, but I've found knowledge to cost a lot and ignorance to cost more. I have enough money to buy it, if I make it a priority."

"Good. I hope it may profit you. But may I make one request, even if it sounds strange?"

"What is your request?"

"If, for any reason, you no longer want the commentary, or decide to get rid of it, you will let me have the first chance to buy it back."

"Sir? I don't understand. I have been searching for a book like this for years. I don't know how many miles I've driven. I will pay. You're right that this is more money than I could easily spare—and I am webmaster to a major advertising agency. I would have only done so for something I desired a great, great deal."

"Never mind that. If you decide to sell it, will you let me have the first chance?"

"Let's talk about something else. What text does it use?"

"It uses the *Revised Standard Version*. Please answer my question, sir."

"How could anyone prefer darkness to light, obscurity to illumination?"

"I don't know. Please answer my question."

"Yes, I will come to you first. Now will you sell it to me?"

The old man rung up the sale.

As Martin walked out the door, the shopkeeper muttered to himself, "Sold for the seventh time! Why doesn't anybody want to keep it?"

---

Martin walked through the door of his house, almost exhausted, and yet full of bliss. He sat in his favorite overstuffed armchair, one that had been reupholstered more than once since he sat in it as a boy. He relaxed, the heavy weight of the volume pressing into his lap like a loved one, and then opened the pages. He took a breath, and began reading.

**INTRODUCTION**

At the present time, most people believe the question of culture in relation to the Bible is a question of understanding the ancient cultures and accounting for their influence so as to be able to better understand Scripture. That is indeed a valuable field, but its benefits may only be reaped after addressing another concern, a concern that is rarely addressed by people eager to understand Ancient Near Eastern culture.

A part of the reader's culture is the implicit belief that he is not encumbered by culture: culture is what people live under long ago and far away. This is not true. As it turns out, the present culture has at least two beliefs which deeply influence and to some extent

> limit its ability to connect with the Bible. There is what scholars call 'period awareness', which is not content with the realization that we all live in a historical context, but places different times and places in sealed compartments, almost to the point of forgetting that people who live in the year 432, people who live in 1327, and people who live in 1987 are all human. Its partner in crime is the doctrine of progress, which says at heart that we are better, nobler, and wiser people than those who came before us, and our ideas are better, because ideas, like machines, grow rust and need to be replaced. This gives the reader the most extraordinary difficulties in believing that the Holy Spirit spoke through humans to address human problems in the Bible, and the answer speaks as much to us humans as it did to them. Invariably the reader believes that the Holy Spirit influenced a first century man trying to deal with first century problems, and a delicate work of extrication is needed before ancient texts can be adapted to turn-of-the-millenium concerns.

Martin shifted his position slightly, felt thirsty, almost decided to get up and get a glass of water, then decided to continue reading. He turned a few pages in order to get into the real meat of the introduction, and resumed reading:

> ...is another example of this dark pattern.
>
> In an abstracted sense, what occurs is as follows:
>
> 1. Scholars implicitly recognize that some passages in the Bible are less than congenial to

whatever axe they're grinding.

2. They make a massive search, and subject all of the offending passages to a meticulous examination, an examination much more meticulous than orthodox scholars ever really need when they're trying to understand something.

3. In parallel, there is an exhaustive search of a passage's historical-cultural context. This search dredges up a certain kind of detail—in less flattering terms, it creates disinformation.

4. No matter what the passage says, no matter who's examining it, this story always has the same ending. It turns out that the passage in fact means something radically different from what it appears to mean, and in fact does not contradict the scholar at all.

This dark pattern has devastating effect on people from the reader's culture. They tend to believe that culture has almost any influence it is claimed to; in that regard, they are very gullible . It is almost unheard-of for someone to say, "I'm sorry, no; cultures can make people do a lot of things, but I don't believe a culture could have *that* influence."

It also creates a dangerous belief which is never spoken in so many words: "If a passage in the Bible appears to contradict what we believe today, that is

> because we do not adequately understand its cultural context."

Martin coughed. He closed the commentary slowly, reverently placed it on the table, and took a walk around the block to think.

Inside him was turmoil. It was like being at an illusionist show, where impossible things happened. He recalled his freshman year of college, when his best friend Chaplain was a student from Liberia, and come winter, Chaplain was not only seared by cold, but looked betrayed as the icy ground became a traitor beneath his feet. Chaplain learned to keep his balance, but it was slow, and Martin could read the pain off Chaplain's face. How long would it take? He recalled the shopkeeper's words about returning the commentary, and banished them from his mind.

Martin stepped into his house and decided to have no more distractions. He wanted to begin reading commentary, now. He opened the book on the table and sat erect in his chair:

> **Genesis**
>
> 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
> 1:2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.
> 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

The reader is now thinking about evolution. He is wondering whether Genesis 1 is right, and evolution is simply wrong, or whether evolution is right, and Genesis 1 is a myth that may be inspiring enough but does not actually tell how the world was created.

All of this is because of a culture phenomenally influenced by scientism and science. The theory of evolution is an attempt to map out, in terms appropriate to scientific dialogue, just what organisms occurred, when, and what mechanism led there to be new kinds of organisms that did not exist before. Therefore, nearly all Evangelicals assumed, Genesis 1 must be the Christian substitute for evolution. Its purpose must also be to map out what occurred when, to provide the same sort of mechanism. In short, if Genesis 1 is true, then it must be trying to answer the same question as evolution, only answering it differently.

Darwinian evolution is not a true answer to the question, "Why is there life as we know it?" Evolution is on philosophical grounds *not* a true answer to that question, because it is not an answer to that question at all. Even if it is true, evolution is only an answer to the question, "*How* is there life as we know it?" If someone asks, "Why is there this life that we see?" and someone answers, "Evolution," it is like someone saying, "Why is the kitchen light on?" and someone else answering, "Because the switch is in the on position, thereby closing the electrical circuit and allowing current to flow through the bulb, which grows hot and produces light."

> Where the reader only sees one question, an ancient reader saw at least two other questions that are invisible to the present reader. As well as the question of "How?" that evolution addresses, there is the question of "Why?" and "What function does it serve?" These two questions are very important, and are not even considered when people are only trying to work out the antagonism between creationism and evolutionism.

Martin took a deep breath. Was the text advocating a six-day creationism? That was hard to tell. He felt uncomfortable, in a much deeper way than if Bible-thumpers were preaching to him that evolutionists would burn in Hell.

He decided to see what it would have to say about a problem passage. He flipped to Ephesians 5:

> 5:21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.
> 5:22 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.
> 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.
> 5:24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands.
> 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
> 5:26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

5:27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.
5:28 Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.
5:29 For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church,
5:30 because we are members of his body.
5:31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."
5:32 This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church;
5:33 however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The reader is at this point pondering what to do with this problem passage. At the moment, he sees three major options: first, to explain it away so it doesn't actually give husbands authority; second, to chalk it up to misogynist Paul trying to rescind Jesus's progressive liberality; and third, to take this as an example of why the Bible can't really be trusted.

To explain why the reader perceives himself caught in this unfortunate choice, it is necessary to explain a powerful cultural force, one whose effect cannot be ignored: feminism. Feminism has such a

> powerful effect among the educated in his culture that the question one must ask of the reader is not "Is he a feminist?" but "What kind of feminist is he, and to what degree?"
>
> Feminism flows out of a belief that it's a wonderful privelege to be a man, but it is tragic to be a woman. Like Christianity, feminism recognizes the value of lifelong penitence, even the purification that can come through guilt. It teaches men to repent in guilt of being men, and women to likewise repent of being women. The beatific vision in feminism is a condition of sexlessness, which feminists call 'androgyny'.

Martin stopped. "What kind of moron wrote this? Am I actually supposed to believe it?" Then he continued reading:

> This is why feminism believes that everything which has belonged to men is a privelege which must be shared with women, and everything that has belonged to women is a burden which men must also shoulder. And so naturally, when Paul asserts a husband's authority, the feminist sees nothing but a privelege unfairly hoarded by men.

Martin's skin began to feel clammy.

> The authority asserted here is not a domineering authority that uses power to serve oneself. Nowhere in the Bible does Paul tell husbands how to dominate their wives. Instead he follows Jesus's model of authority, one in which leadership is a form of servanthood. Paul doesn't just assume this; he

> explicitly tells the reader, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." The sigil of male headship and authority is not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns.

Martin was beginning to wish that the commentary had said, "The Bible is misogynistic, and that's good!" He was beginning to feel a nagging doubt that what he called problem passages were in fact perfectly good passages that didn't look attractive if you had a problem interpretation. What was that remark in a theological debate that had gotten so much under his skin? He almost wanted not to remember it, and then—"Most of the time, when people say they simply cannot understand a particular passage of Scripture, *they understand the passage perfectly well*. What they don't understand is how to explain it away so it doesn't contradict them."

He paced back and forth, and after a time began to think, "The sword can't always cut against me, can it? I know some gay rights activists who believe that the Bible's prohibition of homosexual acts is nothing but taboo. Maybe the commentary on Romans will give me something else to answer them with." He opened the book again:

> 1:26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural,
> 1:27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their

own persons the due penalty for their error.

The concept of 'taboo' in the reader's culture needs some explanation. When a person says, "That's taboo," what's being said is that there is an unthinking, irrational prejudice against it: one must not go against the prejudice because then people will be upset, but in some sense to call a restriction a taboo is de facto to show it unreasonable.

The term comes from Polynesia and other South Pacific islands, where it is used when people recognize there is a line which it is wiser not to cross. Thomas Aquinas said, "The peasant who does not murder because the law of God is deep in his bones is greater than the theologian who can derive, 'Thou shalt not kill' from first principles."

A taboo is a restriction so deep that most people cannot offer a ready explanation. A few can; apologists and moral philosophers make a point of being able to explain the rules. For most people, though, they know what is right and what is wrong, and it is so deeply a part of them that they cannot, like an apologist, start reasoning with first principles and say an hour and a half later, "and this is why homosexual acts are wrong."

What goes with the term 'taboo' is an assumption that if you can't articulate your reasons on the drop of a hat, that must mean that you don't have any good reasons, and are acting only from benighted prejudice. Paradoxically, the term 'taboo' is itself a taboo: there is a taboo against holding other taboos, and this one is less praiseworthy than other taboos...

Martin walked away and sat in another chair, a high wooden stool. What was it that he had been thinking about before going to buy the commentary? A usability study had been done on his website, and he needed to think about the results. Designing advertising material was different from other areas of the web; the focus was not just on a smooth user experience but also something that would grab attention, even from a hostile audience. Those two goals were inherently contradictory, like mixing oil and water. His mind began to wander; he thought about the drive to buy the commentary, and began to daydream about a beautiful woman clad only in—

What did the commentary have to say about lust? Jesus said it was equivalent to adultery; the commentary probably went further and made it unforgiveable. He tried to think about work, but an almost morbid curiosity filled him. Finally, he looked up the Sermon on the Mount, and opened to Matthew:

> 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, `You shall not commit adultery.'
> 5:28 But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

There is a principle here that was once assumed and now requires some explanation. Jesus condemned lust because it was doing in the heart what was sinful to do in the hands. There is a principle that is forgotten in centuries of people saying, "I can do

whatever I want as long as it doesn't harm you," or to speak more precisely, "I can do whatever I want as long as I don't see how it harms you." Suddenly purity was no longer a matter of the heart and hands, but a matter of the hands alone. Where captains in a fleet of ships once tried both to avoid collisions and to keep shipshape inside, now captains believe that it's OK to ignore mechanical problems inside as long as you try not to hit other ships—and if you steer the wheel as hard as you can and your ship still collides with another, you're not to blame. Heinrich Heine wrote:

> Should ever that taming talisman break—the Cross—then will come roaring back the wild madness of the ancient warriors, with all their insane, Berserker rage, of whom our Nordic poets speak and sing. That talisman is now already crumbling, and the day is not far off when it shall break apart entirely. On that day, the old stone gods will rise from their long forgotten wreckage and rub from their eyes the dust of a thousand years' sleep. At long last leaping to life, Thor with his giant hammer will crush the gothic cathedrals. And laugh not at my forebodings, the advice of a dreamer who warns you away from the . . . *Naturphilosophen*. No, laugh not at the visionary who knows that in the realm of phenomena comes soon the revolution that has already taken place in the realm of spirit. For thought goes before deed as lightning before thunder. There will be played in Germany a play compared to which the French Revolution

was but an innocent idyll.

Heinrich Heine was a German Jewish poet who lived a century before Thor's hammer would crush six million of his kinsmen.

The ancient world knew that thought goes before deed as lightning before thunder. They knew that purity is an affair of the heart as well as the hands. Now there is grudging acknowledgment that lust is wrong, a crumbling acceptance that has little place in the culture's impoverished view, but this acknowledgment is like a tree whose soil is taken away. For one example of what goes with that tree, I would like to look at advertising.

Porn uses enticing pictures of women to arouse sexual lust, and can set a chain of events in motion that leads to rape. Advertising uses enticing pictures of chattels to arouse covetous lust, and exists for the sole reason of setting a chain of events in motion that lead people to waste resources by buying things they don't need. The fruit is less bitter, but the vine is the same. Both operate by arousing impure desires that do not lead to a righteous fulfillment. Both porn and advertising are powerfully unreal, and bite those that embrace them. A man that uses porn will have a warped view of women and be slowly separated from healthy relations. Advertising manipulates people to seek a fulfillment in things that things can never provide: buying one more product can never satisfy that deep craving, any more than looking at one more picture can. Bruce Marshall said, "...the young man

> who rings at the door of a brothel is unconsciously looking for God." Advertisers know that none of their products give a profound good, nothing like what people search for deep down inside, and so they falsely present products as things that are transcendent, and bring family togetherness or racial harmony.
>
> It has been asked, "Was the Sabbath made for man, or was man made for the Sabbath?" Now the question should be asked, "Was economic wealth made for man, or was man made for economic wealth?" The resounding answer of advertising is, "Man was made for economic wealth." Every ad that is sent out bears the unspoken message, "You, the customer, exist for me, the corporation."

Martin sat in his chair, completely stunned.

After a long time, he padded off to bed, slept fitfully, and was interrupted by nightmares.

---

The scenic view only made the drive bleaker. Martin stole guiltily into the shop, and laid the book on the counter. The shopkeeper looked at him, and he at the shopkeeper.

"Didn't you ask who could prefer darkness to light, obscurity to illumination?"

Martin's face was filled with anguish. "How can I live without my darkness?"

# A Strange Archaeological Find

To my most excellent friend and pupil:

Yes, you are correct about the letter's origins, and you are right to be somewhat confused. This one's going to take a more than a few words.

Literature from almost any place can be timeless. This people had an epic poem that appeared to be about cat and mouse, but was really about much more: the struggle between good and evil, and the vindication of the oppressed. We do not have a complete manuscript, but we know their children would listen to these poems for hours. I know the criticisms of that literature, and they are all true—but the literature is universal and timeless. I read some of it to my youngest, and he was laughing.

However, not everything they made is that universal. You asked if the document you'd found showed unusual local color. I'd rather call it a slagheap of discarded local paints and pigments. Making sense is going to take some

explaining, but keep your cheer. By the time you're done, you may find some other things less difficult to think about.

Remember the lecture illustration of the potato. At one end is the entirety of man, or what is universally human; at the other end, the full specificity of one man. Understanding man, or understanding one man, means in part moving in an infinitely differentiated space full of nuance. I don't need to remind you that the actual lesson has other dimensions as well, in part because we aren't getting that far with this letter.

Now think about those things that are corporate to a people. Take a thin slice of the potato, and throw the rest away—yes, I know, that's most of the potato. Now there's... I'll explain what the other slice is in a bit, but imagine another, even thinner slice of the slice, so what's left is a line—a line that looks like a point if you view it the wrong way.

What is that second slice? Step into a friend's field, and leave a rock to remember your place. Now walk to his house, counting the steps. Then walk back, and walk to some other landmark—a tree, perhaps, and count your steps. Now forget the earth beneath your feet, the grass you see, the children smiling, and the birds overhead—not quite 'forget', that's too strong, but push them back as secondary. What counts, what makes that place uniquely itself, is the number of steps you counted in going to the house and the tree. Of course the steps can be used to find that place, but imagine further that the number of steps make that place what it is—and it would be quite different if the house had been built ten paces further.

They do this with the number of winters that have passed. That is the second slice, and it is viewed end-on, so as to only be a point—but the strange thing is they do not

think this is part of the picture, but that it *is* the picture. In a strange way, that line, viewed end-on, is much bigger than the potato we think of; it's not just a teacher's illustration, even one that is repeated very often, but an idea so basic and foundational that most of them aren't aware they believe it. They might perhaps be shocked, and think the other person is irrational, if someone were to deny the significance of one of the mantras that encapsulates this view, but... I'm trying to think of an example... I'll have to get back to you on that.

That is one major piece of background. Another that I'll mention—and this is not universal to the people, but something that tends to infect the more intelligent... ok, a bit of background.

We have, and use, one basic kind of candle. Once I was able to visit an archaist who had been able to revive one of the candles they were using. He invited several of us in, pulled a lever...

The candle was encased in a goblet, and it had a dazzling brilliance—as if there was a bonfire burning, and yet its flame was no larger than a small candle's, and it did not flicker at all, nor did it make smoke. The light was not red nor orange, not even yellow, but purest white like the sun—and when I broke my gaze and looked away, the other things in the room looked as if there were a little sun in the room. It was one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen.

As I was saying, they had several kinds of candle, but one thing they had in common was not only that they produced light, but that when they ran out, the wick turned black. One of their jokers, in an inspired moment, produced

a theory that what were called 'light sources' were instead things that sucked dark: darkness was heavy, which is why if you swim down in a lake you will find more and more dark. It was absolutely brilliant humor, all the moreso if you know what sort of thing it parodied.

There are multiple theories like that, and there was... well, this will require a bit of background as well. Any magical system of merit doesn't just try to get things done; it has a theory about why the magic works, and underneath there is a story. One of their magical theories essentially said there was a nonexistant spirit which, despite its nonexistance, hovered over the earth and made more of organisms that were excellent and fewer of organisms that were poor. This theory was woven into a narrative about great mounds of rock and fire, then earth, then lightning striking a lake and bringing something to life, then the spirit working that one living thing into a symphony of diversity, organisms coming and going, until at last mortal gods walked the earth... and then, in the truly greatest speaking, all returns to elemental chaos. It is a truly great myth, and I am saddened that our storytellers do not recount anything like it.

There is an idea of a 'meme', which is an idea, story, or joke, construed as a living thing that this sort of spirit is operating on. I was interested when I encountered the idea, and read with even more interest when the *Principia Cybernetica* described memes in explicitly more anthromorphic terms than people. Here, I was certain, was a masterpiece of comedic genius...

...and then one of my colleagues explained that it wasn't. It was deadly serious. I thought it parodied dirty sleight-of-hand in anti-Christian polemics... but it didn't. It

couched terms in heavily prejucial language, like their example question of, "Have you stopped beating your wife?" but somehow even very bright Christians accepted what far less intelligent ones intuited to be unfair and insulting.

Now I remember one of the catch-phrases, in terms of how important the number of passed winters was for them. I'd have to look at their literature for more, but one of them was, "We're entering the third millenium." As spoken, it was not simply the answer to a trivial question, but a statement of great metaphysical import. From what little I can tell, if someone contradicted this association, it was to them as if he had contradicted that the sun was white.

I think I've given enough of a preface to look at the letter—rather than writing a full letter of preliminaries. Here's the opening:

> Several things relate here. Trying to 'see' what happened in history, particularly where we are looking at the origins of Christianity, is to me somewhat akin to being in a river trying to look back through all the moving water and intuiting what the source looked like when the water you are in now started to flow. 'Tis murky indeed... Those historians and theologians, who might have us believe they are not looking back through the murky river as we are but rather hovering over the source in a helicopter somehow transported back through time, are slipping in a priestly function in so doing.

I'd like to say a few things. As regards your main questions on this passage, you got one right and one wrong.

The Helicopter was a giant mechanical bird capable of carrying men—oh, about that question, these things were produced by magic, but it was not occult practice to use them; this is not an occult reference, and I don't want to delve into why not. You were right about that.

What you were wrong about is your reading that the people being criticized are looking downstream while the letter's author is in the priveleged Helicopter able to look down on the ancient Christians and the people he was criticizing. That isn't what he was saying at all... wait, I know why you would think that. You might be right in that that is what he was really saying. Kind of like the koan I'll adapt:

> An ancient Christian looked troubled.
> One later Christian said, "He is troubled."
> Another Christian said, "How do you know whether or not he's troubled? You're not him!"
> The other replied, "How do you know whether or not I know whether or not he's troubled? You're not me!"

The tone and spirit of the letter indeed suggests that the ancient Christians, and the author's conservative contemporaries, are trapped in a river, while the author is hovering about freely in the Helicopter. *However*, that is not the intent. The intent was to accuse the conservatives of doing something that would appear strange given the assumptions of a metaphor that runs counter to their thought, as for that matter it did for ancient Christian thought.

> Further complicating our task is our respective cultural memes and our personal ongoing process of regeneration. The former contains all the turbidity thrown up by all previous good thinking and confused thinking. The latter usually contains some unrecognized proclivities.

The reference to 'cultural memes' carries quite a lot more freight than the already substantial freight they associate with cultures. I'm trying to think of something to use as a metaphor to convey what is meant here, and I am failing. It's a bit like saying "two people are uniquely themselves and cannot converse otherwise", except that what it plays out as is not a celebration of God's gift of humanity, where God made each man unique and catholic, but being uniquely themselves is construed as an impediment to catholicity: Gregory's skill in choosing nautical metaphors is an impediment to talking with Jane, because most people don't work that way. It's not exactly the doctrine of the Fall, either, saying that there are dark marks on each person and society, and that that hinders communication. It's more... the central dogma of their magic is that there is no magic, and there is an essentially amoral and even material conception of human culture: culture is a spiritually inert weight which slows and weighs people down, except that's not right either. My head is spinning now, and you probably understand less about them than you did at the beginning of this paragraph.

The last sentence seems to stem from individualism, in that corporate personality, the spirit of a society, is a source of turgidity, but God does work with people, and he

sometimes gives them special abilities despite his difficulties in blessing communal knowledge.

> Hence my insistance that we know what we are thinking with as well as what we are thinking about.

No, this sentence is *not* corrupt. I checked.

Perhaps the best way to put it stems from a friend's comment that if he takes a strong and immediate dislike to someone, it is quite often because the other person exemplifies one of his vices. There's some resonance with Confucius's words, "When I see a virtuous man, I try to be like him. When I see an evil man, I reflect on my own behavior."

I understand your suggestion that the reading be emended, "Hence my insistence that conservatives know what we think they are thinking with, as well as what we are thinking about," but you have to understand that the statement as read, literally, can be made in perfectly good faith. Some people talked about the importance of knowing what they were thinking with; the people they criticized often did so.

> Regarding what is called feminism, our very use of the term indicates the influence of our cultural meme and our submission to someone else's cultural agenda.

You were right on this time. He's not an etymologist. However, there are reasons besides individual carelessness that this would be presented as serious analysis.

You know that the New Testament writers tended to read any ambiguity for all it was worth, in their favor. The

considered people tended to be much more tightly rigorous in treating Biblical texts, but relaxed rigor and made "Just-So" stories about words in their own time: "family man" was taken by their feminist dictionary to be a mark of sexism (because that quality is assumed in a woman so much that we don't have a specific term for a family woman), but you can rest assured that, had the language had a term "family woman" but not "family man", the dictionary entry would have talked about how sexist it was to have a word used to talk about a woman as a "family woman", but not even have a word to refer to a "family man".

If you ask a historian or an etymologist, their very use of the term feminism indicates something very prosaic: a movement started, calling itself feminism, and the name has stayed the same across time. This is a run-of-the-mill linguistic occurence, closely related to the growth of dead metaphor, and has the same political significance as the fact that the gesture they use to greet a friend originated as a gesture of mistrust used to keep a stranger from drawing a weapon: none.

However, this sort of folk analysis is innately valuable for historians. You need to keep your eyes open for passages like this; some sentences can tell more than a page of straightforward explanation.

> In the context of biblical discussion, much progress has been made on 'gender passages' such as 1 Timothy 2.

In their conception, that one thin slice of potato is magnified in part by a conception of progress, a conception

that ideas, like machines, grow rust and need to be replaced for no other reason than being old. As such, their use of the term 'progress' means something different from our understanding of a student acquiring the expertise of his master. It means that people are becoming better, wiser, and nobler than the people who came before.

Given that I am writing to you and not speaking publicly, I'm not going to traipse through and analyze the texts referred to. I can say, without bothering to look them up, that they are using their immense scholarly resources to make themselves stupider than they actually are, dredging up some pretext to reverse a conclusion that is obvious to a child of twelve. You and I do this for humor; they were quite serious.

> The starting point for learning this is via Christians for Biblical Equality. See the link to their website on the links page of www.intelligentchristian.org. I am convinced they are right.

Yes, there is a reason for the use of the term 'Biblical equality'. Specifically, the name functions as whitewash when even backwoods farmers have caught on that there are problems with feminism. As far as accuracy goes, one in two isn't bad for these things; it isn't Biblical (note that the Bible doesn't qualify as a suggested starting point for Biblical equality), but the choice of term makes up, if one may follow their linguistics: they seek e-qualia, the absence of qualitative or distinctive traits such as God created every person to exhibit. Their way of leveling the ground also levels the people who are standing on that ground. A cue to

this is found in their use of the term 'gender' where previous thinkers had referred to 'sexuality'.

The older term, 'sexuality', evokes a man and a woman on a couch, but that moment is the visible shoot atop a network of roots. The deep root stated, in essence, that different physical characteristics are not the end of different personhood, but the very beginning: that masculinity and femininity are attributes of the spirit, and that differences of spirit run deeper than differences of body. The feminist movement's search for equality discarded this, believing there are only physical differences, and if there's any differences in people's minds, they must be arbitrary social constructions, namely 'gender'.

The surface issue most commonly discussed—the only issue, to many listeners—is the issue of whether women should be ordained. In this regard, the people who were for women's ordination couldn't see why it shouldn't be that way, and the people against couldn't explain. If there's no essential difference, if as the feminists said we are one type of soul that happens to be encased in two types of body, then it is an unambiguous consequence that women should be ordained.

I trust you will see that something important has slipped into that nice-looking statement. If not—think closely about "one type of soul that happens to be encased in two types of body." What is being said? This doesn't just impact sexuality. The teaching that we are soul encased in body is ancient, and it lies at the root of that great Hydra, Gnosticism. Gnosticism starts out very rigidly ascetic, trying to be spiritual by shunning anything bodily—because we're spirits and not bodies. Then it shifts, and ascetics are

shocked when their spiritual children engage in every form of bodily vice—because we're spirits and not bodies, so it doesn't matter *what* we do with our bodies. I've studied it, and it happens every time.

I would recall to you an early lecture, where I distinguished a philosophical conclusion from a practical conclusion: there's a deeper resemblance than philosophy being practical, but I wish to talk about them as distinct ideas. A philosophical conclusion is what a philosopher will develop from an idea with an hour's thought, and it does not much concern me here. A practical conclusion is what will happen over time if you start a community believing an idea and come back to it later. Gnostic libertinism is the practical conclusion of Gnostic asceticism.

Does the Biblical egalitarian perspective have a practical conclusion? It does, and it is something even that Biblical egalitarian could have seen—could have seen without engaging in the execrated practice of opening a history book. The perspective did not originate with him; it happened before, and the late forms were around for him to see.

The claim bandied about is that women should be ordained. Well… it appears that women had been ordained before and after the Biblical egalitarians, and so far as I read, God's blessing was on it. However, that's really just a glint on the surface. What lies deeper, and the reason people were so bent on having half the priests be priestesses, is the idea that there is no fundamental difference between men and women beyond what impacts the mechanics of reproduction—because if there isn't, then of course it's ridiculous to only ordain men. That assumption was not given critical examination.

What happened after that is what had happened every other time, and what he could have verified by opening his eyes. If the teachings about masculinity and femininity are erased from Christian doctrine, a few proof texts about women's roles won't last long... very few years pass before people explain them away, as appears "progress" in misinterpreting the Timothy passage above. The Bible is an interlocking whole, a great sculpture in perfect balance—and if you pull away one part you don't like, others will not stay in place. So we celebrate the ordination of women, or—in more honest terms—celebrate the annihilation of belief that sexuality could inform how people contribute to the body of Christ.

After that, why be so unenlightened as to maintain sex roles anywhere else? Why not gay marriage? By that time, it was difficult to have anything besides a gay marriage, even with a man and a woman both involved: it was some legal contract involving sex, but disconnected with any expectation of loyalty or openness to children, so why not a marriage between two men? Sure, the Bible has a couple of proof texts about that, but they're not really any harder to "explain" and "investigate" than those that suggest human sexuality contributes to the Church... It wasn't an accident, by the way, that feminism specifically celebrated lesbianism. There were of course other factors, but part of it was the dismantling of an older teaching that celebrated sex as the interaction between two very opposite poles.

By this time, a sculpture that had been hanging precariously slid further down. Somewhere along the line any revelation of God as masculine and not feminine was dismantled—because "we need to keep an open mind and

not confine God to traditional canons of gender", meaning in practice "we need to confine God to our anti-traditional abhorrence of sexuality." You'll remember the Re-Imagining conference which there was that big hubbub about—celebrating the goddess and more fundamentally believing that all the Biblical images their movement didn't like were arbitrary imaginations put in by unenlightened men. I frankly don't see why anyone, conservative or liberal, made such a stink about that. It wasn't any worse than what was happening elsewhere; it just dropped the usual mask.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Where people raised the axe and chopped away one troublesome root of the Ancient Tree, what invariably happened was that that wasn't the one troublesome root; now that it was gone, their vision cleared to see that there was another one of equal trouble... and another... and another... and by the time the Tree fell, people were glad for the death of an ancient menace. The phenomenon is a bit like a fire—the more it has, the more it wants.

> I am leery of the unrecognized use of logical systems which were developed outside scripture.

I understand your point, but I really don't think he's trying to be ironic. "A meme is not a social construct like a syllogism; it reflects the terrain of which the syllogism is a very imperfect map." Agreed, this is a bad way of putting it, but... the best I can explain it is that he is brilliant, knows many of the facets of knowing how to think, but doesn't understand how to think. Reminds me of when I had a student trained in memory but not our thought, who answered perfectly my questions until I stumbled on the

fact that he didn't understand what was being talked about—he memorized words, and did so far better than I ever will, but didn't grasp the ideas the words were meant to hold. This is different; the author knows large chunks of the truth, but... Irenaeus wrote how false teachings were as if someone had taken a jewel statue of the king, and reassembled it to an imperfectly executed statue of a fox, and said the fox were the king. There are real jewels there, but the statue isn't right.

> As we now know through complexity studies, the old Aristotelian view that A and non-A were mutually exclusive is suspect.

In response to your question, I'm more hesitant to say that he's gone from believing in infallible logic to believing infallible complexity study has debunked fallible logic. It comes closer to say that logic is old and favored by many traditional theologians, and therefore in double jeopardy—complexity studies provide a good platform to attack it. If Aristotle had developed complexity studies and more recent endeavors had found logic, I believe this statement would show how logical inquiry reveals inherent problems in complexity studies.

At any rate, after tasting old wine, he has tasted the new, and said, "The new is better."

> There is one reason to be particularly cautious in your use of logic.

He's not saying what you think he's saying. He's not describing logic as being like an array of tools, where you

should use a file rather than a hammer to smooth a piece of wood. The direction he's going is more, after having seen that different tools perform different tasks, to say that you need to be careful in using a saw to cut wood, because there are so many things a saw isn't good at. It might be like an oral person with a well-trained memory discovering the power of writing, and doubting the justification of memorizing the stories he tells.

> That is the instinctive, post-fall, unregenerative, inclination of males to engineer.

In another context, you would be right; the long string of words would convey something wonderful and poetic that one word will not tell. Here, it is there to achieve a quite different effect that one word wouldn't:

**Instinctive**

> I know that instincts are good: the instincts to preserve oneself, or seek company, or procreate are part of the goodness of man. You have to keep in mind who is using the word, though. Remember what the feminist position implies for a theology of body: it is a husk, an exterior, and therefore to say someone is acting on instinct, is to say he is living by something base and exterior, and is less than a man. He is *not* building up to a panegyric on the glory of intelligent creation; he's using what is meant to be a very pejorative term.

**Post-fall**

I've seen this usage before, and I don't know what to make of it. What I can tell you is that it serves as a kind of loaded language to dismiss a feminist's opponent; the opponent is "locked into a post-fall mode of thinking", quite often without a proper explanation of why he is wrong. It's a sort of irrefutable trump.

The propositional content of this epithet is debatable; it states that the Fall created an urge which has just been declared part of our created instinct. It's rather confusing if you try to reason it out, and much better if you don't reason it out, and just let the words flow over you and show that whatever's being discussed is *bad*.

**Unregenerative**

This word may be read as saying that something is not itself part of the regeneration process; unless of the whole of a Christian's life (barring sin) is part of the regenerative process, this could just be part of a holy life that is not concerned with the facet called regeneration. However, in poetic context, this is part of the buildup saying that whatever follows is bad.

**Males**

Here we do not even see 'men', which in use by a feminist refers to less than one-half of men, but 'males'... the term reminds me of a related language, where it is considered to use the terms 'male' and

'female' of a human: they are used in biology, but of humans it is quite vulgar.

One other nuance, present if not obvious, is not simply as you or I would make a such a statement: you or I would refer to women half of the time when we were saying something sexually specific. They wouldn't. This statement says something very insulting about 'males', not because this sample happens to refer to us, but because no male feminist would dare to make such statements about women. A female feminist may say more abrasive things about traditional women, but a male feminist will nearly never do so. This provides a very interesting glimpse into their view of equality.

**Engineer**

Literally speaking, the term refers to part of how man participates in culture and the glory of God: that marvelous candle I described earlier was engineered. However, it is used in a metaphorical sense here, and is highly pejorative. The implication is that the accused is engineering something that was never meant to be engineered.

The interesting thing, especially with the last one, is... traditional theology is something organic that has been passed down from generation to generation, tended with the utmost of care by thinkers far too humble to try to engineer it, and is now being rejected in favor of something that has been engineered. That's why the spiritual climate produced the ill-starred Re-Imagining conference,

something that wouldn't occur to the traditional theologians who're accused of engineering. This irony plays out in the next line:

> Disguised in much theological discussion is the 'what should Christianity be like if I designed it?' agenda.

It is painfully obvious to you and me that making "much progress" on Pauline passages is seeing what Christianity would be like if they designed it, but the irony is apparently not evident there.

The list of indictments brought against traditional theology can be interesting. Looking closely may reveal things the accusers perceive because it is part and parcel of their world.

> I don't think Christianity, or any generic god-conscious theology, was designed or engineered by the living God in an anthropomorphically satisfying way.

An astute observation; there is probably fertile ground for your research into why a person making this claim would do so in the context of criticizing traditional theology for not being anthropomorphically satisfying to people sharing his agenda.

> It matters not whether the logic we use comes from Aristotle, Plato or Alfred E Newman, let's spell it out when we use it and justify why we use it.

Regarding your question, about why he neither spells out his logic nor justifies it: I honestly don't know. Perhaps he was rushed (an unusually common emotion for them), and he decided this was a poorer use of a small perceived available time than points of greater perceived substance, such as the subsequent list of opponents using personal attacks.

### One of the tip-offs of the male dominator Christian theologians

Thinking about your intuition, I decided to check the archives.

An earlier note among the group had understood and responded in depth: specifically, that domination is what a feminist would expect of tradition because of his stereotype, and it is something read in, but is present neither in the Bible, nor in the theologians being represented. The 'misogynist' Paul is among few ancient writers who didn't tell husbands to keep women in line; he addresses women as moral agents, placing submission in their hearts, and then tells the men to love the women, naming as their example the most costly love of all—much more costly than submission. The group member responding had said, in so many words, that the sigil of male headship and authority is not a crown of gold but a crown of thorns.

Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on. The feminist position *needs* the traditional position to be abrasive to women—and if the Bible or traditionalists clarify, never mind; the abuse will be made up in the feminist's mind so he can still vilify the benighted.

> is their use of personal attack on egalitarian theologians.

I've done some reading of them. Once I was priveleged to visit an arcane library that had nearly half the issues to First Things and Touchstone, and I don't remember an article where one of them personally attacked an opposing theologian. There was quite a lot of polemic, and one devastating satire in *The Other Face of Gaia*, but... they show a remarkable amount of restraint, and I'm getting sidetracked.

What I was going to say is that these people viewed being nice and love as the same thing, so that talking about being loving but not nice is equivalent to Plato talking about being eudaimonic and being evil—a perceived contradiction in terms. In this case...

I can see how some Biblical passages would lose some of their force. They had a concept of being 'unsanitary', kind of an amoral sense that you could get sick from something, and they knew disgust, but they didn't have a sense of being polluted and defiled... so few nonscholars would read Jesus' comparison of pillars of community to whitewashed tombs as being not merely an insult but a metaphor of their being so unholy that a person whose shadow fell on them would be defiled for a whole week. Likewise... they usually thought cannibalism was wrong, and knew the plot of *Oedipus Rex*, but they would still read 'brood of vipers' as simply comparing people to snakes and not with the full realization that Jesus compared them to creatures thought to kill their mothers and eat their way out—cannibalism and matricide

being two of the most revolting things an ancient listener could think of. I can see how they might miss much of the abrasiveness, but there are so many other passages: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in the last times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron." You've read the Bible more than once; you could supply your own examples.

Somehow they were able to read these passages and not question the belief that the limits of niceness are the limits of love. I don't know how to explain why; that's just how it is. And so apparently the theologians mentioned are dismissed because they fail to meet a standard the Bible itself rejects.

> Wayne Grudem, for example, has vilified Cathie Kroeger. He did this in print some time ago and it still hurts Cathie. I saw her, her husband Dick along with Elaine Storkey at Cathie's home a few weeks ago and it is obvious the personal attacks have done damage.

I talked with a colleague, and I believe Arius also sustained emotional damage from what happened at Nicaea.

> J I Packer has written some nasty things, using vocabulary stemming from secular conflict.

In reference to 'vocabulary stemming from secular conflict'... I understand your asking where the article author gets *his* vocabulary from, but I'd prefer to abstain from

judgment. I don't know that we have the background to evaluate this.

> James Dobson, who is a psychologist of non-biblical foundations, has led the fight against the publication of more gender equal translations.

I've done some research, and I think he's referring to the obvious James Dobson... I wanted to do further research, because it's not at all obvious to me why he's categorized as a theologian... a sharp popularizer, to be granted, and a shade of demagogue; his psychological expertise is held in light esteem by psychologians now and was apparently held in light esteem then... perhaps the author was using the term 'theologian' as a convenient designation for "anyone prominent who disagrees with him." I don't mean that as a joke; if I had to choose between asking a brilliant theologian or a demagogue like Dobson to lead a fight, I'd pick the demagogue hands-down. (Perhaps the author wasn't familiar with very many *real* theologians' defense of sexuality.)

The idea of gender equal translations is interesting. Assuming a more modest objective of correcting gender bias without reading asexuality into God, the argument is made that the original languages used terms that were effectively asexual, so faithfully rendering them were asexual... and the terms in the original language were grammatically masculine which were understood to include the feminine. What's interesting here is that the terms in English were grammatically masculine and understood to include the feminine, universally and without question until feminists

decided them to have gender bias.

It's kind of like someone going into a room where you enjoy seeing by candlelight, and then someone comes and brings in a blinding torch—and you get irritated and ask why, so he explains that you need the extra light because your eyes are dazzled.

> Dobson's wife writes that the foundation of Christian marriage is the submission of the wife to the husband.

I don't share her perspective, but it is not clear to me why this statement is particularly significant. A more rigorous, if also more vivid, statement is found in Martin Luther's statement that if your theology is perfect except for what the world, the flesh, and the Devil are at that moment attacking, then you are preaching nothing.

Many people pick one or more specializations or areas of emphasis; it's an understandable temptation to think that your specialization is the center of the universe. If you're smiling at this, you might take a moment to remember the many times you have viewed history as the foundation to all scholarly inquiry. It's not; it has a place among the Disciplines, and I am glad to study it, but history is not the foundation to Discipline.

It doesn't surprise me that a woman allied with Dobson would think submission was the foundation of Christian marriage; it has the dual qualities of being important and under attack. What I fail to see is why her statement should be *that* significant.

> I favour and encourage the popularization and

> democratization of bible study and take the view that if a theologian can understanding then so can I. And if I can understand it then it can be produced in a popularly understandable form.

Part of this passage is very confusing; before and after, he is frustrated by popularized and democratized Bible study which leads people to contradict his conclusion. I'm not going to sort through that, but I wish to summarize one element:

There's a kind of proverb, very common, where someone meeting a specialist would say, "In a sentence, explain what it is that you know." What is interesting is that this was not perceived as a riddle of heroic proportions, or even a ridiculous question; they believed instead that the burden of effort was on the specialist, and if he could not convey what knowledge he had obtained by years of excellent study, then he didn't know what he was talking about. The attitude in this challenge is apparently present in what is proposed.

On one level, there is confusion; given that the Bible is beyond any one person's understanding, the Bible was available, not merely in one or two translations, but so many translations we don't have a count. Many of these were simplified. What appears to be said is not a Wycliffe call to make the Bible available to the common man, but a call for propaganda that will obscure what is presently obvious to the lay reader.

> Instead we get more structure from these men who design and engineer. As I say, structure can speak

> louder than words. Structure can speak louder than the word of God. And for some, structure can become the word of God.

You have seen an article demonstrating how structure can speak louder than the word of God, an article that seeks and begs that the structure become the word of God. Read it closely. The allegation is made that structure and engineering are the realm of the tradition with no consideration made for how they might belong to the re-imaginers. Go to the *First Things* archive and read *The Skimpole Syndrome*: never mind if you dislike it, but is that the writing of an engineer? Then read materials from Re-Imagining 2000 and ask if you see a reverent and trusting preservation of a transcendent and divine gift.

> I don't know what, if anything, will come of it, but I took the opportunity to suggest once again to Cathie, Dick and Elaine that they begin producing their own translations of the gender passages along with an outline of the reasons for their differing translation and links for further study.

Why are they making a translation? Well, stop and think. I've made translations for the following reasons:

- To take a text not available in a given language, and make an understandable rendering.

- To take a text available only available in an arcane dialect of a given language, and make it understandable.

- To produce something that is close on a word-to-word level.
- To produce a text that renders thought-for-thought.
- Some careful balance of the previous two goals.
- To document linguistic ambiguity.

What is interesting here is that they aren't making a translation for any of those reasons. There's one reason you or I might not normally think of: to obscure a text's meaning.

You know that translations then tended to gut the Song of Songs, but there's really more going on here. The one I think was called the *Now Indispensible Version* was one where the scholars wanted to render the cruder passages accurately, but their elders said that part of God's word wasn't fit for public consumption. Translation bugaboos we will always have with us, but for some translations it is the *raison d'être*. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* opens the Great Beginning with, "In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." The original for that verse says, literally, "And God was the Word;" Greek did not give John a more emphatic way to say, "And the Word *was* God." So why this translation? It is a translation made by heretics for the express purpose of being able to say, "*Flip, flip, flip*. The Bible doesn't really say that. See! My translation doesn't say so right here!"

That is exactly the kind of translation that is being

requested here.

> Clearly, from the discussion within our own intelligent group, the egalitarian information is not getting out.

I examined the archives: we know that egalitarian information was getting out in the group, and we know that because some very wise people rejected it, and stated that they had done so. The remark here is reminiscent of people who believe that, if you don't share their perspective, it can only be because you don't understand what they're saying. The mentioned article was actually a response sparked by someone who had weighed egalitarianism in the balance, and found it wanting.

Graham

One last note, because I know what you chose not to write.

He was not dead in mind.

He was absolutely brilliant—brighter than you. Graham Clinton was a leader of the International Christian Mensa. Mensa is a society that allows people who have a certain quantified wisdom such as is found with one man among fifty, and their leaders are often even sharper. Graham Clinton was someone who worked through struggle, held a great deal of compassion for his neighbor, and did many good works—and I have intentionally shown you his writing so that you may see someone brilliant and a leader among Christians. He also spent some time at a very good seminary. He did not hold ecclesiastical title, but he was

concerned (and talented) for a Christian life of the mind.

Satan will attack us wherever he can, and may be far more powerful on our strengths than our weakness. The letter I cite, and the movement from which it came, was not a movement of half-wits; it held many sharp people. It takes quite a lot of wits to make yourself that stupid. Compassion doesn't hurt; Graham could never have fallen for this poison did he not hold a great deal of compassion.

You do well enough in gawking at foreigners. That's commendable; it's good amusement. I might suggest there is more you could learn from your gawking—in particular, that their foibles are all too often our foibles dressed up in other clothes. All of the darkness in that letter is darkness I find in my own heart.

Would you come over here for a season? I miss you, and the discussions seemed to be livelier when they had your questions.

Cordially yours,
Sutodoreh
The year of our Lord 2504.

# "Inclusive" Language and Other Debates

## How I scared off all the other advisors

Before I became Orthodox, I entered a diploma in theology program and wanted to do a thesis on programming-style "design patterns" and recurring patterns in Biblical Egalitarian argument where problems in the arguments, it seemed to me, raised a red flag about the conclusions. I managed to scare off most prospective advisors by the idea of using concepts used in computer science, and almost scared off even the Biblical scholar who handles the computer stuff at a place connected with the university before (somewhat by accident) he looked at the concept I wanted to carry over from computer science and concluded that it wasn't so scary after all, and in fact while he said, "I have never heard of an approach like this before," the concept itself was nowhere so scary to a scholar in

theology as the impression I gave by how I introduced my intended thesis. I wrote a thesis under his direction, and at the end of the year, mostly in gesture of thanks, I gave him a classic text in object-oriented programming's "design patterns."

The scholar is a major scholar in Biblical Egalitarian circles, as in a plenary speaker at CBE conferences. He gave me kind and appropriate direction in a thesis that critique common styles of argument associated with convictions that are important to him, and we've remained in contact every now and then. There may be important distinctions within Biblical Egalitarians, but when he directed me he was working to help me produce a good thesis and did so without trying to lead me to his position, and I do not know what exact *stripe* of Biblical Egalitarian he is.

# Defining terms

I use the terms *Biblical Egalitarian* and *complementarian* heavily here. The two terms represent the liberal and conservative camps on issues of men, women, and gender. The flagship organization for Biblical Egalitarians (or, more simply, egalitarians) is Christians for Biblical Equality; the flagship organization for complementarians is The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

**Biblical Egalitarians** try to combine Christianity with feminist concerns of various stripes. For one example, they adamantly believe the Bible's "In Christ there is no... male nor female" and, more specifically, consistently try to neutralize "Wives, submit to your husbands as if to the

Lord... Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave his life for her..." to make room for "no male nor female". To the Egalitarian, if you *really* believe "In Christ there is no male nor female", you believe it on terms informed by feminism. In my experience Biblical Egalitarianism is always argued with sophistry; what got me off sitting on the fence was a forceful presentation of Biblical Egalitarianism clothed in rhetoric that profoundly disturbed me. There is more to Biblical egalitarianism than inclusive language advocacy, but one part of their concern is that using "man" or "brother" when your intent is generic is perpetuating an injustice towards women. Overall there are several feminist-influenced concerns in Biblical egalitarianism; inclusive language is one of them. The basic goal of Bible scholarship pursued by Biblical Egalitarians is to arrive at an understanding of key passages that is more informed by feminist concerns.

**Complementarians**, in a name as carefully chosen as "egalitarians", argue that we are missing something until we understand men and women as *complementary*. They tend to believe that "In Christ there is no... male nor female" and "Wives, submit to your husbands as if to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave his life for her..." both belong to the same whole and in fact seem to both be cut from the same cloth. *Complementarians* are people who say, "No, that's not good," in response to feminism trying to uproot elements of traditional society. However, groups like the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood are making a proactive effort to take a positive position. They are not simply making a negative reaction to change; they are trying to offer a carefully considered positive position about why

specific changes are not good and what a real, serious alternative to those changes would be. The basic goal of Bible scholarship pursued by complementarians is to arrive at an understanding that is more Biblical—not for us to adjust the *Bible*, but for the Bible to adjust *us*.

"Inclusive" language is not the only issue for either, but it is not a trivial issue, and I focus on it here. I would briefly suggest that what is at issue is not whether women are included, but the *terms* of inclusion: belabored "inclusive" language pushes to a Biblical egalitarian version of inclusion, while traditional language includes women on more complementarian terms.

# Where I stand

Where do I stand? "It's complicated" may be the best short answer, but that's misleading. First of all, though I am closer to complementarianism than egalitarianism, it does not mean "I'm a complementarian but I'd rather not say so plainly," and second of all, it does not mean, "I'm trying to forge my own new path between the two extremes." Then what on earth *does* it mean? Um, it's complicated.

The Catholic Church teaches that Catholics and Orthodox believe the same things, and ultimately the only barrier to reunification is that the Orthodox fail to lovingly recognize that we should restore full communion. I responded to that in “An Open Letter to Catholics on Orthodoxy and Ecumenism.” Some Orthodox have found it a bit forceful, but more have found it astute in its observations. But Catholics have only given one response: "**FOUL!** There's no way you can understand us if you are

saying what you are saying about Thomas Aquinas and such." And as Orthodox, I find the question "Are you a complementarian or egalitarian?" something like "Are you Catholic or Protestant?" as a false dilemma.

Before becoming Orthodox, I wrote an essay called "Knights and Ladies" that tried to pin down as qualities manhood and womanhood, and suggested a made-up term "qualitarian" as an alternative to "complementarian." It's a piece that I consulted several men and women in writing, that complementarians seem to like and egalitarians seem to critique, but I now regard it as flawed. It's not exactly that I want to mix in more egalitarianism, but the basic project I took on was a thick description of qualities as a line of response, and a thick description of qualities is part of postmodern Zeitgeist and *not* a real part of Orthodox theology, and as such it is (arguably) a fairly successful attempt to bark up the wrong tree in offering a rebuttal.

There is a forum where I posted certain arguments and received counter-arguments from Orthodox scholars that were subtly reminiscent of the kinds of arguments I had studied in Biblical Egalitarian texts in that thesis. For one example, I made an argument from experience and basic observations about society, and it was dismissed by an Orthodox scholar who had just published a paper with his own thesis. The stated ground? I wasn't arguing from the Fathers. I'd almost like to say that I let that dismissal slide; a close reading of Church Fathers is not what powers the Church Fathers, but writing of spiritual realities out of experience. But I dropped that line of argument, and in response to his dismissal of both my argument and other attempts to define the qualities of male and female, I pulled from the beloved theologian St. Maximus Confessor and

said that, like the Cappadocians and some other figures, St. Maximus Confessor did very much root for transcending the differences between male and female, but this was in connection with a theology that sought to transcend the differences between the spiritual and the material, paradise and the inhabited world, Heaven and earth, and ultimately the uncreated and the created. In every one of the other four cases, the desire to transcend a difference assumes there's a difference in place to begin with. When I gave this answer to a request to argue from the Church Fathers, he dismissed St. Maximus on this point altogether, saying that his widely loved theology was just flawed.

This example may invite a gentle response of, "Your interlocutor was a scholar who had just published a paper that you were hacking away at; it would be naive to expect him to welcome your argument." And perhaps it would be, but this is an example of a common thread; though Orthodox heirarchs have not necessarily treated feminism as something to put their foot down on, and there are Biblical Egalitarians and feminists in the Orthodox Church, every single argument I've seen from an Orthodox trying to help me be more open and receptive to those perspectives has arguments that smell really funny—a strong whiff of eau de red flag.

I haven't spent too much more time revising my beliefs after becoming Orthodox, not really because I think I've arrived at the full truth, but because as people grow in Orthodoxy, sooner or later they figure out that there is more important work than straightening out their worldviews, and they let go of reasoning about truth because they are working to drink Truth Himself. Nonetheless, I wanted to

give this email conversation between him and myself, and pay attention to how appropriate or inappropriate the rhetoric is in particular.

## Should we really be that concerned about rhetoric?

I pay very close attention to rhetoric, rhetorical examples, and argument in these pages. There is a reason why which arises from my experience.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ calls for a very close care to the fruits people bear:

> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

The most obvious "fruits" might be how people are treated, especially the less powerful, sexual behavior, and so on, but as time has passed rhetoric has time and again been faithful to its tree: commendable positions are advanced with commendable rhetoric and false positions are advanced with slippery rhetoric. It is a rare case, rare indeed, where truths we would best heed are heralded by rhetorical treachery.

I do not fault the *presence* of rhetoric; an observer

would say that my writing is just as rhetorical, and just as much contains some kinds of argument and not others, as any piece whose rhetoric and argument I treat as cause for concern. But certain kinds of rhetoric aren't just a rotten wrapping paper around healthgiving fruit. They betray that much more is tainted in the offering than merely a slight logical fallacy here, a misleading example there.

I would not limit the "fruit" in the Sermon on the Mount to be rhetoric alone; I don't really believe it is one of the main fruits Christ intended to evoke, compared to how one treats the poor (for instance). But it is an important fruit in *one* respect: it is available to us as long as we have the message.

In this day of the Internet, false prophets may rarely meet us face to face and we may have little clue of a teacher's sexual fidelity, or lack thereof, or whether the person arguing with us feels entitled to socially acceptable theft, whether to take office supplies or to listen to music without paying the artist or those who worked to make the music available. It might take a Big Brother to tell us whether an activist bears good or bad fruit there. But there is one way we can attend to the prophets' fruits without Big Brother invasions of privacy: true and false prophet alike offer us their rhetoric, and it is well worth attending to this one fruit that is impossible to hide.

# Rhetoric that keeps on recurring—giving an answer when it appears in email

Let us turn to the conversation, which began after put up a search engine and sent him a link; he followed a link and read, on my site, “The Commentary,” and then “Inclusive Language Greek Manuscript Discovered.” He responded to both:

**My advisor wrote:**

BTW I read your "Commentary" piece a couple of times. I wasn't sure what you were getting at.
At first glance it looked like you are rejecting all interpretations which take cultural context into account.
At second reading it looks like you may merely be warning readers that humanity itself hasn't changed, so we shouldn't re-interpret the Bible as if people weren't so clever then.
But I wasn't sure.

But it left me wondering:

- Are you saying we shouldn't make allowance for greater ignorance in the past?

We are no more intelligent now, but we do have better understanding about medicine, geology, astronomy etc. This affects the way we interpret things like "the moon turned to blood" - which we would now regard as an atmospheric phenomenon and nothing to do with the nature of the moon.

- Are you saying we shouldn't make allowance for cultural situations in the past?

God expects the same morality from humans at all times, but don't the rules change in order to result in the same principles? I'm thinking of things like slavery, which in the OT was restricted to certain permitted types (6-yr voluntary slavery, and minimum rights for lifelong slaves from warfare), and was tolerated in the NT "for the sake of the Gospel", and was increasingly opposed by the church (albeit very gradually) with as much speed as society permitted.

Perhaps I didn't read it carefully enough.

Then I went on to read your piece on the gender-neutral MS.

Do you really think that there are people who want to accurately reflect the gender of everything in the Bible? The NLT and others have followed the TNIV lead, and even the ESV has a policy of translating anthropos as 'people' or something similarly neutral. I don't know ANY version which uses the pronoun "it" for the Holy Spirit when the Greek does - eg in Jn.14:17. How would you decide when to follow the Greek and when to follow English convention?

I guess that your aim for these pieces of writing is to provoke the reader to think about the issues, rather than give an answer.

You have certainly succeeded in my case!

---

**My advisor wrote:**

- Are you saying we shouldn't make allowance for cultural situations in the past?

> God expects the same morality from humans at all times, but don't the rules change in order to result in the same principles? I'm thinking of things like slavery, which in the OT was restricted to certain permitted types (6-yr voluntary slavery, and minimum rights for lifelong slaves from warfare), and was tolerated in the NT "for the sake of the Gospel", and was increasingly opposed by the church (albeit very gradually) with as much speed as society permitted.
>
> Perhaps I didn't read it carefully enough.

**I wrote:**

Perhaps one way we should put it is that we should attend to the beam in our own eye.

> Then I went on to read your piece on the gender-neutral MS.
> Do you really think that there are people who want to accurately reflect the gender of everything in the Bible? The NLT and others have followed the TNIV lead, and even the ESV has a policy of translating anthropos as 'people' or something similarly neutral. I don't know ANY version which uses the pronoun "it" for the Holy Spirit when the Greek does - eg in Jn.14:17. How would you decide when to follow the Greek and when to follow English convention?

The point is not exactly that the English grammar of translations should follow Greek grammar as regards grammatical gender, but that what is going on in inclusive

language isn't going on in the Bible.

This response is brief and enigmatic: not the most helpful. But in the following emails I address the concerns and touch on the same things from different angles.

Despite the communication weaknesses in my writing, I thought some of the points were worth sharing.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

- Are you saying we shouldn't make allowance for cultural situations in the past?

God expects the same morality from humans at all times, but don't the rules change in order to result in the same principles? I'm thinking of things like slavery, which in the OT was restricted to certain permitted types (6-yr voluntary slavery, and minimum rights for lifelong slaves from warfare), and was tolerated in the NT "for the sake of the Gospel", and was increasingly opposed by the church (albeit very gradually) with as much speed as society permitted.

**I wrote:**

I wanted to comment on this point more specifically.

To an American, references to slavery first evoke field-slaves in our country. The movie *Malcolm X* has Malcolm on a TV show debate opposite a black opponent who was very educated, culturally almost white, and played to what a white audience then would like to hear for their comfort. The host asked Malcolm what he called his opponent, and he shouted a racial slur and then distinguished between house- and field-slaves: the field-slave's lot was extremely

rough; the house slave was much less difficult and could verge on effectively being a well and politely-treated servant. Compared to the field slave who faced rough realities, the house slave almost represented a leisure class and the house-slave's outlook and experience were white.

In the U.S., we no longer have people clothed in a few garments, meant to last, with cotton garments woven from the work of field slaves. We have instead many garments meant to wear out, and the culture of a fashion industry that socially enforces purchases above replacement of low-quality garments, made in sweatshops which wear people out faster than U.S. field slavery wore people out. And there are other areas where we are pushing forward not only on abortion, but on scientific use of human embryos meant to be destroyed. And I do not exclude the U.K. from this critique.

I would really not consider a picture to be complete that includes the abolition of slavery and remains, unlike St. John Chrysostom on slavery, silent on other areas where we do worse.

My initial response to his mention of slavery mentioned "a beam in our eye"; this was intended to specify one such beam that makes me skeptical of celebrations of how much we have progressed as a society.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

Could I press you a little more on what you mean by inclusive language? How would you translate the following:

Blessed is the man who ... (Ps.1)
If a brother sins against you... (Lk.17.3)
God made man in his own image, ... male and female he

made them (Gen.1.27)

If we had read these in a modern English book, we'd assume the author was implying that

- women can't be blessed,
- sisters don't sin against you
- women aren't made in the image of God.

Some Bibles are translated to help people understand what the words were in the Greek and Hebrew, while others are translated to help people understand what God's message is, in their own language. It is fairly easy to translate those verses literally, but how would you translate them into modern English so that a reader wouldn't get the wrong impression about what the message is?

I'm trying to gauge opinions on this from a wide range of people, and I'd be interested in your response.
But don't feel pressured into answering - I won't think badly of you if you don't have time to answer.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

Could I press you a little more on what you mean by inclusive language?
How would you translate the following:

Blessed is the man who ... (Ps.1)
If a brother sins against you... (Lk.17.3)

> God made man in his own image, ... male and female he made them (Gen.1.27)

If we had read these in a modern English book, we'd assume the author was implying that

- women can't be blessed,
- sisters don't sin against you
- women aren't made in the image of God.

**I wrote:**

Your last paragraph almost begs the question; it's reminiscent of saying "humankind" even though never, outside of the shadow of inclusive language efforts, has "mankind" been understood to encompass anything less than all of us.

"Exclusive" language is what "inclusive" language wants standard English to be. Inclusive language efforts, and specifically the efforts to recast the alternative as exclusive, redefining "man", "brother" (and even "mankind") to be male only, are not a more inclusive alternative to an unchanged option. They are an effort to replace a naturally inclusive language with a more belabored language, and redefine away the inclusive character of what is being attacked.

My point here is that "exclusive language" and "inclusive language" are no mere neutral and descriptive terms: they are loaded language that misrepresent what change is actually being advanced. An alternative, if pointed, terminology for "exclusive" language and

"inclusive" language might be **naturally inclusive language** and **belabored inclusive language**.

"Exclusive" language is arguably *not* what inclusive language advocates say it is, language that includes women where the alternative is exclusive to them, except where inclusive language advocates have succeeded in redefining *naturally inclusive language* as exclusive language.

Furthermore, there are several things to untangle, and I give more than one answer to the question about how I would translate "If a brother..." and other passages because there is more than one thing to say. I write quite a few emails because there's really quite a lot tangled up in the remarks I am responding to.

---

I wanted to add a couple of notes from a class that dealt in hardcore feminist theology. I am noting this specifically as something that I would not directly lump Biblical Egalitarians in with unless Biblical Egalitarians ask to be lumped in with them.

The first point was that several of them dealt with the question of an inclusive term for one person of unspecified gender, and in general did not opt to use "they" for one person. Several alternatives were tried, including "s/he" (pronounced "she"), and one author tried hard to make the point that "she" and "her" could be entirely appropriate as a rightly inclusive term for males as well as females.

The second point is that so far as I remember, none of the feminist authors were of limited concern for adult women only; some might speak at one point and refer only to adults (in reference to aging, for instance), but all of the authors were concerned for girls, and from whenever life began in their eyes, a girl was a full-fledged member of the

class of women to be cared for...

...but none of them raised concerns of "inclusive language" that "woman" is a term only referring to adults, and so is wrongly applied to a 14 year old or a 14 month old.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but it seems when feminists want to use language that will include all females, their term of choice works like the "exclusive" language of "man", "mankind", and such. The list of people who choose the language style of *naturally inclusive language*, when they want to include all members of a group, includes feminists who never flinch at using "women" when they mean to include all females—girls *every bit as much as* adult women.

And returning to the topic of my advisor and his Biblical Egalitarianism, while he clearly uses and advocates **gender**-inclusive language, he never once uses what might be called **age**-inclusive language. He may ask if a rendering of "Blessed is the man..." demands "Women can't be blessed", but he seems entirely unconcerned to clarify whether minors can be blessed. He never uses words like "child", "boy", "girl", "infant", etc: he applies sophistry to ask us to make it clear that *women* can be blessed, but the same effort is not made for children, even if they are girls!

It would appear that at least as far as age is concerned, my advisor assumes that what is called "exclusive language" in gender is not exclusive at all, but *naturally* **inclusive**.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

> Could I press you a little more on what you mean by inclusive language?
> How would you translate the following:

Blessed is the man who ... (Ps.1)
If a brother sins against you... (Lk.17.3)
God made man in his own image, ... male and female he made them (Gen.1.27)

**I wrote:**

I might also comment, before giving a brief interlude that the first example on Orthodox rather than Protestant kinds of exegesis refers to Christ primarily and us derivatively, which is an aside to the context as it has been:

The last example differs from the first two examples, where conservative and liberal readings of the underlying text alike take terms as generic.

In terms of Orthodox Church Fathers who can attract feminists, the Cappadocians are one group of usual suspects; St. Ephrem, who had women as well as men chanting liturgical teaching in liturgy, is another, and Kathleen McVey's *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* shows some of those concerns. At one point, "Branch" is the metaphorical name applied to the Cross and then Christ, and the translator explains that the term 'branch' is grammatically feminine and, at that point, renders repeated pronoun references to the Branch, which refer to Christ with varying ambiguity, as "She".

The footnote I take as an example of the French proverb "*Qui s'excuse, s'accuse*" (in politically correct English: "To excuse yourself is [by that very fact] to accuse yourself") and it is the same light that I read the NRSV's excusing and accusing themselves for their translation for what you left out in the ellipsis, rendering "them" for "him" in "in the image of God he created him"; I've read the whole NRSV

and that footnote is the most convoluted footnote justifying a translation that the NRSV offers; the NRSV does not usually *s'excuse/s'accuse* concerning its renderings.

Now that is over the ellipsis. As regards referring to God as "him", we have left the question of horizontal inclusive language where a grammatically male reference to a person of unspecified sex in the original text is argued to require explicitly gender-neutral language in English today. Or to put it differently, the original text worked more like the English now called "exclusive language", but its spirit today is best reflected by the "inclusive language" that is used in redefining the alternative as "exclusive language". But this question is not the issue in calling God "him"; at most it is a gateway drug.

The first two comments are simply about passages where all sensible scholarship agrees that "man", "brother", etc. as they appear in the original text are intended to include women. The last example is one where there is real controversy over whether the text should be rendered to be more politically correct. I was trying to say, "Look, I see two problems—cans of worms—in translating the last text that aren't in the first two."

---

**My advisor wrote:**

- Are you saying we shouldn't make allowance for cultural situations in the past?

God expects the same morality from humans at all times, but don't the rules change in order to result in the same principles? I'm thinking of things like slavery, which in the OT was restricted to certain

permitted types (6-yr voluntary slavery, and minimum rights for lifelong slaves from warfare), and was tolerated in the NT "for the sake of the Gospel", and was increasingly opposed by the church (albeit very gradually) with as much speed as society permitted.

**I wrote:**

There's something I might like to comment.

There are some points where any number of examples might be chosen. In the Bible, Sodom is an emblem of sin and is used to say that a particular community's sins are grievous, but the list of sins connected to Sodom is rather open-ended: without going with queer scholarship and saying that the sin had nothing to do with "sodomy", there is room to say that the men of Sodom showing vile and obscene inhospitality to angelic visitors was the anvil that broke the camel's back; part of the build-up is a dialogue in which Abraham tries to negotiate with a God who cannot find ten righteous in the city. The city is an image of vice later in the Bible, but the sins that are compared to Sodom are open-ended: they include hollow religious observances while preying on one's neighbor and the poor (opening of Isaiah), adultery and defiled living (Jeremiah 23:14), pride and excessive eating without care for the poor (Ezekiel 16), not receiving Christ's apostles appropriately (Matthew 10), general ungodliness (II Peter 2:6), and unnatural lust (Jude 7, perhaps the biggest fly in the ointment to queer exegetes who assert that Sodom's story is no more about homosexual relations as such than the story in Judges 19 is about heterosexual relations as such). But the list is open-ended and I have not included connections of pagan nations; my

main point is that the list of sins is open-ended; prophets name Sodom in connection to the sins they indict. And other things are open-ended in church and in scholarship...

But it really strikes me how much this one simple example of slavery and the Bible comes up in certain contexts. When I read queer scholarship arguing that the story of Sodom can be read without the hypothesis that homosexual relationships are condemned as such, *a discussion of slavery in the Bible paves the way*. When Craig Keener argues in the example of bad scholarship I chose for my thesis that we can do better than the Ephesians haustafel, *a discussion of slavery in the Bible paves the way*. When I discussed this regularity with one teacher, and asked "If it is necessary that we will get our bearings somewhere about what orients our understanding of Scripture, why this specific paradigm example?" It would seem that when people want to enhance what the Bible has, or draw out what it intends more clearly, or improve on it as demoted (*if in fact I name more than one intent*), the paradigm example that should orient our view of Scripture invariably finds itself in a Bible that did not offer our progressive abolitionism.

(I might comment in reference to my earlier example, though, of clothing and sweatshops: Before the abolition of slavery, Northern as well as Southern U.S. citizens who wore cotton were clothed at the expense of preventable human misery from field-slavery. And today, black and white Americans alike are clothed at the expense of preventable human misery from sweatshops. But there is a difference of scale. Americans own, use, and replace quite a few more garments, and if one may speak of a "carbon footprint", one may perhaps also speak of a "footprint in

preventable human misery", and say that U.S. field slavery was an abomination, but the "footprint in preventable human misery" of an American today in clothing is not comparable to the footprint of an American before the civil war; it is comparable to the footprint of a small city. And as long as we have excess of clothing and other unneeded luxuries at the expense of preventable human misery, we should perhaps moderate our celebration of ourselves for having progressed beyond such evils as slavery.)

When I made the comment about this one example that keeps paving the way to orient us, the professor made a comment about canons within a canon, and I would like to comment on the concept and then her specific comment. The idea of a canon within a canon is not a particularly Orthodox one, and I'm not sure I've ever read an Orthodox theologian speak in such terms. The first time the concept was explained to me was something like this: "All great and even minor theologians draw disproportionately from some areas of the Bible more than others, and they do not all do so in exactly the same way. We call the areas of focus 'the canon within the canon.'" And in that sense, I'm not sure there's Orthodox room to object, even if there may be more important things to say. But what I would say is that while that is one way of understanding the canon, it is profoundly misleading to suggest that this is the only basic meaning current in academia. On those terms, which I'm not sure I'd particularly object to, "the canon within the canon" for a particular theologian is a simplification, a generalization, and the kind of thing you observe after the fact. One may claim to identify a particular theologian's "canon within the canon" in something of the same spirit where C.S. Lewis

spoke of defining periods in history: he didn't see how you could do serious history without them, but they are a map that does necessary violence to its terrain, and unnecessary violence if it is imposed as an absolute.

In my time at another school, I heard the phase "canon within the canon" consistently. One example was when people were setting out to engage in a particular theology, and identified as the very first task to identify the canon within the canon. Taken in context, this was clarified to mean not "What few areas of the Bible will we give special focus?" but "What few areas of the Bible will we not truncate away?" Not all examples were the same as this, but I do not remember a usage of "the canon within the canon" that retained the boundaries and modesty of the definition I first met. And, returning to when I raised a question in a paper about getting our bearings from the passages of the Bible that treat slavery prescriptively and do not directly abolish it, my professor responded that there needed to be some canon within the canon. And that response surprised me. I have seen the example of slavery repeatedly, but apart from that one remark I have never heard it called "the canon within the canon." But it does in a certain way make sense.

**If you are going to orient and situate people so they will naturally seek to appreciate the Bible's strengths while gently working to refine its weaknesses, then there is no "canon within the canon" in the Bible that can properly compete with prescriptive moral teaching in the Bible that sets bounds for slavery but fails to command its abolition.**

The best nutshell summary I've heard of Polanyi's

theory of personal and tacit knowledge is, "Behaviorists do not teach, 'There is no soul,' but rather induct students into investigation in such a way that the possibility of a soul is never even considered." And there is something telling along these lines in the slavery example that keeps being chosen when the audience is drawn to work and refine the Bible's weaknesses.

I find the example significant.

—

On another note, I realized I had misread your intent because of where I cut a quotation. Let me quote the part that I muffed, and then respond to that.

> God made man in his own image, ... male and female he made them (Gen.1.27)
>
> If we had read these in a modern English book, we'd assume the author was implying that
> ...
> * women aren't made in the image of God.

On that point may I comment about Mary the Mother and Birth-giver of our God?

There are some pretty medieval Catholic things that the Reformers kept even as they rebelled against Rome, and I'm not referring in this case to assuming that doctrines like the Trinity and the Incarnation should remain after reform.

There is precedent as old as Origen, and as Orthodox as a number of canonized saints, for having as one layer of piety an identification of the believer as the Lord's bride. In Orthodoxy this is not as focal as the image of the Church as the bride of Christ, and in piety it is not nearly as important

as the Biblical image of sons of God (I am intentionally using the masculine here; the Bible includes "children of God" but never "daughters of God"). But was really on steroids in the medieval Catholic West and the bedrock of sanctification through the metaphor of bridal mysticism remains the bedrock of sanctification in Evangelicalism today, and is part of a rather asinine question I asked in moving towards Orthodoxy: *Is the reason so many Evangelical men are converting to Orthodoxy that Orthodoxy understands sanctification as deification and Evangelicalism understands sanctification as a close personal relationship with another man?*

Another example has to do with what The Sin is, the one sin we ought most to look out for. In the pop caricature of Victorianism, The Sin was lust. Among many Evangelicals today, there is a wariness much like what made a Catholic Dorothy Sayers write, "The Other Six Deadly Sins", and The Sin is pride. In late medieval Catholicism, The Sin was idolatry, and people were looking for it everywhere. If the Reformers found that the adoration of the saints to be idolatry, they were developing a medieval Catholic perspective.

Whether medieval Catholic and contemporary Orthodox veneration of Mary the Mother of God should be seen as the same or different is something I am not interested in exploring here, but the following element of Orthodox piety I am sure would have been classified as idolatry by the Reformers:

> It is very proper and right to call thee blessed,
> Who didst bring forth God,
> Ever blessed and most pure,

And the Mother of our God.
More honorable than the cherubim,
And more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim,
Who without spot bearedst God the Word,
True Mother of God, we magnify thee.

I would like to make a point, and it is not exactly about agreeing to disagree. A basic Reformation outlook or worldview had no place to classify this other than as worship. First of all, it addresses Mary in the second person. In the culture of at least of Evangelicalism as I know it, in a secular context you address other people in the second person, but in a church context you address God alone in the second person. Second, it extols her above the highest ranks of angels and really gives her a place that the Reformers did not see as a place to be given rightly to a created and sinful human. And third, it calls her Mother of God, which would at least give the impression of placing her above God. The Christological controversy that led Nestorius's attempt at a reasonable way to please everybody with "Christotokos" is known, at least on the books, but that "Mother of God" is both confessional Christology and not intended to place Mary as supra-divine (Orthodox liturgy refers to Joachim and Anna as "ancestors of God" and icons call James "the brother of God"), and a relational statement: "Mother of God" is not confused with being above God any more than the readings of "sons of God" in the Bible mean that we are taken to be fully divine by nature in the same sense as Christ.

My point in these clarifications is not exactly to say that

the Reformation view is wrong; my point is to say that what is going on in those words is something that the Reformation universe has no place for, except in the category of worship that should be given to God alone.

And my reason for bringing this up is not to say "Because we praise Mary as the Mother of God, we don't view women as inferior." It is to say that, to paraphrase what I'm responding to, "Gen 1:27 says, '...in his image he created him, male and female he made them.' Does this mean that women aren't made in the image of God?"

There's a fairly clear statement on that point in the Bible, in one of the passages that your camp sees as (residual?) misogynism in Paul and something that we need to progress beyond, because that's the only place for it, much as an early Reformer could only see the liturgical quote above as idolatry, of rendering to a creature what is only proper to give to the Creator:

> For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.

I will leave it mostly as an exercise to the reader what I believe of this text; what I will say is that I will understand if your conceptual framework has no place for statements like this except as one of the areas of the Bible that is not so much a strength to appreciate as something to gently refine.

The two points buried under all these words are first, that bringing up slavery as the place to get our bearings in understanding the Bible is highly significant, and second, that there's something going on in the text that egalitarianism has no place for and is apt to misfile because

it has no place to receive it.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

But it left me wondering:

- Are you saying we shouldn't make allowance for greater ignorance in the past? We are no more intelligent now, but we do have better understanding about medicine, geology, astronomy etc. This affects the way we interpret things like "the moon turned to blood" - which we would now regard as an atmospheric phenomenon and nothing to do with the nature of the moon.

**I wrote:**

The assumptions that frame this question are part of what I was trying to answer in “"Religion and Science" Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution.” That treats the religion-science question at interesting and arguably provocative length; beyond the link, I'd like to respond briefly.

I don't make allowances for greater ignorance in the past. Allowances for different ignorance in the past are more negotiable. And I would quote General Omar Bradley: "We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount."

To put things differently, my advisor could be paraphrased, "Look, we've progressed! We have a more scientific understanding of some things!"

My response rejects the modern doctrine of progress: I don't believe we've progressed, and in particular the fact that we are more scientific is not the same as moral progress. In fact, the case may be that when we have moved to a more scientific outlook it has led us to lose sight of things that are foundational to Christian faith: “"Religion and Science" Is Not Just Intelligent Design vs. Evolution” explains how exactly being more scientific may not be good for theology.

---

**I wrote:**

There was one other point I would like to venture, in terms of how things fit together:

Jerry Root wrote a monograph from his dissertation, *C.S. Lewis and a Problem of Evil*, arguing that C.S. Lewis made an objectivist critique of subjectivism and that this is a major thread through multiple works across decades and arguably could be called the common theme. All of Lewis's fiction, or at least the samples quoted from before he was a Christian ("Dymer") onwards, have villains who are ascribed subjectivist rhetoric.

Root is himself an egalitarian, which I need to say in fairness, although his egalitarian argument smells faintly subjectivistic, along with a silence that speaks rather loudly: he never intimates that the message of the Unman in Perelandra might in fact be almost unadulterated subjectivism and a gospel of feminism and that these are arguably not two separate things, at least in the narrative.

I have a friend who is a silver-haired, balding counselor, and tried really hard to help me prepare for my Ph.D. program (which blew up anyway, but I can't fault his help or

any defect in his help). He spoke appreciatively of his training in gay theology (he is a conservative Orthodox and was not trying to convert me to queer agendas), and the biggest single point he tried to make, as something I would have trouble understanding, was subjectivism in relation to feminism.

One of the things he told me that I wouldn't understand was the kind of thing that was illustrated in this: there is a hardcore academic feminist camp that insists that all male celibacy is a tool of patriarchal oppression, and there is a hardcore academic feminist camp that insists that all heterosexual intercourse is rape, and these camps coexist without particular conflict. The objectivist says, "Wait a minute, unless at least one of these is at least partly wrong, or there is an imperative for all men to be homosexually active (or doing something more creative), there is no course open that would let a male live without being a sex offender," is in a very real sense intruding with something foreign onto the scene: objectivism that says there is a reality we should seek to conform to, however imperfectly we may do so.

Biblical egalitarianism is often not so pronounced; I doubt many, or even any, of the egalitarians at Wheaton College make any claim of comparable feminist extremity. But the subjectivism is there, and my thesis could be described as an analysis of how subjectivists argue when straight argument won't get them where they want to go—and every single treatment of the passage from a Biblical Egalitarian/feminist that we looked at for a comparison study had the same shady argument; I have yet to see a Biblical Egalitarianism treatment of the passage on

husbands and wives in Ephesians 5 that argues in objectivist fashion; every one of the dozens of cases I've seen argues with sophistry out of a subjectivism that is unwilling to conform to the reality studied.

I wrote about the connection more explicitly in point 24 of “From Russia, with Love;” that explains concretely and more descriptively what it would mean for feminism and egalitarianism to be intertwined with subjectivism.

I know Jerry Root and probably should have called him Jerry instead of Root the second time. I sat in on one of his classes once, to observe before teaching (he is considered a legendary professor in the community), and as a C.S. Lewis scholar quoted Lewis as he said, "Satan is without doubt nothing else than a hammer in the hand of a benevolent and severe God. For all, either willingly or unwilly, do the will of God: Judas and Satan as tools or instruments, John and Peter as sons." He then said, communicating with great warmth, "and I would add, 'or daughters'" and said that women were included in the great company of those who do God's will as children of God and not as mere tools.

In my role as a visitor, as a fly on the wall, I held my tongue on saying, "You're not adding to the text, you're taking away from it." By saying that he was adding that the text could apply to women, he was **retroactively** redefining the text, when no sane reader, even a sane reader who prefers to use explicitly gender-neutral terms when the intent does not include specifying gender, would read Lewis's text as saying that males like Peter and John could do God's will the good way but *by definition* Mary the Mother of God and Mary Magdalene the Apostle to the Apostles could not.

Do I *really* believe Jerry believed that, or intended that

in anyone he addressed?

*The rhetoric is too subjectivist for that.*

---

**My advisor wrote:**

Your emails are interesting though, as you say, they have gone down paths which you were particularly interested in.

The main question I had was:

> Blessed is the man who ... (Ps.1)
> If a brother sins against you... (Lk.17.3)
> God made man in his own image, ... male and female he made them (Gen.1.27)

How would you translate them into modern English so that a reader wouldn't get the wrong impression about what the message is?

My guess, from what you've said, is that you don't think English has changed, and you don't think that anyone would get the wrong message except hard-line feminists who would intentionally misread the text.

On Ps.1 you point out the Christological interpretation, which I recognise, though I wouldn't say it is the primary meaning of the text. One of the wonderful things about Jesus was that he DID associate with sinners, though without becoming one of them.

I fear that English has changed, whether we like it or not, and modern readers need some help, or else they will think the Bible is exclusivist.

---

**I wrote:**

I believe English has changed, but you assert forcefully that when the text says "man" it cannot refer to women, fullstop, in the modern reader's mind. I would take that as a rhetorical overstatement, but even if it is a rhetorical overstatement, it suggests that you have been getting your bearings from egalitarians for whom "inclusive" language is an active priority, whether this is a conscious or unconscious effort. Compared to other Christians, especially outside academic circles, I would expect you have a disproportionately high number of friends and contacts who are members of CBE or share significant sympathies.

(You can fairly say that at least in academic circles I have a disproportionately low number of such friends, and a disproportionately higher number of friends who would critique CBE, and I would say I am not middle of the road for the friends I know.)

English, especially among the learned, has changed, and "man" is less likely to be read as simply referring to people in general. But it is a strong position to say that "if a brother sins against you", in a passage whose plain sense gives "brother" a much more expansive sense than the biological, will be read only as referring to males. And strictly speaking, at least two of your points contain the same logical fallacy as saying that "All taxicabs are vehicles" demands, if taken literally, that "Because a truck is not a taxicab it cannot be a vehicle". "If a brother sins against you" if taken to exclude women cannot logically imply "sisters can't sin." "In the image of God he created him" if taken not to refer to Eve cannot logically imply "Women are not created in the image of God." You take an extreme interpretation and position, perhaps partly to rhetorically

underscore a point, but with what I think are appropriate allowances for rhetorical overstatement, I believe you take a change that has occurred partially to be full and absolute.

The story of the **T**NIV does not commend the reading that the change is simply bringing the language of the translation in sync with the language on the street. The argument that this needs to be further imported to Bible translations has something of a whiff of the offensive, "The bureaucracy is expanding... to meet the needs of an expanding bureaucracy!"

N.B. The reference to the TNIV (Today's New International Version) is essentially as follows: The NIV (New International Version), like many other translations, has been updated and revised over time. The people in charge of the NIV, as one update, were going to change to inclusive language. There was an enormous outcry that ended in the people in charge of the NIV signing an agreement not to convert the NIV to use inclusive language. And after making that commitment in writing, they still left the NIV available but made an inclusive language version of the NIV and renamed it "**Today's** New International Version."

For the claim, "English has changed", the argument is that perhaps in the past readers may have read "man" and "brother" as fully inclusive of women, but we need to use (belabored) inclusive language now because things have changed.

The position taken is that we need to move from the older style of naturally inclusive language, to explicit (and belabored) inclusive language, to adjust to the fact that we are in the process of moving from naturally inclusive

language to a belabored inclusive language. We should stop using "man" in an inclusive sense because we are stopping using "man" in an inclusive sense. The bureaucracy is expanding... to meet the needs of an expanding bureaucracy! We must work harder at political correctness to meet the needs of an expanding political correctness.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

It sounds like I have trodden on your toes - I'm very sorry.

In the English of most newspapers and blogs, a "man" is male, a "woman" is female and a "person" can be either.

In my original question, I recognised the value of literal translations for those who know the Bible well.

But I was wondering how you would translate such example passages for friends who aren't Christian, or for people who pick up a Bible in their hotel room - ie those who haven't ever heard of CBE or other such groups, and who don't know that "man" can mean both male and female in the Bible.

---

**I wrote:**

Well, that depends somewhat on audience. If I am aiming for the chattering classes as my audience, I would probably follow the rule, "Unless it is your specific extent to exclude half of humanity from any possible consideration, use strictly and explicitly gender-neutral language."

But when I step outside the bubble of those classes, and overhear working-class people talking, "If you see someone, tell them..." melts away and leaves "If you see someone, tell

him..." The experience of "he" and "him" as essentially "exclusive" language is common with the bubble we live in but far from absolute, and that matter far from common, in this U.S., where I believe your concerns have made more headway than in the U.K. If we are talking "people who pick up a Bible in their hotel room", we have left the realm of educated people who read the Bible as literature, and we are talking truckers and the unwashed masses--you know, the kind of people who furnished some of the twelve disciples. And there the answer is simple: say "he" when your intent is generic; saying "they" for one person sounds weird and part of a foreign world intruding on normal English.

And this may be drifting slightly, but if the question is, "How do we render 'If a brother sins against you' so that the full sense of the Church as a family and rebukes within that community comes across," I don't know, and I am wary of the question and approach. Certainly part of it may be more explicit in rendering "If a brother or a sister sins against you"--or, if you don't mind making things even harder for truckers opening a Bible in a hotel room, "If a sibling sins against you"--but more broadly the choice of 'brother' in Greek bears a wealth of layers that are hard to translate so that all of them are apparent on first blush in English, a game which is very hard to win.

This is meant more as a confession of stupidity on my part than a boast, but at one point I tried to make my own Bible translation, called the Uncensored Bible, and aiming for clarity. There were a few highlights to it, and it rendered the Song of Songs clearly, or was intended to, like the original NIV before the higher-ups vetoed translating the Song of Songs the same way they translated other books.

And, though this is not intended as an inclusive language issue, the wordplay in Matthew 6:27 was rendered neither "Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" nor "Which of you by worrying can add a single cubit to his height?" but "Do you think you can add a single hour to your life by worrying? You might as well try to worry yourself into being a foot taller!"

But the work as a whole has pearls amidst sand, and it taught me chiefly that translating the Bible is a lot harder than I had given credit for, even knowing several languages and having done translation before. And while I partly succeeded, part of what I learned through that failure was that my idea of "Just make what is in the verse plainly simple" is a lot harder, and part of my naivete in the project was in trying to do that. Certainly it's possible to be a little clearer where major translations deliberately obscure things from the unwashed masses, but the biggest thing I got out of it was recognizing I was doing something dumb, and coming to respect what the major translations accomplish a whole lot more.

But if that is the goal, "If a brother sins against you" is much harder to get across than changing "If a brother" to "If a brother or sister", "If a sister or brother", "If a sibling", etc. because "brother" speaks of the Church as a family and frames the situation not as discussing appropriate rebuke of someone who you are not particularly connected to, but appropriate rebuke within one tightly connected fatherhood or family. And the expansiveness of "brother" is perhaps 10% clarified, and 90% not clarified, by including the word "sister" or going for the gelding option of "sibling".

So I would partly say, "I don't know", and you can call it a dodge if you want, but if your goal is to make what is going

on in the text clear to most readers, especially outside academia and the chattering classes, you might or might not get 10% of the way there by explicitly making language more gender-inclusive, but if you do so, don't say, "Mission accomplished," because the large part of making "If a brother sins against you" accessible in translation is not accomplished once the translation is clear in applying both to men and women.

The rhetorical posture is taken, "The person I'm really concerned about is the person on the street, the average blue-collar Joe or Jane. What about ordinary people who don't have all this academic knowledge?"

I answer quite simply, "Don't worry; that large demographic is probably the one least affected by political correctness and least likely to hear 'Women are excluded' if they read a Bible that says 'man' or 'brother'."

---

**My advisor wrote:**

It looks like we both want to educate people to understand the Bible and then translate it literally, because it is so hard to translate it to be understood without that education.

Your decision to use the second person instead of third person is often done in gender-neutral translations, and it works sometimes (such as the example you gave), but not always. I wish we had a neutral pronoun.

Ah well, we have to live with imperfection.

---

**My advisor wrote:**

> It looks like we both want to educate people to understand the Bible and then translate it literally, because it is so hard to translate it to be understood without that education.

**I wrote:**

Something like that; it is a difficult matter.

> Your decision to use the second person instead of third person is often done in gender-neutral translations, and it works sometimes (such as the example you gave), but not always. I wish we had a neutral pronoun.
>
> Ah well, we have to live with imperfection.

In many ways. My attempt at translation taught me that even more than it taught me I was dumber than I thought.

---

# Of vinyl records, black and white photography, and using *naturally* inclusive language

Belabored "inclusive" language is here to stay, the rhetoric for it is here to stay, and English usage has changed. I can hardly contest any of these claims, but I would make a point.

When I was a child, it appeared that black and white film had been permanently superseded by color film for all mainstream personal use, and I watched vinyl records be

superseded by CD's, pure and simple. Black and white photography outside of Official Art Photography by Real Fine Art Photographers was obsolete now that we had advanced to color film, and a big record player was a waste of space.

But something funny has happened since then—the "improvements" are not so final as one might think. It is not just Official Art Photographers who make those obsolete monochrome photographs; there is an increasing appreciation for black and white photography, to the point that *color* digital cameras take pictures and extra work is done to make monochrome photographs, either black and white or sepia. And while digital audio isn't going away anytime soon, the more an audiophile really, really cares about music and really, really cares about the sound that is rendered, the more likely he is to explicitly prefer the live sound from good vinyl records and a good record player with a good needle to the tinny and more mediocre sound of even the best digital audio.

I said above, partly to avoid pressing a point, "educated people who read the Bible as literature," giving the impression that the Bible as literature crowd will obviously use inclusive language translations. But there's something really funny going on here. Educated liberals who read the Bible as literature normally use inclusive language. Educated liberals who read the Bible as literature normally believe in inclusive language. And, in my contacts, educated liberals who read the Bible as literature pass over every inclusive language Bible translation for the majesty of the King James Version. With its *naturally* inclusive language.

"Man" has taken something of the tint of a sepia image,

and hearing language like "humankind" sounds like the tinny mediocrity of a CD to an audiophile who prefers vinyl: the point gets across, but not the way vinyl allows.

Inclusive language efforts have given the traditional language of "man", "brother", and "mankind" a share of the beauty and poetic force of sepia and vinyl.

## What's *wrong* with the emails above

I've written these emails with a growing sense that there is something wrong with them: a sense that there was something inescapably misleading even when the observations were accurate. After a while I put a finger on what bothered me. These observations may be accurate observations of truths (or maybe just politically incorrect). But they are not a drinking of Truth. They fall short of the Sermon on the Mount:

> Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Do you think that by worrying you can add a single hour to your span of life? You might as well try to worry you way into being a foot taller? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one

> of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O men of little faith?

The observations above are the equivalent of careful, meticulous observations about how to run after food and clothing when there is a Kingdom of God to seek after. Food and clothing have their place, and the observations I made could have a place in the ascetical life, but they are not what there is to seek first, and true Biblical manhood and womanhood come not from trying to be complementarian but from seeking wholeheartedly for the Kingdom of God and his perfect righteousness, and letting all else fall into its place.

Let us seek the greater good.

# Our Crown of Thorns

I remember meeting a couple; the memory is not entirely pleasant. Almost the first thing they told me after being introduced was that their son was "an accident," and this was followed by telling me how hard it was to live their lives as they wanted when he was in the picture.

I do not doubt that they had no intent of conceiving a child, nor do I doubt that having their little boy hindered living their lives as they saw fit. But when I heard this, I wanted to almost scream to them that they should look at things differently. It was almost as if I was speaking with someone bright who had gotten a full ride scholarship to an excellent university, and was vociferously complaining about how much work the scholarship would require, and how cleanly it would cut them off from what they took for granted in their home town.

I did not think, at the time, about the boy as an icon of the Holy Trinity, not made by hands, or what it means to think of such an *icon* as "an accident." I was thinking mainly about a missed opportunity for growth. What I wanted to say was, "This boy was given to you for your

deification! Why must you look on the means of your deification as a curse?"

Marriage and monasticism are opposites in many ways. But there are profound ways in which they provide the same thing, and not only by including a community. Marriage and monasticism both provide—in quite different ways—an opportunity to take up your cross and follow Christ, to grow into the I Corinthians 13 love that says, "When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me"—words that are belong in this hymn to love because love does not place its own desires at the center, but lives for something more. Those who are mature in love put the childish ways of living for themselves behind them, and love Christ through those others who are put in their lives. In marriage this is not just Hollywood-style exhilaration; on this point I recall words I heard from an older woman, that you don't know understand being in love when you're "a kid;" being in love is what you have when you've been married for decades. Hollywood promises a love that is about having your desires fulfilled; I did not ask that woman about what more there is to being in love, but it struck me as both beautiful and powerful that the one thing said by to me by an older woman, grieving the loss of her husband, was that there is much more to being in love than what you understand when you are young enough that marriage seems like a way to satisfy your desires.

Marriage is not just an environment for children to grow up; it is also an environment for parents to grow up, and it does this as a crown of thorns.

The monastic crown of thorns includes an obedience to one's elder that is meant to be difficult. There would be

some fundamental confusion in making that obedience optional, to give monastics more control and make things less difficult. The problem is not that it would fail to make a more pleasant, and less demanding, option than absolute obedience to a monastic elder. The problem is that when it was making things more pleasant and less demanding, it would break the spine of a lifegiving struggle—which is almost exactly what contraception promises.

Rearing children is not required of monastics, and monastic obedience is not required married faithful. But the spiritual struggle, the crown of thorns by which we take up our cross and follow Christ, by which we die to ourselves that we live in Christ, is not something we can improve our lives by escaping. The very thing we can escape by contraception, is what *all* of us—married, monastic, or anything else—need. The person who needs monastic obedience to be a crown of thorns is not the elder, but the monastic under obedience. Obedience is no more a mere aid to one's monastic elder than our medicines are something to help our doctors. There is some error in thinking that some people will be freed to live better lives, if they can have marriage, but have it on their own terms, "a la carte."

What contraception helps people flee is a spiritual condition, a sharpening, a struggle, a proving grounds and a training arena, that all of us need. There is life in death. We find a rose atop the thorns, and the space which looks like a constricting prison from the outside, has the heavens' vast expanse once we view it from the inside. It is rather like the stable on Christmas' day: it looks on the outside like a terrible little place, but on the inside it holds a Treasure that is greater than all the world. But we need first to give up the illusion of living our own lives, and "practice dying" each

day, dying to our ideas, our self-image, our self-will, having our way and our sense that the world will be better if we have our way—or even that we will be better if we have our way. Only when we have given up the illusion of living our own lives... will we be touched by the mystery and find ourselves living God's own life.

# Orthodoxy, Contraception, and Spin Doctoring: A Look at an Influential but Disturbing Article

## The reason for writing: "Buried treasure?"

Computer programmers often need to understand why programs behave as they do, and there are times when one is trying to explain a puzzle by understanding the source, and meets an arresting surprise. Programmer slang for this is "buried treasure," politely defined as,

> A surprising piece of code found in some program. While usually not wrong, it tends to vary from crufty to bletcherous, and has lain undiscovered only because it

> was functionally correct, however horrible it is. Used sarcastically, because what is found is anything *but* treasure. Buried treasure almost always needs to be dug up and removed. 'I just found that the scheduler sorts its queue using [the *mind-bogglingly* slow] bubble sort! Buried treasure!'"1

What I have found has me wondering if I've discovered theological "buried treasure," that may actually be wrong. Although my analysis is not exhaustive, I have tried to provide two documents that relate to the (possible) "buried treasure:" one treating the specific issue, contraception, in patristic and modern times, and one commentary on the document I have found that may qualify as "buried treasure."

# How to use this document

This document is broken into two parts besides this summary page.

The first part is taken from a paper written by an Orthodox grad student, with reference to Orthodoxy in patristic times and today. It sets a broad theological background, and provides the overall argument. One major conclusion is that one paper (Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90) is important in a troubling shift in Orthodox theology.

The second part, motivated by the understanding that Zaphiris's paper is worth studying *in toto*, is a relatively brief commentary on Zaphiris's paper. If the initial paper

provides good reason to believe that Zaphiris's paper may be worth studying, then it may be valuable to see the actual text of his paper. The commentary can be skipped, but it is intended to allow the reader to know just why the author believes Zaphiris is so much worth studying.

It is anticipated that some readers will want to read the first section without poring over the second, even though the argument in the first section may motivate one to read the second.

# Why the fuss?

The Orthodox Church appears to have begun allowing contraception, after previously condemning it, around the time of an article (Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall 1974, 677-90) which may have given rise to the "new consensus." This article raises extremely serious concerns of questionable doctrine, questionable argument, and/or sophistry, and may be worth further studying.

A broader picture is portrayed in the earlier article about contraception as it appears in both patristic and modern views, which are profoundly different from each other.

Christos Jonathan Seth Hayward -
CJSHayward@pobox.com - CJSHayward.com

# Patristic and Current Orthodoxy: on Contraception

## Introduction

Patristic and contemporary Orthodoxy do not say exactly the same things about contraception. Any differences in what acts are permitted are less interesting than the contexts which are much more different than the differences that would show on a chart made to classify what acts are and are not formally permissible.

Much of what I attempt below looks at what is unquestionable today and asks, "How else could it be?" After two sections comparing the Patristic and modern circumstances, one will be able to appreciate that one would need to cross several lines to want contraception in Patristic Christianity while today some find it hard to understand why the Orthodox Church is being so picky about contraception, I look at how these considerations may influence positions regarding contraception.

## How are the Fathers valuable to us?

I assume that even when one criticizes Patristic sources, one is criticizing people who understand Christianity much better than we do, and I may provocatively say that the Fathers are most interesting, not when they eloquently give voice to our views, but precisely when they shock us. My interest in what seems shocking today is an interest in a cue

to something big that we may be missing. This is for much the same reason scientists may say that the most exciting sound in science is not "Eureka," "I've found it," but "That's funny..." The reason for this enigmatic quote is that "Eureka" only announces the discovery of something one already knew to look for. "That's funny" is the hint that we may have tripped over something big that we didn't even know to look for, and may be so far outside of what we know we need that we try to explain it away. Such an intrusion—and it ordinarily feels like an *intrusion*—is difficult to welcome: hence the quotation attributed to Winston Churchill, "Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on."

Understanding Church Fathers on contraception can provide a moment of, "That's funny..."

# The Patristic era

My aim in this section is not so much to suggest what views should be held, than help the reader see how certain things do not follow from other things self-evidently. I would point out that in the Patristic world, not only were there condemnations of contraception as such, but more deeply, I would suggest that there was a mindset where the idea of freeing the goodness of sexual pleasure from any onerous fecundity would seem to represent a fundamental confusion of ideas.

We may be selling both the Fathers and ourselves short if we say that neo-Platonic distrust of the body made them misconstrue sex as evil except as a necessary evil excused as a means to something else, the generation of children. The

sword of this kind of dismissal can cut two ways: one could make a reductive argument saying that the ambient neo-Gnosticism of our own day follows classical forms of Gnosticism in hostility to bodily goods that values sex precisely as an experience and despite unwanted capacity to generate children, and so due to our Gnostic influence we cannot value sex except as a way of getting pleasure that is unfortunately encumbered by the possibility of generating children whether they are wanted or not. This kind of dismissal is easy to make, difficult to refute, and not the most helpful way of advancing discussion.

In the Patristic era, some things that many today experience as the only way to understand the goodness of creation do not follow quite so straightforwardly, in particular that goodness to sex has its center of gravity in the experience rather than the fecundity. To Patristic Christians, it was far from self-evident that sex as it exists after the Fall is good without ambivalence, and it is even further from self-evident that the goodness of sex (if its fallen form is considered unambiguously good) centers around the experience of pleasure in coitus. Some contemporaries did hold that sexual experience was good. The goodness of sex consisted in the experience itself. Any generative consequences of the experience were evil, to be distanced from the experience. Gnostics in Irenaeus's day (John Noonan, *Contraception: A History of Its Treatments by Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986, 57, 64. *Unfortunately, not only is there no recent work of Orthodox scholarship that is comparable to Noonan, but there is little to no good Orthodox scholarship on the topic at all!*), Manichees in the

days of Augustine (Noonan 1986, 124.), and for that matter medieval Cathars (Noonan 1986, 181-3.) would hold to the goodness of sex precisely as an experience, combined with holding to the evil of procreation. (I will not analyze the similarities and differences to wanting pleasure unencumbered by children today.) Notwithstanding those heretics' positions, Christianity held a stance, fierce by today's standards, in which children were desirable for those who were married but "marriage" would almost strike many people today as celibacy with shockingly little interaction between the sexes (*including* husband and wife), interrupted by just enough sex to generate children (For a treatment of this phenomenon as it continued in the Middle Ages, see Philip Grace, Aspects of Fatherhood in Thirteenth-Century Encyclopedias, Western Michican University master's thesis, 2005, chapter 3, "Genealogy of Ideas," 35-6.). Men and women, including husbands and wives, lived in largely separate worlds, and the framing of love antedated both the exaltations of courtly and companionate love without which many Westerners today have any frame by which to understand goodness in marriage (See Stephen Clark, Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences, Ann Arbor: Servant 1980, Chapter 18, for a contrast between traditional and technological society.).

I would like to look at two quotations, the first from Augustine writing against the Manichees, and the second as an author today writes in reference to the first:

> *Is it not you who used to counsel us to observe as much as possible the time when a woman, after her*

> *purification, is most likely to conceive, and to abstain from cohabitation at that time, lest the soul should be entangled in flesh?* This proves that you approve of having a wife, not for the procreation of children, but for the gratification of passion. In marriage, as the marriage law declares, the man and woman come together for the procreation of children. Therefore whoever makes the procreation of children a greater sin than copulation, forbids marriage, and makes the woman not a wife, but a mistress, who for some gifts presented to her is joined to the man to gratify his passion. Where there is a wife there must be marriage. But there is no marriage where motherhood is not in view; therefore neither is there a wife. In this way you forbid marriage. Nor can you defend yourselves successfully from this charge, long ago brought against you prophetically by the Holy Spirit (the Blessed Augustine is referring to I Tim 4:1-3).

There is irony here. "Natural family planning" is today sometimes presented as a fundamental opposite to artificial contraception. (The term refers to a calculated abstinence precisely at the point where a wife is naturally capable of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response.) Augustine here described natural family planning, as such, and condemns it in harsh terms. (I will discuss "natural family planning" in the next section. I would prefer to call it contraceptive timing for a couple of reasons.)

**Note:**

There is some irony in calling "'Natural' Family Planning" making a set of mathematical calculations and

deliberately avoiding intercourse at the times when a woman is naturally endowed with the greatest capacity for desire, pleasure, and response.

Besides the immediate irony of Augustine criticizing the *form* of contraception to be heralded as "'*Natural*' Family Planning," (remember that "natural" family planning is a calculated abstinence when a wife is capable, naturally, of the greatest desire, pleasure, and response), Augustine's words are particularly significant because the method of contraception being discussed raised no question of contraception through recourse to the occult ("medicine man" *pharmakeia* potions) even in the Patristic world. There are various issues surrounding contraception: in the Patristic world, contraceptive and abortifascient potions were difficult to distinguish and were made by *pharmakoi* in whom magic and drugs were not sharply distinguished (Noonan 1986, 25.). But it would be an irresponsible reading to conclude from this that Patristic condemnations of contraceptive potions were only condemning them for magic, for much the same reason as it would be irresponsible to conclude that recent papal documents condemning the contraceptive mindset are only condemning selfishness and not making any statement about contraception as such. Patristic condemnations of contraception could be quite forceful (Noonan 1986, 91.), although what I want to explore is not so much the condemnations as the environment which partly gave rise to them:

> [L]et us sketch a marriage in every way most happy; illustrious birth, competent means, suitable ages, the very flower of the prime of life, deep

affection, the very best that each can think of the other, that sweet rivalry of each wishing to surpass the other in loving; in addition, popularity, power, wide reputation, and everything else But observe that even beneath this array of blessings the fire of an inevitable pain is smouldering... They are human all the time, things weak and perishing; they have to look upon the tombs of their progenitors; and so pain is inseparably bound up with their existence, if they have the least power of reflection. This continued expectancy of death, realized by no sure tokens, but hanging over them the terrible uncertainty of the future, disturbs their present joy, clouding it over with the fear of what is coming... Whenever the husband looks at the beloved face, that moment the fear of separation accompanies the look. If he listens to the sweet voice, the thought comes into his mind that some day he will not hear it. Whenever he is glad with gazing on her beauty, then he shudders most with the presentiment of mourning her loss. When he marks all those charms which to youth are so precious and which the thoughtless seek for, the bright eyes beneath the lids, the arching eyebrows, the cheek with its sweet and dimpling smile, the natural red that blooms upon the lips, the gold-bound hair shining in many-twisted masses on the head, and all that transient grace, then, though he may be little given to reflection, he must have this thought also in his inmost soul that some day all this beauty will melt away and become as nothing, turned after all this show into noisome and unsightly bones, which wear no trace, no memorial, no remnant

> of that living bloom. Can he live delighted when he thinks of that?
>
> Let no one think however that herein we depreciate marriage as an institution. We are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing. But since the common instincts of mankind can plead sufficiently on its behalf, instincts which prompt by a spontaneous bias to take the high road of marriage for the procreation of children, whereas Virginity in a way thwarts this natural impulse, it is a superfluous task to compose formally an Exhortation to marriage. We put forward the pleasure of it instead, as a most doughty champion on its behalf... But our view of marriage is this; that, while the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state. An example might be found in the patriarch Isaac. He married Rebecca when he was past the flower of his age and his prime was well-nigh spent, so that his marriage was not the deed of passion, but because of God's blessing that should be upon his seed. He cohabited with her till the birth of her only children, and then, closing the channels of the senses, lived wholly for the Unseen...

This picture of a "moderate" view of marriage that does not "depreciate marriage as an institution" comes from St. Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On Virginity*, and allowances must be made for the fact that St. Gregory of Nyssa is contrasting virginity, not with an easy opposite today, namely promiscuity or lust, but marriage, which he bitterly attacks in the context of this passage. The piece is not an

attractive one today. However, that does not mean that what he says is not part of the picture. This bitter attack is part of a picture in which contraception could look very different from today, but that way of looking at contraception is not purely the cause of a rhetoric attacking marriage to praise virginity. I present this not to analyze St. Gregory's exact view on marriage, but to give a taste of an answer to "How else could it be?" in comparison to what is unquestionable today.

Some attitudes today (arguably the basic assumption that motivates offense at the idea that one is condemning the goodness of the created order in treating sex as rightly ordered towards procreation) could be paraphrased, "We affirm the body as good, and we affirm sex in all its goodness. It is a source of pleasure; it is a way to bond; it is powerful as few other things are. But it has a downside, and that is a certain biological survival: unless countermeasures are taken, along with its good features unwanted pregnancy can come. And properly affirming the goodness of sex means freeing it from the biological holdover that gives the good of sexual pleasure the side effect of potentially resulting in pregnancy even if it is pursued for another reason." To the Patristic Christian, this may well come across as saying something like, "Major surgery can be a wonderful thing. It is occasion for the skillful art of doctors, in many instances it is surrounded by an outflow of love by the patient's community, and the difficulties associated with the process can build a thicker spine and provide a powerful process of spiritual discipline. But it would be really nice if we could undergo surgery without attendant risks of unwanted improvements to our health."

It seems so natural today to affirm the goodness of the body or sex, and see as the only possible translation of that affirmation "the goodness of the pleasure in sexual experience," that different views are not even thinkable; I would like to mention briefly some other answers to the question, "How else could it be?" The ancient world, in many places, looked beyond the few minutes of treasure and found the basis for the maxim, "*Post coitum omne animal triste*" (after sex, every animal [including humans] is sad), and feared that sex could, among other things, fundamentally deplete virile energy (Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure, New York: Random House 1985, 137): its goodness might be seen as a costly goodness involving the whole person, rather than simply being the goodness of "one more pleasure, only a very intense one, that is especially good because it is especially intense" or self-evidently being at the core of even a good marriage (Noonan 1986, 47-8).

This is not to suggest that Christians merely copied the surrounding views. Contraception, abortion, and infanticide were quite prevalent in the Roman world (Noonan 1986, 10-29). Whatever else Patristic Christianity can be criticized for in its strong stance on contraception, abortion, and infanticide, it is not an uncritical acceptance of whatever their neighbors would happen to be doing. And if St. Gregory of Nyssa holds up an example which he alleges is procreation that minimizes pleasure, it might be better not to simply say that neo-Platonism tainted many of the Fathers with a dualistic view in which the body was evil, or some other form of, "His environment made him do it."

# Modernity and "natural" family planning

In the discussion which follows, I will use the term "contraceptive timing" in lieu of the somewhat euphemistic "natural family planning" or "the rhythm method." In my own experience, I have noticed Catholics consistently needing to explain why "natural family planning" is an opposite to contraception; invariably newcomers have difficulties seeing why decreasing the odds of conception through mathematical timing is a fundamentally different matter from decreasing the odds of conception through biological and chemical expedients. I would draw an analogy to firing a rifle down a rifle range, or walking down a rifle range to retrieve a target: either action, appropriately timed, is licit; changing the timing of an otherwise licit action by firing a rifle while others are retrieving their targets and walk in front of that gun is a use of timing that greatly affects the moral significance of an otherwise licit act. I will hereafter use the phrase "contraceptive timing."

# Orthodox implications

As Orthodox, I have somewhat grave concerns about my own Church, which condemned contraception before 1970 but in recent decades appears to have developed a "new consensus" more liberal than the Catholic position: abortifascient methods are excluded, there must be some openness to children, and it must be agreed with by a couple's spiritual father. This "new consensus," or at least what is called a new consensus in an article that

acknowledges it as surrounded by controversy that has "various groups accusing each other of Western influence," which is, in Orthodox circles, a good cue that the there is something interesting going on.

The one article I found on the topic was "lobbyist" scholarship that seemed to *avoid* giving a fuller picture (Zaphiris 1974.). This one article I found in the ATLA religion database matching the keywords "Orthodox" and "contraception" was an article that took a "new consensus" view and, most immediately, did not provide what I was hoping a "new consensus" article would provide: an explanation that can say, "We understand that the Fathers had grave reservations about contraception, but here is why it can be permissible." The article in fact made no reference to relevant information that can (at least today) be easily obtained from conservative Catholic analyses. There was no discussion of relevant but ambiguous matter such as Onan's sin (Noonan 1986, 34-6.) and New Testament condemnations of "medicine man" *pharmakeia* which would have included some contraception (Noonan 1986, 44-5.). There was not even the faintest passing mention of forceful denunciations of contraception by both Greek and Latin Fathers. John Chrysostom was mentioned, but only as support for distinguishing the good of sex from procreation: "The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, also does not stress the procreation of children as the goal of marriage." (Zaphiris 1974, 680) Possibly; St. Chrysostom Chrysostom may not have written anything like the incendiary material from St. Gregory above. But "the moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers" *did* write:

The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers has at times a

legendary bias against against Rome (let alone against the Eastern Church), and renders Chrysostom as talking about abortion and infanticide but not obviously contraception. This is deliberate mistranslation. To pick out one example, In *Patrologia Graecae* 60.626 (the quotation spans PG 60.626-7), "*enqa polla ta atokia*," rendered "*ubi multae sunt herbae in sterilitatem?*" in the PG's Latin and "Where are the medicines of sterility?" by Noonan, appears in the NPNF as "where are there many efforts at abortion?" This is a deliberate under-translation.

> [St. John Chrysostom:] *Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where are the medicines of sterility?* Where is there murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? *Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation.* What then? Do you contemn the gift of God, and fight with his laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing?... Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing?... *In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife.* (Homilies on Romans XXIV, Rom 13:14, as translated in Noonan 1986, 98.)

St. Chrysostom is not so quick as we are today to distinguish contraception from murder. Possibly, as Zaphiris writes, "there is not a defined statement on the morality of contraception within Orthodoxy." But this is a treacherous use of words.

Let me give an analogy to explain why. People consume both food and drink, by eating and drinking. But it is somewhat strange to point out that a person has never drunk a roast beef sandwich, particularly in an attempt to lead a third party to believe, incorrectly, that a person has never consumed that food item. The Chuch has "defined" statements relating to Trinitarian and Christological, and other doctrines, and formulated morally significant canon law. But she has never "defined" a statement in morals; that would be like drinking a roast beef sandwich. And so for Zaphiris to point out that the Orthodox Church has never "defined" a statement about contraception—a point that would be obvious to someone knowing what sorts of things the Church does not "define;" "defining" a position against murder would, for some definitions of "define," be like drinking a sandwich—and lead the reader to believe that the Church has never issued a highly authoritative statement about contraception. The Orthodox Church has issued such statements more than once.

Saying that the Orthodox Church has never "defined" a position on a moral question is as silly and as pointless as saying that a man has never drunk a roast beef sandwich: it is technically true, but sheds no light on whether a person has consumed such a sandwich—or taken a stand on the moral question at hand. Zaphiris's "observation" is beginning to smell a lot like spin doctoring.

I have grave reservations about an article that gives the

impression of covering relevant Patristic material to the question of contraception without hinting at the fact that it was condemned. Needless to say, the article did not go beyond the immediate condemnation to try to have a sympathetic understanding of why someone would find it sensible to make such condemnations. If I were trying to marshal Orthodox theological resources in the support of some use of contraception, I doubt if I could do better than Zaphiris. However, if the question is what Orthodox should believe in reading the Bible through the Fathers, submitting to the tradition in seeking what is licit, then this version of a "new consensus" theological treatment gives me even graver doubts about the faithfulness of the "new consensus" to Orthodox tradition. The Zaphiris article, if anything, seems to be an Orthodox document with influence, and red flags, that are comparable to *Humanae Vitae*.

There have been times before where the Orthodox Church has accepted something alien and come to purify herself in succeeding centuries. In that sense there would be a precedent for a change that would be later undone, and that provides one ready Orthodox classification. The Orthodox Wiki provides no history of the change in Orthodoxy, and a formal statement by the Orthodox Church in America (source), without specifically *praising* any form of contraception, attests to the newer position and allows some use of reproductive technologies, but does not explain the change. I would be interested in seeing why the Orthodox Church in particular has brought itself into sudden agreement with cultural forces beyond what the Catholic Church has.

The Orthodox Church both affirms that Christ taught

marriage to be indissoluble—excluding both divorce and remarriage after divorce—and allows by way of oikonomia (a concession or leniency in observing a rule) a second and third remarriage after divorce, not counting marriages before full reception into the Orthodox Church. However, there is a difference between observing a rule with oikonomia and saying that the rule does not apply. If a rule is observed with oikonomia, the rule is recognized even as it is not followed literally, much like choosing "the next best thing to being there," in lieu of personal presence, when one is invited to an occasion but cannot easily attend. By contrast, saying that the rule does not apply is a deeper rejection, like refusing a friend's invitation in a way that denies any duty or moral claim for that friend. There is a fundamental difference between sending a gift to a friend's wedding with regrets that one cannot attend, and treating the invitation itself with contempt. The rites for a second and third marriage are genuine observations of the fact that one is observing a rule with leniency: the rite for a second marriage is penitential, the rite for a third marriage even more so, and a firm line is drawn that rules out a fourth marriage: oikonomia has limits. If a second and third marriage is allowed, the concession recognizes the rule and, one might argue, the reality the rule recognizes. If one looks at jokes as an anthropologist would, as revealing profound assumptions about a culture, snipes about "A wife is only temporary; an ex-wife is forever" and "When two divorced people sleep together, four people are in the bed" are often told by people who would scoff at the idea of marriage as a sacred, permanent union... but the jokes themselves testify that there is something about a marriage that divorce cannot simply erase: a spouse can become an ex-spouse, but

the marriage is too permanent to simply be dropped as something revocable that has no intrinsically permanent effects. And in that sense, an ex-spouse is closer to a spouse than to a friend that has never had romance. Which is to say that marriage bears witness both to an absolute and oikonomia in how that absolute is observed.

Even with noted exceptions, the Gospels give the indissolubility of marriage a forceful dominical saying backed by quotation from the heart of the Old Testament Scriptures. If something that forcefully put may legitimately be observed with oikonomia, then it would seem strange to me to say that what I have observed as Patristic attitudes, where thinking of contraception as desirable would appear seriously disturbed, dictate not only a suspicion towards contraception but a criterion that admits no oikonomia in its observation. Presumably some degree oikonomia is allowable, and perhaps one could not rule out the oikonomia could take the form of a new consensus's criterion allowing non-abortifascient contraception, in consultation with one's spiritual father, on condition of allowing children at some point during a marriage. *However*, even if that is the legitimate oikonomia, it is legitimate as the lenient observation of grave moral principles. And, in that sense, unless one is prepared to say that the Patristic consensus is wrong in viewing contraception with great suspicion, the oikonomia, like the rites for a second and third marriage, should be appropriate for an oikonomia in observing a moral concern that remains a necessary moral concern even as it is *observed* with leniency.

# Conclusion

I am left with a puzzle: why is it that Orthodox have adopted the current "new consensus"? My guess is that Zaphiris's quite provocative article was taken as simply giving a straight account of Orthodoxy and Patristic teaching as it relates to contraception. The OCA document more or less applies both his analysis and prescriptions. But, while I hesitate to say that no one could explain both why the Fathers would regard contraception as abhorrent and we should permit it in some cases, I will say that I have not yet encountered such an explanation. And I would present, if not anything like a last word, at least important information which should probably considered in judging the rule and what is appropriate oikonomia. If Orthodoxy regards Patristic culture and philosophy as how Christ has become incarnate in the Orthodox Church, then neither condemnations of contraception, nor the reasons why those condemnations would be made in the first place, concern only antiquarians.

Would it be possible for there to be *another* "new consensus?"

# "Morality of Contraception: An Orthodox Opinion:" A commentary

The article published by Chrysostom Zaphiris, "Morality of Contraception: An Eastern Orthodox Opinion," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, volume 11, number 4, fall

1974, 677-90, seems *extremely* significant. **It seems a lobbyist article, and in both content and timing the 1970's "new consensus" as articulated by the Orthodox Church in America is consistent with taking Zaphiris in good faith as simply stating the Orthodox position on contraception.** (This was the one article I found in an ATLA search for keywords "Orthodox" and "contraception" anywhere, on 13 May, 2007. A search for "Orthodoxy" and "contraception" on 14 May, 2007 turned up one additional result which seemed to be connected to queer theory.) I perceive in this faulty—or, more properly, deceptively *incomplete* data, questionable argument, and seductive sophistry which I wish to comment on.

I believe that Zaphiris's text is worth at least an informal commentary to draw arguments and certain features to the reader's attention. In this commentary, all footnotes will be Zaphiris's own; where I draw on other sources I will allude to the discussion above or add parenthetical references. I follow his footnote numbering, note page breaks by inserting the new page number, and reproduce some typographical features.

**Footnote from Zaphiris's text**

> Chrysostom Zaphiris (Orthodox) is a graduate of the Patriarchal Theological School of Halki, Turkey, and holds a doctorate with highest honors from the University of Strasbourg, where he studied with the Roman Catholic faculty. His 1970 thesis dealt with the "Text of the Gospel according to St. Matthew in

Accordance with the Citations in Clement of Alexandria compared with Citations in the Greek Fathers and Theologians of the Second to Fifth Centuries." Dr. Zaphiris taught canon law and New Testament courses at Holy Cross School of Theology (at Hellenic College), Brookline, MA, 1970-72. From 1972 to 1974, he was Vice Rector at the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Studies, Tantur, Jerusalem.

* This paper was originally presented during the discussion held for doctors of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and the surrounding area hosted by theologians of the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur on the question of the morality of contraception. At this point, I would like also to thank Br. James Hanson, C.S.C., for his help editing my English text.

THE MORALITY OF CONTRACEPTION: AN EASTERN ORTHODOX OPINION*

by

CHRYSOSTOM ZAPHIRIS

PRECIS

This discussion of the morality of contraception includes four basic points: the purpose of marriage as viewed scripturally and patristically, the official teachings of Orthodoxy concerning contraception, the moral issue from an Orthodox perspective, and "the Orthodox notion of synergism and its implications for the moral question of contraception."

It is possible through inference to determine that the Scriptures and the early Christian writers considered that, within marriage, sexual activity and procreation were not the same entity and that sexuality was to be practiced within marriage. These assertions are illustrated.

The official teaching of the Orthodox Church on contraception includes five points: a denunciation of intentional refusal to procreate within marriage, a condemnation of both abortion and infanticide, an absence of any commitment against contraception, and a reliance upon the medical profession to supply further information on the issue. The author offers a theological opinion on the question of contraception allowing for contraception under certain circumstances.

Synergism is the final issue discussed. Synergism is defined as cooperation, co-creation, and co-legislation between humans and God. When people use their talents and faculties morally and creatively, they are acting in combination with God and expressing God's will. The Orthodox view of contraception is perceived within the dimensions of synergistic activity and serves as a contrast to the Roman Catholic view.

The essay concludes with some comments about contraception as a moral issue as perceived within the Eastern Orthodox Church. Allowing for individual freedom and responsibility, and in light of synergism, Orthodoxy avoids definitive pronouncements on such moral issues as contraception.

I. INTRODUCTION.

> Contraception is one of the most important aspects of human behavior and family life, and thus it is a part of life which cannot be ignored by theology itself. There can 678 be no question of treating this moral question, but only of outlining the aspects which must be considered according to the Orthodox tradition.

I don't know an exact rule for "what must be considered for the Orthodox tradition," but besides of Biblical witness, the Patriarch of New Rome and one of three "heirarchs and ecumenical teachers" of the Orthodox Church, St. John Chrysostom, homilectically treating something as an abomination and calling it "worse than murder" would tend to be something I would include under "aspects which must be considered according to the Orthodox tradition."

One reaction which I would like to address in many readers, even though it is not properly commentary is, "Contraception is comparable to *homicide*? It's called "worse than *murder*"? Is this translated correctly? Is this gross exaggeration? Is it cultural weirdness, or some odd influence of Platonic thought that the Church has recovered from? Why on earth would anybody say that?" This is a natural reaction, partly because the Fathers are articulating a position that is inconceivable today. So the temptation is to assume that this has some cause, perhaps historical, despite moral claims that cannot be taken seriously today.

I would like to provide a loose analogy, intended less to convince than convey how someone really could find a

continuity between contraception and murder. Suppose that destroying a painting is always objectionable. Now consider the process of painting: a painting germinates in an artist's mind, is physically created and explored, and finally becomes something one hangs on a wall.

Now let me ask a question: if one tries to interrupt the process of artistic creation, perhaps by disrupting the creator's state of mind and scattering the paints, does that qualify as "destroying a painting"?

The answer to that question depends on what qualifies as "destroying a painting." If one disrupts the artist who is thinking about painting a painting, or scatters the paints and half-painted canvas, then in neither case has one destroyed a finished painting. You cannot point to a completed painting that was there before the interruption began, and say, "See? That is the painting that was destroyed." *However*, someone who is not being legalistic has good reason to pause before saying "This simply does not qualify as destroying a painting" A *completed* painting was not destroyed, but the process of artistic creation that produces a completed painting was destroyed. And in that sense, someone who interrupted Van Gogh and stopped him from painting "Starry Night" is doing the same sort of thing as someone today who would burn up the completed painting. The two acts are cut from the same cloth.

Now my intent is not to provide a precise and detailed allegory about what detail of the creation process represents conception, birth, etc. That is not the intent of the general illustration. My point is that talk about "destroying paintings" need not be construed only as destroying a completed painting in its final form. There is also the

possibility of destroying a painting in the sense of willfully disrupting the process of an artist in the process of making a painting. And, perhaps, there is room for St. John Chrysostom's horrified, "*Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation.*" Now is this rhetorical exaggeration? Quite possibly; Noonan studies various penitentials, all from before the Great Schism, and although there is not always a penance assigned for contraception by potion, two assign a lighter penance than for homicide, one assigns the same penance, and one actually assigns a penance of four years for homicide and *seven* for contraception. Contraception could bear a heavier penance than murder.

It is somewhat beside the point to work out if we *really* have to take St. John Chrysostom literally in saying that contraception is worse than homicide. I don't think that is necessary. But it is not beside the point that the Fathers seem to treat a great deal of continuity between contraception, abortion, and infanticide, and seem not to draw terribly sharp oppositions between them. Whether or not one assigns heavy-handed penalties from contraception, I can't think of a way to read the Fathers responsibly and categorically deny that contraception is cut from the same cloth as abortion and infanticide. The point is not exactly an exact calculus to measure the relative gravity of the sins. The point is that they are all connected in patristic writing.

> First, we need to study the purpose of marriage as we find it in the Scriptures and in the writings of the Greek Fathers. Second, we will reflect on the official teaching authority of the Orthodox Church on this

question of contraception. Third, we will offer a moral opinion as to the legitimacy of the practice of contraception from an Orthodox viewpoint. And finally, we will discuss the Orthodox notion of synergism and its implications for the moral question of contraception.

II. THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE.

Although the purpose of marriage is never treated systematically in the Scriptures or in the Fathers according to our contemporary viewpoint and questions, it is possible to infer the thoughts of these classical authors on the purpose of marriage. In general, what we find is that there is the presupposition that human sexual activity within marriage and the procreation of children are not seen as completely the same reality. And furthermore, both Scripture and the Fathers consistently counsel the faithful to live in such a way that human sexuality can be expressed within marriage.

The claim in the last sentence is true; more has been argued from St. John Chrysostom. But Orthodoxy does view celibacy and marriage as more compatible than some assume today. At least by the letter of the law, Orthodox are expected to be continent on fasting days and on days where the Eucharist is received, meaning a minimum of almost half days of the year, including one period approaching two months. I don't know what degree of oikonomia is common in pastoral

application, but an Orthodox might want to drop another shoe besides saying "both Scripture and the Fathers consistently counsel the faithful to live in such a way that sexuality can be expressed in marriage."

> The Scriptures present us with a Christian doctrine of marriage most clearly in Genesis and in the writings of St. Paul. In Genesis 2:18, God said that it was not good for man to be alone, but that he should have a helpmate which he then gave to Adam in the person of his wife, Eve. Is this help meant by God to be only social and religious?

Apparently the possibility that marriage could, as in the patristic world, be not only an affective matter of what people but a union of pragmatic *help* encompassing even the economic is not considered.

For a detailed answer to "How else could that be?" in terms of a relationship including quite significant pragmatic *help*, see Stephen Clark, Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences, Ann Arbor: Servant 1980. To someone who has read and digested that book, there seem to be an awful lot of assumptions going into what marriage is allowed to be for the husband and wife.

> Or is it also intended by God to be a physical help provided to a man in terms of sexual complementarity?

Does "physical help" simply boil down to the C-word, as Zaphiris seems to mean? Are there no other possibilities?

And why is "physical help" just something a wife gives a husband and not something a husband gives a wife? The euphemism sounds like the wife should be kind enough to join a pity party: "*It causes him so much pleasure, and it causes me so little pain.*" I would like to propose a much more excellent alternative: **making love.**

Perhaps it is also possible that "physical help" should also include assistance with errands, or provision, or getting work done as part of a working household? Besides *Stephen Clark, Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor: Servant 1980), Proverbs 31:10-31 describes the ideal helpmate who perhaps has children but is not praised for beauty or as a basic sex toy: she is praised, among other things, as a powerful and effective helpmeet. In the praises, physical beauty is mentioned only in order to deprecate its significance.

In reading Clark, it seems a natural thing to offer a wife the praises of the end of Proverbs. Zaphiris's presuppositions make that kind of thing look strange. But the defect is with Zaphiris.

> However we answer these questions, one thing is certain: the question of procreation as such is not raised by the author. Yet, procreation itself is encouraged by the author of Genesis 1:28, when God orders human beings to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Just as the author of the Pentateuch never makes an explicit connection between the creation of Eve and the practice of human procreation, so likewise St. Paul in the New Testament never makes

> this connection.
>
> In the case of St. Paul, it is a question of sexual relations of continence within marriage or of marriage as opposed to virginity, but never exactly the question of procreation in any of these cases. Paul considers marriage and virginity as charisms within the life of the Church. He exhorts believers to the practice of virginity if they have this charism; if not, he encourages them to marry. This raises a subsequent question: "Does St. Paul encourage marriage first of all to promote the procreation of children or rather make up for human weakness which is experienced in sexual passion?" While I acknowledge that procreation of children is one of the reasons for marriage which Christian theology has consistently taught, it has never been the *only* reason for Christian marriage.
>
> If we follow St. Paul closely, it is apparent that he encourages a man to marry, not simply to procreate children, but for other reasons, the most prominent of which 679 would be to avoid fornication (cf. I Cor. 7:2). It is because human persons have the right

I would like to make a comment that sounds, at first, like nitpicking about word choice:

Rights-based moral calculus is prevalent in the modern world, sometimes so that people don't see how to do moral reasoning without seeing things in terms of rights. But the modern concept of a "right" is alien to Orthodoxy.

See Kenneth Himes (ed.) *et al.*, *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations* (Washington: Georgetown University Press 2005), chapter 2 (41-71) for an historical discussion including how the

concept of rights became incorporated into Catholic moral reasoning from the outside. The change was vigorously resisted as recently as Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), today the subject of embarrassed explanations, but what Catholics apologetically explain is often closer to Orthodoxy than the modern Catholic explanation of what Catholicism really teaches. Even in modern Catholicism, officially approved "rights" language is a relatively recent development, and there are attempts to use the concept differently from the secular West.

Armenian Orthodox author Vigen Guorian's *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1987, page number not available) briefly complains about the modern idea of placing human dignity on no deeper basis than rights; I would refer the reader to my homily "Do we have rights?" ( cjshayward.com/no_rights ) for moral-ascetical reasoning that rejects the innovation.

The reason why I am "nitpicking" here is that there is a subtle difference, but a profound one, between saying that sex is good within marriage (or at least permissible), and saying that husband and wife have a right to sexual pleasure, and this entitlement is deep enough that if the sexual generation of children would be undesirable, the entitlement remains, along with a necessity of modifying sex so that the entitled sexual pleasure is delivered even if the sexual generation of children is stopped cold.

Zaphiris never develops the consequences of rights-based moral reasoning at length or makes it the explicit basis for arguing for an entitlement to sexual pleasure even if that means frustrating sexual generation. However, after

asserting a married right to sex, he not only fails to discourage this reasoning, but reaches a conclusion identical with the one this reasoning would reach.

> to be married and to perform sexual activity within that specific context that Jesus Christ and St. Paul have condemned explicitly the practice of fornication (cf. Mt 5:32, 19:9; Acts 15:20; I Cor. 5:1, 6, 13, 18). Thus, in our study of the Christian tradition on marriage and the possibility of contraceptive practices within marriage, we must keep clearly in view this particular function of marriage as an antidote to fornication.
>
> We find a similar sensitivity in the writings of Paul to the human need for sexual gratification in marriage when he counsels Christian couples on the practice of continence within marriage. "The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husbands. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwords, you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan" (I Cor. 7:4-5). In this passage, there is no question of procreation, but only of the social union between husband and wife within Christian marriage. While, on the positive side, Paul affirms that Christian marriage is a sign of the union between Jesus Christ and the Church and that the married couple participates in the unity and holiness of this union, more negatively he also sees in marriage an antidote or outlet for the normal human

sexual passions. In this context, St. Paul always counsels marriage as preferable to any possibility of falling into fornication.

In saying this, St. Paul is obviously not opposed to procreation as the end of marriage. The bearing of children was naturally expected to result from the practice of sexual intercourse within marriage as he counseled it. Abstinence from regular sexual intercourse was encouraged only to deepen the life of prayer for a given period of time. This limiting of abstinence to a specific period of time shows well Paul's sensitivity to the demands of human sexual passions and his elasticity of judgment in giving moral counsel. Thus, from the exegesis of Genesis of St. Paul, the whole contemporary question of the explicit connection between sexual intercourse within marriage and the procreation of children was simply not raised in the same form in which it is today.

I would like to take a moment to look at the story of Onan before posing a suggestion about exegesis.

I suggest that in the Bible, especially in portraying something meant to horrify the reader, there are often multiple elements to the horror. The story of Sodom portrays same-sex intercourse, gang rape, and extreme inhospitality. There is a profoundly naive assumption behind the question, "Of same-sex intercourse, gang rape, and extreme inhospitality, which *one* are we *really* supposed to think is the problem?" In this case, it seems all three contributed to something presented as superlatively horrifying, and it is the combined effect that precedes

Sodom's judgment in fire and sulfur and subsequently becoming the Old Testament prophet's "poster city" for every single vice from idolatry and adultery to pride and cruelty to the poor. The story of Sodom is *written* to have multiple elements of horror.

There is one story where contraception is mentioned in the Bible, and it is one of few where Onan joins the company of Uzzah, Ananias, Sapphira, Herod (the one in Acts), and perhaps others in being the only people named in the Bible as being struck dead by God for their sins. This is not an august company. Certainly Onan's story is not the story of a couple saying, "Let's iust focus on the children we have," but a story *that* forceful in condemning Onan's sin, *whatever* the sin properly consisted in, has *prima faciae* good claim to be included a Biblical text that factors into a Biblical view of contraception. The story is relevant, even if it is ambiguous for the concerns of this question.

Likewise, in something that is not translated clearly in most English translations, the New Testament (Gal 5:20, Rev 9:21) *pharmakoi* refers to "medicine men" who made, among other things, contraceptive and abortifascient potions, in a world that seemed not to really separate drugs from magic. English translations ordinarily follow the KJV in translating this only with reference to the occult sin, so that it does not come across clearly that the Bible is condemning the people you would go to for contraceptives. This is ambiguous evidence for this discussion: it is not clear whether it is only condemning the occult practices, condemning what the occult practices were used for, or condemning both at the same time, but the question is significant.

Granted, not every Biblical text touching marriage is

evidence against contraception. There are other relevant passages like Gal 5:21-33 which discuss the love in marriage with no reference to fecundity, but if one wants to understand the Bible as it relates to contraception, it is surprising not to mention passages that directly impinge on it, ambiguously but raising the question of whether contraception is a grave sin.

**Zaphiris's footnote:**

1. Cf. *Stromata*, III, 82, 4.

Turning from the writings of Paul to those of the Greek Fathers, we will see that there is a continuity of Orthodox tradition in this understanding of the purpose of marriage. First, let us consider the statement of Clement of Alexandria who raises this problem as a theologian and as a pastor of the faithful. When he comments on I Cor. 7:2, he uses neither the allegorical nor the spiritual method of exegesis, but rather the literal interpretation of this Pauline text. Through this methodology, Clement, in spite of his usual idealism, recommends marriage over fornication and counsels sexual intercourse within marriage over the possibility of serving the temptor through fornication.[1]

**Zaphiris's footnote**

2. See H. Crouzel, *Virginité et mariage selon Origène* (Paris-Bruges, 1963), pp. 80-133.

679 We find a similar line of thought in his successor, Origen. Although Origen accepts procreation as the end of marriage, he also sees in marriage the legitimate concession to human weakness in its sexual passions.[2]

Likewise Methodius of Olympus continues this interpretation of St. Paul in a very clear statement on the subject: "... The apostle did not grant these things unconditionally to all, but first laid down the reason on account of which he has led to this. For, having set forth that 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman' (I Cor. VII, 1) he added immediately 'nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife' (I Cor. VII, 2)—that is 'on account of the fornication which would arise from your being unable to restrain your passions.'..." Afterwards the author notes that Paul speaks "by permission" and "not of command," so that Methodius comments: "For he receives command respecting chastity and not touching of a woman, but permission respecting those who are unable to chasten their appetites."

**Zaphiris's footnote**

3. Cf. *The Banquet of the Virgins*, III, 12.

Methodius applies similar logic to the possibility of the second marriage, in that he permits the second marriage, not specifically for the procreation of children, but "on account of the strength of animal passion, he [Paul] allows one who is in such condition may, 'by permission' contract a second marriage; not

as though he expressed the opinion that a second marriage was in itself good, but judging it better than burning . . ." According to Methodius, the apostle speaks here, first saying that he wished all were healthy and continent, as he also was, but afterwards allowing a second marriage to those who are burdened with the weaknesses of the passions, goaded on by the uncontrolled desires of the organs of generations for promiscuous intercourse, considering such a second marriage far preferable to burning and indecency.[3]

4. See A. Moulard, *Saint Jean Chrysostome, le défenseur du mariage et l'apôtre de la virginité* (Paris, 1923), pp. 72ff.

The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers, St. John Chrysostom, also does not stress the procreation of children as the goal of marriage. On the contrary, he adheres to the Pauline texts and to the apologists for virginity and concludes that marriage does not have any other goal than that of hindering fornication.

"The moral theologian *par excellence* of the Fathers" wrote the passage cited in the paper above:

"*Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where are the medicines of sterility?* Where is there murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain only a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from

> drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? *Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation*. What then? Do you contemn the gift of God, and fight with his laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing?... Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing?... *In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife*."

There is arguably a degree of ambiguity in the Church Fathers. However, the ambiguity is of a far lesser degree. The Fathers argued most vehemently against opponents who believed the procreation of *any* children was morally wrong; contraception was seen as a duty in all intercourse, and not a personal choice for one's convenience. See Augustine as cited on page 6 above. Acknowledging that the Fathers addressed a different situation, this does not mean that, since the Fathers did not address the situation of a couple not wishing to be burdened by more children for now, the patristic arguments are inapplicable. An injunction against suicide may say something about self-mutilation even if, in the initial discussion, there was no question of mutilations that were nonlethal in character.

There is some element of something in the Fathers that can be used to support almost anything: hence Sarah Coakley's *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell 2002) teams up St. Gregory of Nyssa with Judith Butler, who is a lesbian

deconstructionist and "bad writing" award winner, in pursuing the "gender fluidity" that is greatly sought after by queer theory and feminism (157-61). For that matter, I think there is a stronger case for Arianism, from the Bible, than Zapyiris makes from the Church Fathers on contraception, and it involves less "crossing fingers." For the record, I believe the conclusions of both arguments I have brought up are heresy, but there is a reason I brought them up. We are in trouble if we only expect the truth to be able to pull arguments from the Scripture and the Fathers, or believe that an argument that draws on the Scripture and the Fathers is therefore trustworthy. My point is not so much whether Zaphiris is right or wrong as the fact that there's something that can be pulled from the Fathers in support of everything, either right *or* wrong. His argument needs to be weighed on its merits. (Or demerits.)

There is some more complexity to the discussion; I have left many things out of the shorter article, but the much even of what I have left out would make the point more strongly. Hence Noonan discusses a view that sex during pregnancy is not licit because it will not be fruitful, discusses the Stoic protest of "even animals don't do this," mentions a third-century dissenter from this view (Lactantius) who allowed sex during pregancy only as an ambivalent concession, and then the well-read researcher writes, "This... is the only opinion I have encountered in any Christian theologian before 1500 explicitly upholding the lawfulness of intercourse in pregnancy" (Noonan 1986, 78.). Properly taken in context, this would support a much stronger position than I have argued, and one less attractive today.

Is the issue complex? There's a lot here to understand. Granted. But in this case, "complex" does not mean "nothing but shades of grey," and I am at a loss for a good, honest reason to claim to provide an overview Patristic theology as relevant to contraception, while at the same time failing to mention how it condemned contraception.

## III. THE OFFICIAL TEACHING OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH ON CONTRACEPTION

> While there is not a defined statement on the morality of contraception within Orthodoxy,

To modify what I wrote above: I am not sure exactly what Zaphiris means by "defined." The Church is not considered to have "defined" *any* position on morals in the sense of infallibly pronounced doctrines. In Orthodoxy, the Seven Ecumenical Councils may create canons that are morally binding, but irreversible doctrinal declarations are mostly connected to Christology. Under that definition of "defined", the Orthodox Church would not have "defined" a ruling against contraception, *regardless* of its moral status. Neither would she have "defined" a ruling against rape, murder, or any other heinous offenses, even as she unambiguously condemns them.

This is one of several passages that raises questions of slippery rhetoric, perhaps of sophistry. Assuming that the above understanding of "defined" applies (a question which I am unsure of even if it seems that an affirmative answer would be consistent with the rest of the document), his claim is technically true. But it is presented so as to be interpreted as stating that the Orthodox Church has no real

position on the matter, unlike other moral questions where the Orthodox Church would presumably have defined a position. This understandable inference is false. The Patristic witness, and arguably the Biblical witness, in fact do treat contraception as suspicious at best. If so, this is a case of Zaphiris saying something technically true in order to create an impression that is the opposite of the truth. That is very well-done sophistry.

Zaphiris continues with a small, but telling, remark:

> there is a body of moral tradition which has a bearing on this question.

This short claim is also true. More specifically, there is a body of moral tradition which has a bearing on this question and tends to view contraception negatively.

> First, the Church vigorously denounces any obvious case of pure egotism as the motivating force in Christian sexuality within marriage. Any married couple within the Orthodox Church who want absolutely no children sins grievously against both the Christian dispensation and against the primordial purpose of human life which includes the procreation or, as the Greek Fathers prefer, the "immortality" of the human 680 species.

It seems that Zaphiris may be, for reasons of rhetoric and persuasion, providing a limit to how much he claims, so as to be more readily accepted. Zaphiris provides no footnotes or reference to sources more specific than the

"Greek Fathers" to buttress this claim, and does not provide an explanation for certain questions. One such question is why, if marriage is not morally required and celibates are *never* obligated to provide that specific support for the "immortality" of the human species, such obligation is binding on *all* married couples. Are all celibates exempt from "the primordial purpose of human life," and if so, why is it permissible to fail to meet such a foundational purpose of human life? I do not see why Zaphiris's logic justifies his making the more palatable claim that some openness towards children is mandatory.

This raises the question of whether he has a consistent position arising from his reading, or whether he is simply inventing a position and claiming he got it from the Greek Fathers.

> According to the Greek Fathers, to refuse to transmit life to others is a grievous sin of pride in which the couple prefers to keep human life for themselves instead of sharing it with possible offspring.
>
> **Zaphiris's footnotes:**
>
> 5. See, e.g., *Didache*, II, i-3, V, 2, VI, 1-2; Pseudo-Barnabas, *Epist*., XIX, 4-6, Saint Justin, 1 *Apolog*., XXVII, 1-XXIX,1; Athenagoras, *Supplic*., XXXV; *Epist*. *Ad Diogn*., 5,6; Tertullian, *Apolog*, IX, 6-8; *Ad Nationes*, I, 15; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, XXX, 2; Lactance, *Divinarum Instutionum*, VI, 20.
>
> 6. In this regard, we should stress the fact that the Greek Fathers forbid every induced abortion of a

human fetus because abortion involves tampering with a human soul. In fact, the soul is not the product of the sexual act of the parents, but is rather the manifestation of the love of God or the result of a special direct or indirect action of God (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI. 135, *et Eclogae propheticae*, 50, 1-3). A study of the means of the transmission of the soul is beyond the scope of the present paper so that we do not try to explain it here. What is important is to emphasize that the parents cannot destroy any human life—even embryonic—because the embyro carries the soul which is transmitted by God.

7. We must stress the fact that a few non-Christian philosophers took issue with the pro-abortion majority and condemned abortion. Cf. Seneca, *De Consolatione ad Helviani*, XVI, 3; R. Musunius, p. 77; Desimus Junius Juvenalis, *Satire*, VI, 595f.; Philon of Alexandria, *Hypothetia*, VII, 7 (apud Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, VIII, 7, 7).

8. Among other Greek Fathers, see Clement of Alexandria, *Eclogae propheticae*, 50, 1-3.

Secondly, the Orthodox Church, following the teachings of the Fathers,[5] is totally opposed to any form of the abortion of unborn children. Human life belongs exclusively to God and neither the mother nor the father of the fetus has the right to destroy that life.[6] When the Fathers of the Church debated against the non-Christian philosophers[7] of the first

> centuries, they considered abortion as murder because the life of the fetus is animate being.[8]

(Note, for the closing claim, that the reason Zaphiris provides is articulated in a fashion which does not apply to contraception, at least not directly: destroying a painting is wrong precisely because an existing and completed painting is a work of art. What the rhetoric says, avoids saying, and leaves the reader to infer, seems to be exquisitely crafted sophistry.)

> Thirdly, the Orthodox Church has universally condemned infanticide as immoral, following the same line of theological reasoning.

**Zaphiris's footnote:**

> 6. In this regard, we should stress the fact that the Greek Fathers forbid every induced abortion of a human fetus because abortion involves tampering with a human soul. In fact, the soul is not the product of the sexual act of the parents, but is rather the manifestation of the love of God or the result of a special direct or indirect action of God (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI. 135, *et Eclogae propheticae*, 50, 1-3). A study of the means of the transmission of the soul is beyond the scope of the present paper so that we do not try to explain it here. What is important is to emphasize that the parents cannot destroy any human life—even embryonic—because the embyro carries the soul which is transmitted by

God.

Fourthly, it is important to stress that the Orthodox Church has not promulgated any solemn statements through its highest synods on the whole contemporary question of contraception. In general, I think it is accurate to say that, as long as a married couple is living in fidelity to one another and not allowing an immoral egotism to dominate their sexual relations, the particularities of their sexual life are left to the freedom of the spouses to decide.

Finally, it is important to note that the Orthodox Church looks to the medical profession itself to come to some unanimity in its biological research on the effects of contraception for human health. At the moment, the world of science does not furnish the world of theology such a unanimous body of opinion as would allow the Church prudently to formulate unchangeable moral teaching on this point. 682

There is probably a higher class academic way of making this point, but there is a classic anecdote, rightly or wrongly attributed:

Winston Churchill to unknown woman: "Would you sleep with me for a million pounds?"

Unknown woman: "Would I!"

Winston Churchill: "Would you sleep with me for five pounds?"

Unknown woman: "Exactly what kind of woman do you think I am?"

> Winston Churchill: "We've already established that. We're just negotiating over the price."

This claim is not a claim that the theological status of contraception is to be determined by the medical profession. The paragraph quoted above means that the theological status of contraception has already been established, with the "price" left to the medical profession to work out.

> IV. A THEOLOGICAL OPINION ON THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTION
>
> **Zaphiris's footnote:**
>
> 10. Clement of Alexandria, e.g., probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy, defines marriage as "gamos oun esti synodos andros kai gynaikos e prote kata nomon epi gnesion teknon sporai," i.e. marriage is primarily the union of a man and a woman according to the law in order to procreate legitimate children (cf. *Stromata*, II, 137, 1).
>
> From the material we have surveyed above, it should be obvious that there can be no question of entering into marriage without the intention of procreating children as part of the marriage and still remain faithful to the Orthodox moral tradition.[10]

Pay very, *very* close attention to footnote 10, immediately above. When a Church Father says that marriage is for the procreation of legitimate children,

Zaphiris mentions this only in a footnote and immediately *apologizes* for it, explaining it away it as "probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy." Are we really talking about the same "Greek philosophy" as Zaphiris describes above as only rarely having people speak out against abortion? Also, it seems to me that one of the cheapest ways to immediately neuter a Church Father's position is to hazily claim that said Father was probably under the influence of Greek philosophy. Come to think of it, I do not remember reading such a dismissal ever stating where on the map of Greek philosophy the influence came from. Stoic? Epicurean? Platonist? Aristotelian? Cynic? There have got to be many more influential schools than those I pulled off the top of my head (without mentioning even neo-Platonism).

**Zaphiris's footnote:**

> 11. When the patristic theologians comment on the Pauline doctrine of I Cor. 7:4-5, they consistently stress the temporary character of the sexual abstinence which was permitted by St. Paul to the marriage partners. This temporary period would be all that a husband and wife should agree to in order to avoid the temptation to evil (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 79, 1).
>
> However, it seems to me that a different question is raised when we consider the case of a couple who already have three or four children and

> cannot realistically face the possibility of begetting more children and providing adequately for their upbringing and education. Either they can act fairly irresponsibly and beget more children or they can abstain from sexual intercourse with the constant threat that Satan may tempt the couple to some form of adultery.

I see plenty of precedent for this kind of heart-rending plea in Margaret Sanger's wake. Ordinarily when I see such a line of argument, it is to some degree connected with one of the causes Margaret Sanger worked to advance. I am more nebulous on whether the Fathers would have seen such "compassion" as how compassion is most truly understood; they were compassionate, but the framework that gave their compassion concrete shape is different from this model.

I might comment that it is almost invariably first-world people enjoying a first-world income who find that they cannot afford any more children. Are they really that much less able than people in the third-world to feed children, or is it simply that they cannot afford more children *and* keep up their present standard of living? If this choice is interpreted to mean that more children are out of the question, then what that means is, with apologies to St. John Chrysostom, a decision that luxuries and inherited wealth make a better legacy for one's children than brothers and sisters.

> If the first practice of continued sexual intercourse is pursued, there is the likelihood of an unwanted pregnancy in which case the child ceases to be a sign of

their shared love, but risks being a burden which causes only anxiety and even hostility. It is not common that people in this situation of despondency opt for the clearly immoral act of abortion. If this radical action is avoided, and the parents go through with the birth of an unwanted child, there is still the danger that they will subsequently seek a divorce.

Apart from economic or possible emotional problems which accompany economic pressures in family life, there is the equally concrete problem that the health of one of the parents or the health of the possible child might be jeopardized should conception occur.

To limit as far as possible the moral, religious, social, economic, cultural, and psychological problems which arise with the arrival of an unwanted child—both for the parents and for the larger community—I believe that the use of contraceptives would be, if not the best solution, at least the only solution we have at our disposal today. I cannot distinguish between natural and artificial means because the morality of both is the same. If someone uses either a natural or an artificial means of birth control, the intention is the same, i.e., to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. The use of contraceptives can facilitate a sexual life which enjoys a minimum of anxiety.

With these reflections on the current situation of family life and based on the above understanding of St. Paul and the Fathers, I ask myself what is better: to practice abstinence from the act of sexual intercourse, an act made holy by the blessing of God, or to practice

> a controlled sexual life within marriage and avoid the temptation of Satan? As we know, sexual intimacy within marriage is a very important 683 aspect of the relationship between husband and wife. With the use of contraceptives this sexual intimacy can be practiced without fear of unwanted pregnancy or without the danger of adultery which may result from the practice of abstinence.

Here contraceptives appear to "save the day" in terms of marital intimacy, and the question of whether they have drawbacks is not brought to the reader's attention. Zaphiris is interested, apparently, in answering the question, "What can be made attractive about contraception?" There are other ways of looking at it.

There was one time I met Fr. Richard John Neuhaus; it was a pleasure, and very different from the stereotypes I keep hearing about neoconservatives here at my more liberal Catholic school, Fordham.

At that evening, over beer and (for the others) cigars I asked about the idea that I had been mulling over. The insight is that concepts ideas and positions having practical conclusions that may not be stated in any form. I asked Fr. Neuhaus for his response to the suggestion that the practice of ordaining women is a fundamental step that may ripple out and have other consequences. I said, "It would be an interesting matter to make a chart, for mainline Protestant denominations, of the date they accepted the ordination of women and the date when they accepted same-sex unions. My suspicion is that it would not be too many years."

He responded by suggesting that I push the observation further back: it would be interesting to make a chart for

American denominations of the date when they allowed contraception, and the more nebulous date when they started to allow divorce.

Fr. Neuhaus's response raises an interesting question for this discussion. There might be greater value than Zaphiris provides in answering the question, "What are the practical effects, both positive and negative, for sexual intimacy that happen when a couple uses contraception?" There is room to argue that intimacy premised on shutting down that aspect of sharing may have some rather unpleasant effects surfacing in odd places. Fr. Neuhaus seemed to think before suggesting a connection between contraception and divorce. But this is *not* the question Zaphiris is answering; the question he seems to be answering is, "How can we present contraception as potentially a savior to some couples' marital intimacy?" This is fundamentally the wrong question to ask.

**Zaphiris's foonote:**

12. This spiritual union and the physical union are not opposed to one another, but are complementary. As an Orthodox theologian, I cannot treat physical union and spiritual union as dialectically opposed realities, which would result from an opposition between matter and spirit. Rather than getting trapped in this typically Western problem, I follow the theological stress of Orthodoxy; this opposition between matter and spirit is resolved through the Logis, and matter and spirit are affirmed to be in

extraordinary accord and synergy.

> The use of contraceptives can contribute to the possibility of a couple's having a permanent physical and spiritual union. The practice of contraception can contribute to the harmony between the man and wife which is the *sine qua non* of their union. Furthermore, the practice of contraception can facilitate a balance between demographic expansion on our planet and cultivation of its natural resources. This is absolutely essential if we are to prevent future misery and human degradation for future generations. Furthermore, the church itself, which always desires to promote the economic, social, educational, psychological, and religious well-being of its members and of all persons, should permit the practice of contraception among its faithful if it is to be true to its own task.

There was one webpage I saw long ago, comparing the 1950's and 1990's and asking whether it was still possible to make ends meet. The author, after comparing one or two of other rules of thumb, compared what was in a 1950's kitchen with what was in a 1990's kitchen, and concluded, "We're not keeping up with the Joneses any more.... We're keeping up with the Trumps."

St. John Chrysostom was cited in an academic presentation I heard, as presenting an interesting argument for almsgiving: in response to the objection of "I have many children and cannot afford too much almsgiving," said that having more children was a reason to give *more* alms, because almsgiving has salvific power, and more children have more need for the spiritual benefit of parental

almsgiving.

Besides finding the argument interesting, there is something that I would like to underscore, and it is *not* simply because this would be a family size with contraception forbidden. This is in the context of what would today be considered a third world economy—what we know as first world economy did not exist until the West discovered unprecedentedly productive ways of framing an economy. An hour's work would not buy a burger and fries; a day's work might buy a reasonable amount of bread, and meat was a rarity. Those whom St. Chrysostom was advising to give more alms since they had more children, were living in what would be considered squalor today. Or in the West the year of Zaphiris' publication, or perhaps before that.

Why is it that today, in such a historically productive economy, we have suddenly been faced with the difficulty of providing for a large family? Why does the first world present us with the (new?) issue of providing for as many children as a couple generates? My suspicion is that it is because we have an expected baseline that would appear to others as "keeping up with the Trumps." The question in Zaphiris is apparently not so much whether children can be fed, whether with a first world diet or with straight bread, as whether they can be given a college education, because, in a variation of Socrates' maxim, a life without letters after one's name is not worth living.

I would raise rather sharply the conception of what is good for human beings: as Luke 12:15 says, a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. The Orthodox ascetical tradition has any number of resources for a well-lived life. There are more resources than most of

us will ever succeed in using. The Orthodox ascetical tradition is not only for people who consider themselves rich. Is contraception *really* justified just because the average middle-class family cannot afford to bring up more than a few children in the lifestyle of keeping up with the Trumps?

> This personal theological-moral opinion which I have outlined and which suggests that we take active human measures regarding family life and the future of society does not at all imply that I reject the full importance of the action of divine providence as important—it is probably the most important factor in the human future. On the contrary, I want to suggest the cooperation of human reason with divine providence; for the Greek Fathers, human reason itself is a participation in the divine revelation. The discoveries and inventions of humankind are themselves permitted by God who governs the human spirit through the Logos without suppressing human freedom.
>
> Furthermore, we must not forget that the physiology of the woman is itself a kind of preventative to the occurrence of pregnancy. During her menstrual cycle, as is well known, she is fertile only part of the time. On the side of the male physiology, it is only by chance, and certainly not the result of every ejaculation of semen, that one of the millions of sperm swims to the ovum with final success so that conception occurs. I believe that the physical make-up of the reproductive system of both female and male shows that God did not intend that every act of human

> sexual intercourse should result in a pregnancy. Consequently, I believe that the contraceptive pill does not produce an abnormal state in woman, but rather prolongs the non-fecund period which comes from God.
>
> Having arrived at this moral opinion which would allow the use of contraceptives by Orthodox couples, it is important to conclude by underscoring several basic points. First, as an Orthodox theologian, I feel that I must respect the freedom of a married couple to ultimately make the decision themselves after I have done my best to school them in the sacredness of marriage, the importance of their union within the saving Mystery of Jesus Christ, and their role in peopling the communion of saints.
>
> 684 Secondly, it is important, from an Orthodox point of view, to recognize in the practice of sexual continence a primarily spiritual reality. That is, sexual continence should be practiced only when a couple feels that this is being asked of them by God as a moment within their mutual growth in holiness and spirituality. Any imposition of continence as a physical discipline entered into for baser motives such as fear is not the kind of continence which is counseled to us by the Gospel.

This makes an amusing, if perhaps ironic, contrast to *Humanae Vitae*. Here Zaphiris more or less says that "continence" for the sake of having sexual pleasure unencumbered by children is not *really* continence. Which I would agree with. Zaphiris says that the pill (abortifascient,

incidentally, on some accounts today) is merely regulating a natural cycle, while crying "foul!" at the Catholic claim that contraceptive timing is a spiritually commendable "continence." The Catholic position is the mirror image of this, rejecting the idea that the pill (even if it were not abortifascient) is merely regulating a natural cycle, and classifying the pill among what Catholic canon law calls "poisons of sterility." Both *Humanae Vitae* and Zaphiris make a shoddy argument for one of these two methods of contraception and cry "Foul!" about shoddy argument on the other side.

Despite the fact that Zaphiris presents himself as hostile to *Humanae Vitae* and rising above its faults, the two documents seem to be almost mirror images, more similar than different.

**Zaphiris's footnotes:**

13. As we know, the Encratites (e.g. Tatian, Cassien, and Carpocrates) condemned marriage because they considered every act of sexual intercourse as sinful. It was sinful because it did not come from God (cf. Epiphanius of Salamine, *Adv. Haer.*, I, III, 46). For them, sexuality was also condemned because of its supposed relationship to original sin. The fleshly union allowed by marriage only further propagated this original sin in the offspring. Thus, because sexuality was not divine, Jesus Christ came to suppress it (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 91, 1; 92, 1). In their doctrine, through the suppression of the fleshly union, Jesus Christ opposed the Gospel of the New Testament to the Law of the Old Testament

which had allowed sexual intercourse in marriage. The followers of the encratistic movement said that they did not accept sexuality, marriage, or procreation because they did not feel that they should introduce other human beings into the world and in their stead as their immediate successors in the human race since they would only endure suffering and provide food for death (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, III, 45, 1).

14. Cf. Joseph Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility, Situation Ethics at Wori*, (London, 1967), especially pp. 34ff.

Thirdly, I want to make it quite clear that I am not proposing a complete and unqualified endorsement of the practice of contraception. Rather I am trying to find that same kind of middle ground which the ancient church followed in condemning both the extremes of sexual puritanism among the Encratites, [13] who found in sex something contrary to the holiness of God, and the opposite extreme of pagan debauchery which sought to find all human meaning in the practices of sexual excess. Within this Christian context, I exhort doctors to be faithful to the individual holiness of every Christian man and woman and to shun any irresponsible practice of automatically counseling the use of contraceptives in every situation for the sake of mere convenience and dehumanizing utilitarianism. Also, I want to make it quite clear that I in no way support the "new morality" with its ethic of sexual activity outside the bounds of matrimony,

which is sometimes facilitated by doctors who furnish contraceptives quite freely to the young and uninstructed.

## V. THE QUESTION OF CONTRACEPTION IN RELATION TO HUMANS' ROLE AS CO-LEGISLATORS WITH GOD IN THE WORLD

The roots of the Orthodox teaching on marriage are to be found in St. Paul's statement about the love between Christ and the church, and St. John Chrysostom's view that marriage should be likened to a small church which, like the great church of 684 God, is "one, holy, universal and apostolic." The relationship between husband and wife parallels the earthly church and the eternal church, or the relationship between the visible and the invisible church. These are not two different churches; on the contrary, there is one church with two dimensions: earthly or terrestrial, and eternal or celestial. The two are inextricably linked. Similarly, marriage constitutes for the Orthodox faith both a terrestrial and a celestial reality, for marriage is both a work of human love and a sacramental means of salvation. Moreover, insofar as every divinely created being, including man and woman, is created according to the Logos, marriage reflects the Divine Logos.

For Paul, marriage is a striking manifestation (exteriorization) of the union between Jesus Christ and his church (Eph. 5:21-33). The Old Testament prophets saw marriage as a dimension of God's covenant with the people. A husband's relationship

with his wife is the same as the creature's relationship with the Creator; faithfulness in one is faithfulness in the other and, as with the faithfulness (cf. Hos. 1:1-3, 5; Jer. 3:1ff.; Ezek. 16:1ff., 23:1ff.; Isa. 50:1ff., 54:1ff.), so too Paul, in the New Testament, pronounced marriage a holy means (*mysterion* or sacrament) of Christ's grace. The marriage of man and woman participates in the marriage of Christ and the church.

Eastern Orthodox theologians view the relationship between God and human beings as a creative collaboration. It is our freedom that makes us co-creators with God in the world, and co-legislators with God in the moral order. As creatures, we are obliged to obey the law set down by the Creator, but insofar as our obedience is an expression of our freedom, we are not passive objects of God's law, but rather creative agents of it. Our reason is joined to God through the Logos (the Divine Reason). When we choose to exercise our reason in the moral life, we cooperate with God's creative work on earth. This cooperation or collaboration the Greek Fathers spoke of as synergism (synergeia). The person and work of Jesus Christ is the fullest embodiment of this synergistic union of God and humanity.

It is in the light of the synergistic union between God and humanity that the Eastern church understands and resolves the problems of contraceptives, especially the use of the pill.

I could interrupt more to ask many more questions like, "Is this what the Eastern Church should teach to be faithful

to her tradition, or what Zaphiris wants the framing metaphor for the Eastern teaching to be as a change to its prior tradition?"

> The question we should ask now is: Does our freedom to devise and employ contraceptives, including the pill, violate "natural law" as Roman Catholic teaching states? We are compelled to answer that the encyclical of Pope Paul VI (*Humanae vitae*) is lacking because it does not acknowledge the role of man and woman as God's co-creators and co-legislators on earth. The Eastern Orthodox view of contraception, unlike that of the Latin church, is that our capacity to control procreation is an expression of our powers of freedom and reason to collaborate with God in the moral order. A human being is viewed not only as a subject which receives passively the "natural law," but also as a person who plays an active role in its formulation. Thus the natural law, according to Eastern Orthodox thinkers, is not a code imposed by God on human beings, but rather a rule of life set forth by divine inspiration and by our responses to it in freedom and reason. This view does not permit the Eastern Orthodox Church to conclude that the pill, and artificial contraceptives generally, are in violation of natural law.

There are a couple of things that are significant here.

First the argument being made about being co-legislators is a point of cardinal importance and one that should *ideally* be supported by at least *one* footnote. There is an *absolute* lack of footnotes or even mention of names of

authors or titles of text in this section's quite significant assertions about the Eastern Church. (This raises to me some questions about the refereeing here. My teachers usually complain and lower my grade when I make sweeping claims without adding footnotes.)

Second, to employ a Western image, Christian freedom is comparable to a sonnet: total freedom within boundaries. Hence, in a slightly paraphrased version of one of the sayings of the Desert Fathers, "A brother asked an old monk, 'What is a good thing to do, that I may do it and live?' The old monk said, 'God alone knows what is good. Yet I have heard that someone questioned a great monk, and asked, "What good work shall I do?" And he answered, "There is no single good work. The Bible says that Abraham was hospitable, and God was with him. And Elijah loved quiet, and God was with him. And David was humble, and God was with him. Therefore, find the desire God has placed in your heart, and do that, and guard your heart."'" ( https://cjsjhayward.com/christmas_tales/ , as seen on 14 May, 2007) There is great freedom in Orthodoxy, but freedom within bounds. Things such as "Do not murder," "Do not commit adultery," and "Do not steal," are boundaries absolutely consistent with the Desert Fathers saying above. There is great freedom within boundaries, and in fact the boundaries *increase* our freedom.

What Zaphiris presents is a great, stirring, poetic hymn to our cooperation with the Creator as co-creators, presented as a reason not to require a certain bound. (It is my experience that sophistry is often presented more poetically than honest arguments.) Perhaps this would be a valid move if there were no serious issues surrounding

contraception, but as it is, it follows the logical fallacy of "begging the question": in technical usage, "begging the question" is not about *raising* a question, but improperly taking something for granted: more specifically, presenting an argument that assumes the very point that it is supposed to prove. It is begging the question to answer the question, "Why is contraception permissible?" by eloquently proclaiming, "Contraception is a *magnificent* exercise of Orthodox freedom, because Orthodox freedom is magnificent and contraception is permissible within the bounds of that freedom." The whole point at issue is whether contraception is permissible; to argue this way as a way of answering that question is sophistry.

(**I might suggest that it is an "interesting" exercise of our status as co-creators with God to try hard to shut down the creative powers God built into sex.** Perhaps the suggestion is not indefensible, but it is in *need* of being defended, and Zaphiris never acknowledges that *this* interpretation of our status as co-creators needs to be defended, or buttress his specific interpretation.)

> 686 The conception of natural law in *Humanae vitae* contains a deterministic understanding of human marital and sexual life. According to this understanding, any and every human (or artificial) intervention into the biological processes of human being constitutes a violation of God's law for humanity. Hence, contraception as an artificial interruption or prevention of the natural event of procreation is inherently a violation of God's law. *Humanae vitae*, moreover, goes on to state that each

act of coitus is, according to the law of nature, an "actus per se aptus ad generation."

While the Eastern Orthodox Church fully acknowledges the role of procreation in the marital sexual act, it does not share the deterministic understanding of this act as expressed by *Humanae vitae*, which ignores love as a dimension of great value in sexual intercourse between husband and wife. Indeed, this love is viewed by the Eastern church as the marriage partners' own response to the love of God for human beings, a human love as the marriage partners' own response to the love of God for human beings, a human love which is also a paradigm of Christ's love for the church. Finally, one must say that the deterministic Roman Catholic conception of marital sexuality, rooted as it is in scholastic medieval teaching, cannot very well deal with crucial contemporary problems such as over-population, food shortage, poverty, and insufficient medical resources.

The Roman Catholic position on human sexuality and procreation is based on the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, and these in turn are decisively influenced by Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle's view was that every object in the physical universe possesses an intelligible structure, a form which is composed of an intrinsic end and the means or "drive" to realize that end. When a thing is behaving, or being used, according to its end—as a frying pan used to fry fish—then that thing is acting properly or "naturally"; however, when a thing is not acting, or being used, according to its intrinsic end—as when a frying pan is

> used to prop open a faulty window—then that object is acting, or being used, improperly or "unnaturally."

There is a much bigger problem than a singularly unflattering illustration of the distinction between natural and unnatural use.

Unless one counts Zaphiris's example above of a theologian saying that marriage is intended for procreation, with footnoted clarification that this is "probably due to the influence of Greek philosophy," the surrounding passage (about Thomas Aquinas's discussion of whether contraception is unnatural) is the first time that Zaphiris mentions a theologian presenting an argument against contraception. And it is a Latin after the Great Schism interpreted in terms of Scholastic influence.

The following inference is not stated in so many words, but the trusting reader who is trying to be sympathetic will naturally draw an understandably wrong conclusion: "Arguments that contraception enter the picture when Aquinas as a Latin Scholastic imported Aristotelian philosophy." Again, this is not stated explicitly, but much of sophistry, including this, is the impression that is created without technically saying anything false. (This is how sophistry works.)

This will lead the trusting reader to expect another further conclusion: since (so it appears) arguments against contraception,and especially the idea of contraception being unnatural, *enter* the picture with Latin Scholasticism, any Orthodox who brings such argument against contraception is under Western influence. People who have fallen under Western influence should perhaps be answered gently and charitably, but the Western influence is not something one

should listen to and accept. Again, this is *not* stated in so many words, but it is precise the rhetoric appears to be aimed at.

Incidentally, whatever Aquinas may have gotten from Aristotle, the Greek Fathers had ideas of unnatural vice *without* the help of Latin Scholasticism. There is a firmly embedded concept of unnatural vices, including witchcraft as well as "unnatural vice." Jude 7 charges the men of Sodom with unnatural lust (*sarkos heteras*). The salient question is not whether the Greek Fathers have an understanding of *some* sins as unnatural, but whether contraception is a sin and, if so, whether it is among the sins classified as unnatural. But it is *not* automatically due to Western influence for an Orthodox to make claims about unnatural sin.

> St. Thomas attempted to synthesize Aristotle's logic of means-ends with the biblical story of the divine creator of the universe. For Aquinas, God is the author of the intelligible structure present in each finite or earthly object. When a finite being behaves according to its intrinsic end, it acts "naturally" as Aristotle thought, but according to Aquinas it also acts in accord with the divine will for that creaturely being. So it is with human sexuality and procreation. Aquinas believed that the intrinsic end of all sexuality (human and non-human) is procreation. Procreation may not necessarily result from each act of coitus, but this does not mean that the sexual (human) partners have disobeyed God for, if their aim in sexual union was procreation, they have behaved in accord with the

> divine will governing this creaturely reality. But if that intrinsic aim of sexuality-procreation is subverted, either by substituting pleasure for procreation as the aim, or by introducing artificial devices or means to inhibit or prevent procreation, then sexuality is practiced "unnaturally" or sinfully, and God is disobeyed.
>
> The wedding of Aristotle's means-ends logic to the biblical Creator meant for Aquinas that sexuality, as every other earthly vitality, is governed by laws setting forth God's intention for each creaturely being, which are knowable to every creature for 686 the proper conduct of its life on earth. When the law governing sexuality and procreation is disobeyed, then, according to Aquinas' theology, the Creation itself is undermined and God's own creative will is defied.
>
> * * *
>
> If a fuller anthropological understanding of human beings is advanced, such that people are viewed as free, rationally and spiritually, as well as biologically, a different judgment on contraception must then be made, one certainly different from that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Zaphiris is driving his persuasive effect further. He is driving home further the impression that if a misguided fellow Orthodox tells you that contraception is sin, he is presumably one of those poor saps, an Orthodox who has fallen under Western influence, and if this misguided fellow Orthodox perhaps specifies that this is because

contraception frustrates the purpose of sex, this is someone under the spell of the Roman Church, who is to be dealt with as one ordinarily deals with the pseudomorphosis of Western influence yet again corrupting Orthodoxy.

> It is the belief of Eastern Orthodox theology that only such an anthropology is consistent with the dignity the Bible bestows on humans as *imago Dei*.

Note that earlier some of what Zaphiris said *earlier* was presented as a "theological opinion," not necessarily binding on the consciences of other Orthodox Christians even if he was trying to make a case for it. But here we seem to have shifted to something that is binding on all Orthodox Christians: "It is the belief of Eastern Orthodox theology that only such an anthropology," apparently meaning the anthropology implied in the last section which makes at least one sweeping claim without footnotes or even the name of an author or text, that is binding on the consciences of Orthodox Christians. Earlier, perhaps the view of St. John Chrysostom might have been acceptable, at least as a theological opinion. Here it begins to look like a blunt declaration implying that Chrysostom's position is heretical. Is the implication, "If anybody disagrees with this, let him be anathema?"

> This dignity is revealed afresh by Jesus Christ who, as both divine and human in freedom, reason, spirit, and flesh, incarnates the complex anthropology of all human beings.
>
> Speaking from this anthropological conception of

humanity, we should distinguish three principle aspects in the use of contraceptives—the psychological, the medical, and the moral. From the psychological point of view, contraceptives are permissible only when their use is the result of a common decision reached by both partners. The imposition of contraceptives by one partner in the sexual act must be regarded as immoral inasmuch as it abridges the freedom and possibly violates the conscience of the other partner. Any use of contraceptives which does not respect the psychological condition of both partners and of the sexual act itself must be judged immoral. What should guide sexual partners in the use or non-use of contraceptives is their freedom and reason, their spiritual dignity as creatures of God.

**Zaphiris's footnote:**

15. [Footnote not recorded in my copy.]

From the medical point of view, we have mentioned above the conditions under which contraceptives are permissible. It is important to emphasize here that moral questions are not part of the technical judgments made by medical doctors about the use or non-use of contraceptives.[15] As we have said, the use of the pill is not a permanent sterilization but a temporary state of sterility induced for reasons that may be social or economic or psychological or demographic or physiological.

Contrary to Roman Catholic teaching, the pill does not violate natural law. Its function is not to bring

about a permanent state of sterilization but rather a temporary suspension of fertility. And this decision to suspend fertility, when made by both marital partners with reason and freedom and spirit, is a decision made perfectly consistent with God's will for human beings on earth.

* * *

688 There is an authentic moral question in the use and non-use of contraceptives. It is no less true that marriage as a sacramental mystery contains a powerful moral dimension. When marital partners engage in contraception, the Orthodox Church believes that they must do so with the full understanding that the goal God assigns to marriage is both the creation of new life and the expression of deeply felt love.

Note: Love is something you deeply *feel*. I do not find this notion in the Bible nearly so much as in the literature of courtly love. This conception of love is (one infers from Zaphiris) not only permissible but mandatory.

Moreover, the Orthodox Church believes that the relationship of man and woman in marriage is essentially a relationship of persons. This means that sexual life must be guided by the meaning of relationship and personhood.

Though it is obvious that procreation is a physical phenomenon, the Eastern church understands the

> decision of the married couple to have a child to be a moral, even more, a spiritual decision. The Pope's encyclical, *Humanae vitae*, in our judgment, committed a significant error. The authors of the encyclical sought to distinguish our procreative power from all other powers that make us human but, in fact, they isolate our procreativeness and set it apart from the human personality. Such an isolation does little justice to the complexity. If conjugality has as its goal *per se aptitude for procreation*, then this is a virtual denial that sexual is permissible during a woman's unfertile periods. We have said, and now repeat, that conjugality can and ahould[sic] continue, whether or not procreation is a practical possibility. In contrast to *Humanae vitae*, Orthodox thinkers do not believe that human beings are subjects bound by "natural law" in the deterministic Roman Catholic sense, but rather persons living and acting freely in the natural world.

It now appears, at least to the uninitiate or those liable to misconstrue things, that existentialist personalism is the teaching of the Orthodox Church. And apparently not just a theological opinion: one is bound to subscribe to it.

* * *

**Zaphiris's footnote:**

16. For one Orthodox discussion of the question of insemination, see the excellent book of Prof. Chrysostomos Constantinidis, *Technete*

*Gonipoiesis kai Theologia* in *Orthodoxia*, XXXIII (1958), 66-79, 174-90, 329-335, 451-468; XXXIV (1959), 36-52, 212-230.

> Eastern Orthodoxy recognizes that men and women can only truly be God's co-creators on earth through the responsible use of freedom and reason. The question of responsibility becomes crucial in such cases as permanent sterilization, artificial insemination,[16] and euthanasia. The Eastern Orthodox Church cannot and will not legislate vis-à-vis the enormously important and complicated questions raised by these cases.

I'm at this point imagining the Battle Hymn of the Republic playing in the background: "Glory, glory, Hallelujah! His truth goes marching on!" This is very stirring rhetoric, but sits ill with some of my sources and seems to be something he doesn't document well.

> These questions are regarded by the Orthodox Church as *theologoumena*, that is, theologically discussable issues. The Eastern church seeks always to respect one's freedom of decision, but it also seeks through its own ethical inquiry to guide people in making responsible decisions.

There is a lot of great rhetoric for this perspective in Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*. I am suspicious of this rhetorical version of growing to autonomous adult responsibility in its Catholic forms, and I don't see why it

needs to be incorporated into Orthodoxy.

> The Eastern church's refusal to provide specific answers to some concrete moral questions is based on a fundamental theological principle—the belief that no one can specify where human freedom ends and divine will begins.

Notwithstanding that Zaphiris has done *precisely* that, *not* by forbidding contraception altogether, but by specifying multiple lines which contraception may not pass. And, apparently, specified a line where Orthodox condemnation of contraception may not pass. But this is impressive rhetoric none the less.

> Synergism means the collaboration of human beings with God in the continuing creation of the world. We must struggle to understand the right and wrong uses of our freedom, guided by the divine spirit. Our freedom is a mystery of God's own will and freedom. Therefore, no theologian—Eastern Orthodox 689 or otherwise—can specify what finally constitutes the divine-human collaboration. Practically speaking, we can know when any given act, having taken place we can never be certain of the responsible and creative use of our freedom. We cannot determine *a priori* the movement of the human spirit any more than we can determine *a priori* the movement of the divine spirit. It is certain that, unless we recognize continually the Lordship of God in the world—the Creator judging all the actions of the creatures, we cannot speak truly of a divine-human synergism.

> The church is an instrument of the work of the Holy Spirit on earth, and must seek to relate the scriptural revelation of God to the moral situation in life which we constantly confront. When the church accepts this responsibility, it enables the participation of human beings in the on-going history of salvation. In this fashion, the church witnesses simultaneously to the sacred will of God and to the urgency of human moral life. Thereby the church avoids both antinomianism on the one side and the moral reductionism of "situation ethics" on the other side.

Many ethical approaches are presented as meant to steer a middle course between problematic extremes, including ones we might like and ones we might like. See an attempted middle road between forcing queer positions onto the Biblical text and forcing conservative positions onto the Biblical text in Patricia Beattie Jung, "The Promise of Postmodern Hermeneutics for the Biblical Renewal of Moral Theology," in Patricia Beattie Jung (ed.), *Sexual Diversity and Catholicism: Toward the Development of Moral Theology*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2001. I haven't seen this phenomenon before in Orthodoxy, but it is common in the liberal Catholic dissent I've read. The dissenter adopts a rhetorical pose of being eager to seek a measured middle course that doesn't do something extreme, and does not give unfair advantage to any position. But this is done in the course of agitating for change on a point where the Catholic teaching is unambiguous. Jung, for instance hopes for a versions Catholic ethics more congenial to lesbian wishes, but she always takes the rhetoric of

moderate and reasonable efforts that will respect Scripture and Catholic Tradition. (Again, I am comparing Zaphiris to Catholic dissent because I have not seen what he is doing here in Orthodoxy before, but have seen it *repeatedly* in liberal Catholic dissent.)

**Zaphiris's footnote:**

17. This is an expression used by Nicholas Cabasilas, an Eastern Orthodox theologian of the Byzantine era. The notion of God's *maniakos eros* is discussed by Paul Evdokimov, *L'amour fou de Dieu* (Paris, 1973).

We must conclude here by saying that God's fantastic love for human beings—*maniakos eros*[17]—has divinised all creation. With this divinisation, God achieves the purpose of bringing all beings to God's own self. We play a role in this great work of salvation through the creativeness and freedom which God has bestowed on us. These dynamic capacities of our being cannot finally be identified and understood outside the scope of the Christian doctrines of humanity (anthropology), of Christ (Christology), and of salvation (soteriology). The ultimate purpose of our synergistic relation to God is our own regeneration, as the New Testament states (cf. Rom. 8:28;Phil. 2:13; I Cor. 3:9).

**Zaphiris's footnotes:**

8 I Cor 2:7.

9 Rom 12:2.

Moreover, synergism has an ecclesiological dimension, and secondarily a moral dimension. Our role as co-legislators on earth with God can only fully be exercised in relationship to the church, which is the instrument of the communication of the Holy Spirit to humans in their creativeness. This means for Eastern Orthodoxy that the legislative and creative actions of men and women are a liturgy of the church itself. When we live in relation to the church's body, we live within "God's wisdom: a mysterious and hidden wisdom framed from the very beginning to bring us to our full glory."[18] The ecclesio-anthropo-soteriological value of this human liturgy is contained in the relation which exists between God's revelation and our activity. The harmonious cooperation between God and humans makes it possible for our legislative and creative acts to be "what is good, acceptable, and perfect."[19]

We have offered these remarks in the hope that they can contribute to a common basis for an ecumenical discussion on the contemporary human problem of contraception.

Orthodox who are concerned with ecumenism may wish to take note of this statement of authorial intent.

690

**Study and discussion questions**

1. What view concerning marriage and sexuality do we find in the Scriptures? In the early Christian writers?

2. Discuss the author's interpretation of the biblical and patristic views of marriage, sexuality, and procreation.

3. What implication concerning contraception can be derived from biblical and patristic concepts of marriage, sexuality, and procreation?

4. What are the official teachings of the Orthodox Church on contraception?

5. How do these teachings compare with Protestant and Roman Catholic teachings?

6. Under what circumstances does the author believe contraception to be theologically permissible? Discuss.

7. What is synergism?

8. How is contraception linked with synergism?

9. How is the resulting view of contraception within Orthodoxy a contrast to the Roman Catholic view?

10. Why does the Eastern Orthodox Church

> avoid concrete and decisive answers to problems such as contraception?

I have never seen *The Secret* / Bible study / book discussions questions posed like this in a refereed journal before. I suspect that these will lead people to say things that will help cement the belief that the truth is more or less what has been presented in this account. This seems in keeping with other red flags that this is doing more than just providing a scholarly account of what Orthodox believe. Perhaps this is part of why this paper's label as a "theological opinion"—about as close as Orthodoxy gets to the idea of "agreeing to disagree" on spiritual matters—has been accepted as a statement of what the Orthodox Church believes, period.

I believe this document has problems, and if as I expect it is a major influence in the "new consensus" allowing some contraception in the Orthodox Church, this constitutes major reason to re-evaluate the "new consensus."

There could conceivably be good reasons to change the ancient tradition of the Orthodox Church from time immemorial to almost the present day. *Maybe*. But this is not it. (And if these are the best reasons Zaphiris found to change the immemorial tradition of the Church, perhaps it would be better not to do so.)

# He Created Them Male and Female, Masculine and Feminine

God is the Creator and Origin of all. Leaving out of address the Problem of Evil, there is nothing good which does not issue from him.

That stated, God does have the power to create something which is both new and good, a good which is not in himself. That is an implication of the extent to which he is the Creator.

I would point to the material, physical world as a prime example of this. We are created as carnal creatures, and that is good. It is a gift given to us, and any spirituality which shuns or disdains the physical is a lie.

The physical, though, was wholly created. In history, after the Creation in Eden, God the Son became incarnate by the virgin Mary, but now (God the Father and God the Holy Spirit) and then in the three persons of God, God (was) an aphysical spirit.

When I speak of God as being masculine and not feminine, I am not asserting that femininity is an evil characteristic, or unreal, or something else of that order. Femininity was created as good. I am simply speaking of God as being masculine and not feminine.

---

I think that the Chinese concept of Yin and Yang (although not perfect for this purpose — look far enough in writings, and you will find lots of weird mysticism that wanders from truth) is capable of illuminating the matter a great deal. (I will, rather than refute, simply leave out what is inconsistent with Christian teaching)

First of all, the thought of Yin and Yang is greatly present. Something highly similar is embodied in that the structure of most languages intrinsically speaks of masculine and feminine; if I were writing this in French, at least half of the words would be masculine or feminine. It is not another superficial detail; it is a manner in which the world is seen.

Yang is the masculine, active principle; Yin is the passive, feminine principle. In a landscape, Yang is the great mountain which thrusts out and stands because that is the nature of its solid presence; Yin is the flat land or the valley whose quiet nature is there. Yang is rough and solid, the might and majesty of an organ played sforzando, the deep echo of tympani, the firmness of a rock. Yin is the soft and supple, the peacefulness of an organ (key of F) played gedekt, the sweet resonance of a soprano voice, the pliancy of velvet and water. Yang is constant and immutable; Yin is conformant and polymorphic. Yang gives; Yin receives.

The relation between God and man is the relation

between Yang and Yin.

God is HE WHO IS, the rock and foundation. In God is such power and authority that he commanded, "Let there be light," and it was so. It is God whose mere presence causes mountains to melt like wax, at whose awesome presence the prophet Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me, for I am destroyed."

God created a garden, and placed man in it, telling him to receive; he forbade eating one of the two trees in the center of the garden (the other was the Tree of Life) only after telling them to enjoy and eat freely of the trees.

Again to Noah, God gave salvation from the flood.

Abraham, God called.

Moses, God bestowed the Law.

David, God promised an heir.

Israel, God sent prophets and righteous men.

In the fullness of time, God sent his Son.

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth. Yahweh Sabaoth is with us; The God of Jacob is our fortress."

Righteousness is not something we earn; it is something Jesus earned for us when he offered one perfect sacrifice for all time. Works come because "we are sanctified by faith and faith alone, but faith which sanctifies is never alone." The forgiveness of sins is a pure and undeserved gift; the power to obey, by the motion of the Spirit is a gift. All who accept and abide in these gifts will be presented spotless before God the Father, as the bride of Christ to feast with the bridegroom in glory, joy, and peace for all eternity. Christ, like the phoenix who dies only to shoot forth blazing in new glory, afire with the power of an indestructible life, offers this life to us, that we also may receive it.

The thread running through all of these things, through

the words "Ask and receive, that your joy may be complete," indeed through all of Scripture from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, is, "I love you. Receive."

To ask if God is more like a man or more like a woman is a backwards question.

The answer instead begins by looking at God.

God is the ultimate Yang.

> "All creatures embody Yin and embrace Yang."
>
> -Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

Man, next to God, is Yin. It is only in comparison with each other that the human male is Yang and the human female is Yin; both are very Yin in the shadow of God.

It is something of this that is found in the passages that most explicitly speak of the imago dei:

> "God created man in his image; In the image of God he created him; Male and female he created them."
>
> Gen. 1:27

> "With [the tongue], we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, made in God's image."
>
> James 3:9

> "...[the man] is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man

> created for woman, but woman for man.... In the Lord, however, man is not independant of woman, nor is woman independant of man. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."
>
> I Cor. 11:7-9, 11-12

Now, before I proceed, let me issue a clear statement that this does not bear an implication of murder of a woman is no big deal, men are moral entities but women are chattels, or some other such nonsense. The Golden Rule is "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," not "Do unto other males as you would have them do unto you;" indeed, the Sermon on the Mount, Paul's letters, etc. were addressed to women as well as men. I could devote space to a detailed explanation of why it is wrong to treat women as subhuman, but I do not think that that particular problem is great enough now (at least here/in formal thought) to need a refutation, although it certainly merits a sharp reproof when it does appear.

The picture painted is one of the male being a Yin-reflection of God, and (here in a manner which is not nearly so different, and is essentially equal) the female being a Yin-reflection of God and man.

It is all humanity to which obedience means being Yin to God's Yang, being clay which is pliant and supple in the hands of the potter. It is, in my opinion, one of the great graces, along with becoming the sons and daughters of God, that the Church is/is to be the bride of Christ. (Note that in the Old Testament and the New Testament alike, the metaphor is quite specifically bride, not 'spouse' in a generic

sense and never 'husband'.)

The relation between God and man is the relation between Yang and Yin; God is more Yang than Yang. The difference dwarfs even the profound differences between human male and female. There is a sense in which the standard is the same; even in the passages in which Paul talks about this order, there is nothing of a man having a macho iron fist and a woman being a nauseating sex toy. Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as if to the Lord," comes immediately after some words that are quite unfortunately far less cited: "Believers, submit to one another in love," and the following words to husbands make an even higher call: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up to her." Elucidation elsewhere ("Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them," Col. 3:19) speaks at least as plainly; the passages addressed to wives telling them to submit are quite specifically addressed to wives, and not to husbands. The words, "Husbands, here is how you are to impose submission on your wives and keep them under control," do not appear anywhere in Scripture.

To have a man who is macho and dominant, whose ideal of the ultimate form of manhood is Arnold Schwarzenegger carrying around a Gatling gun, or to have a woman who is wishy-washy and insubstantial, who is "so wonderfully free of the ravishes of intelligence" (Time Bandits), is disagreeable. It is, however, not at all disagreeable because "All people are essentially identical, but our phallocentric society has artificially imposed these unnatural gender differences." It is not anything close to

that.

It is rather that macho and wishy-washy both represent an exceedingly shallow, flattened out (per)version of masculinity or femininity. It is like the difference between an artificial cover of politeness and etiquette over a heart of ice, and a real and genuine love.

The solution is not to become unisex, but to move to a robust, three dimensional, profound, and true masculinity or femininity. There is a distinctly masculine, and a distinctly feminine way to embody virtue. It is like eating a hot casserole as contrasted to eating a cool piece of fruit: both are good and solidly nourishing, but they are different.

[note: I handwrote this document, and decided to type it later... a part of this next paragraph will have the same effect as Paul's words, "See what large letters I am using as I write with my own hand," in the tiny print of a pocket NIV... I am choosing to leave it in, because its thought contributes something even when the script is lost]

I know that I am not the perfect image of masculinity — there is a good deal of both macho and effeminacy in me — but there is one little thing of myself that I would like to draw attention to: my handwriting, the script in which this letter is written. It should be seen at a glance by anyone who thinks about it that this was written by a male; rather than the neat, round letters of a feminine script, this script bears fire and energy. I draw this to attention because it is one example of (in my case) masculinity showing itself in even a tiny detail.

A good part of growing mature is for a man to become truly masculine, and for a woman to grow truly feminine; it is also to be able to see masculinity and femininity.

*Vive la différence!*

# A Wonderful Life

Peter never imagined that smashing his thumb in a car door would be the best thing to ever happened to him. But suddenly his plans to move in to the dorm were changed, and he waited a long time at the hospital before finally returning to the dorm and moving in.

Peter arrived for the second time well after check-in time, praying to be able to get in. After a few phone calls, a security officer came in, expressed sympathy about his bandaged thumb, and let him up to his room. The family moved his possessions from the car to his room and made his bed in a few minutes, and by the time it was down, the security guard had called the RA, who brought Peter his keys.

It was the wee hours of the morning when Peter looked at his new home for the second time, and tough as Peter was, the pain in his thumb kept him from falling asleep. He was in as much pain as he'd been in for a while.

He awoke when the light was ebbing, and after some preparations set out, wandering until he found the cafeteria. The pain seemed much when he sat down at a table. (It took

him a while to find a seat because the cafeteria was crowded.)

A young man said, "Hi, I'm John." Peter began to extend his hand, then looked at his white bandaged thumb and said, "Excuse me for not shaking your hand. I am Peter."

A young woman said, "I'm Mary. I saw you earlier and was hoping to see you more."

Peter wondered about something, then said, "I'll drink for that," reached with his right hand, grabbed a glass of soda, and then winced in pain, spilling his drink on the table.

Everybody at the table moved. A couple of people dodged the flow of liquid; others stopped what they were doing, rushing to mop up the spill with napkins. Peter said, "I keep forgetting I need to be careful about my thumb," smiled, grabbed his glass of milk, and slipped again, spilling milk all over his food.

Peter stopped, sat back, and then laughed for a while. "This is an interesting beginning to my college education."

Mary said, "I noticed you managed to smash your thumb in a car door without saying any words you regret. What else has happened?"

Peter said, "Nothing great; I had to go to the ER, where I had to wait, before they could do something about my throbbing thumb. I got back at 4:00 AM and couldn't get to sleep for a long time because I was in so much pain. Then I overslept my alarm and woke up naturally in time for dinner. How about you?"

Mary thought for a second about the people she met. Peter could see the sympathy on her face.

John said, "Wow. That's nasty."

Peter said, "I wish we couldn't feel pain. Have you thought about how nice it would be to live without pain?"

Mary said, "I'd like that."

John said, "Um..."

Mary said, "What?"

John said, "Actually, there are people who don't feel pain, and there's a name for the condition. You've heard of it."

Peter said, "I haven't heard of that before."

John said, "Yes you have. It's called leprosy."

Peter said, "What do you mean by 'leprosy'? I thought leprosy was a disease that ravaged the body."

John said, "It is. But that is only because it destroys the ability to feel pain. The way it works is very simple. We all get little nicks and scratches, and because they hurt, we show extra sensitivity. Our feet start to hurt after a long walk, so without even thinking about it we... shift things a little, and keep anything really bad from happening. That pain you are feeling is your body's way of asking room to heal so that the smashed thumbnail (or whatever it is) that hurts so terribly now won't leave you permanently maimed. Back to feet, a leprosy patient will walk exactly the same way and get wounds we'd never even think of for taking a long walk. All the terrible injuries that make leprosy a feared disease happen *only* because leprosy keeps people from feeling pain."

Peter looked at his thumb, and his stomach growled.

John said, "I'm full. Let me get a drink for you, and then I'll help you drink it."

Mary said, "And I'll get you some dry food. We've already eaten; it must—"

Peter said, "Please, I've survived much worse. It's just a bit of pain."

John picked up a clump of wet napkins and threatened to throw it at Peter before standing up and walking to get something to drink. Mary followed him.

Peter sat back and just laughed.

John said, "We have some time free after dinner; let's just wander around campus."

They left the glass roofed building and began walking around, enjoying the grass and the scenery.

After some wandering, Peter and those he had just met looked at the castle-like Blanchard Hall, each one transported in his imagination to be in a more ancient era, and walked around the campus, looked at a fountain, listened to some music, and looked at a display of a giant mastodon which had died before the end of the last ice age, and whose bones had been unearthed in a nearby excavation. They got lost, but this was not a terrible concern; they were taking in the campus.

Their slow walk was interrupted when John looked at his watch and realized it was time for the "floor fellowship." and orientation games.

Between orientation games, Peter heard bits of conversation: "This has been a bummer; I've gotten two papercuts this week." "—and then I—" "What instruments do you—" "I'm from France too! *Tu viens de Paris?*" "Really? You—" Everybody seemed to be chattering, and Peter wished he could be in one of—actually, several of those conversations at once.

Paul's voice cut in and said, "For this next activity we are going to form a human circle. With your team, stand in

a circle, and everybody reach in and grab another hand with each hand. Then hold on tight; when I say, "Go," you want to untangle yourselves, without letting go. The first team to untangle themselves wins!"

Peter reached in, and found each of his hands clasped in a solid, masculine grip. Then the race began, and people jostled and tried to untangle themselves. This was a laborious process and, one by one, every other group freed itself, while Peter's group seemed stuck on—someone called and said, "I think we're knotted!" As people began to thin out, Paul looked with astonishment and saw that they were indeed knotted. "A special prize to them, too, for managing the best tangle!"

"And now, we'll have a three-legged race! Gather into pairs, and each two of you take a burlap sack. Then—" Paul continued, and with every game, the talk seemed to flow more. When the finale finished, Peter found himself again with John and Mary and heard the conversations flowing around him: "Really? You too?" "But you don't understand. Hicks have a slower pace of life; we enjoy things without all the things you city dwellers need for entertainment. And we learn resourceful ways to—" "—and only at Wheaton would the administration *forbid* dancing while *requiring* the games we just played and—" Then Peter lost himself in a conversation that continued long into the night. He expected to be up at night thinking about all the beloved people he left at home, but Peter was too busy thinking about John's and Mary's stories.

The next day Peter woke up his to the hideous sound of his alarm clock, and groggily trudged to the dining hall for coffee, and searched for his advisor.

Peter found the appropriate hallway, wandered around

nervously until he found a door with a yellowed plaque that said "Julian Johnson," knocked once, and pushed the door open. A white-haired man said, "Peter Jones? How are you? Do come in... What can I do for you?"

Peter pulled out a sheet of paper, looked down at it for a moment and said, "I'm sorry I'm late. I need you to write what courses I should take and sign here. Then I can be out of your way."

The old man sat back, drew a deep breath, and relaxed into a fatherly smile. Peter began to wonder if his advisor was going to say anything at all. Then Prof. Johnson motioned towards an armchair, as rich and luxurious as his own, and then looked as if he remembered something and offered a bowl full of candy. "Sit down, sit down, and make yourself comfortable. May I interest you in candy?" He picked up an engraved metal bowl and held it out while Peter grabbed a few Lifesavers.

Prof. Johnson sat back, silent for a moment, and said, "I'm sorry I'm out of butterscotch; that always seems to disappear. Please sit down, and tell me about yourself. We can get to that form in a minute. One of the priveleges of this job is that I get to meet interesting people. Now, where are you from?"

Peter said, "I'm afraid there's not much that's interesting about me. I'm from a small town downstate that doesn't have anything to distinguish itself. My amusements have been reading, watching the cycle of the year, oh, and running. Not much interesting in that. Now which classes should I take?"

Prof. Johnson sat back and smiled, and Peter became a little less tense. "You run?"

Peter said, "Yes; I was hoping to run on the track this afternoon, after the lecture. I've always wanted to run on a real track."

The old man said, "You know, I used to run myself, before I became an official Old Geezer and my orthopaedist told me my knees couldn't take it. So I have to content myself with swimming now, which I've grown to love. Do you know about the Prairie Path?"

Peter said, "No, what's that?"

Prof. Johnson said, "Years ago, when I ran, I ran through the areas surrounding the College—there are a lot of beautiful houses. And, just south of the train tracks with the train you can hear now, there's a path before you even hit the street. You can run, or bike, or walk, on a path covered with fine white gravel, with trees and prairie plants on either side. It's a lovely view." He paused, and said, "Any ideas what you want to do after Wheaton?"

Peter said, "No. I don't even know what I want to major in."

Prof. Johnson said, "A lot of students don't know what they want to do. Are you familiar with Career Services? They can help you get an idea of what kinds of things you like to do."

Peter looked at his watch and said, "It's chapel time."

Prof. Johnson said, "Relax. I can write you a note." Peter began to relax again, and Prof. Johnson continued, "Now you like to read. What do you like to read?"

Peter said, "Newspapers and magazines, and I read this really cool book called *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Oh, and I like the Bible."

Prof. Johnson said, "I do too. What do you like about it most?"

"I like the stories in the Old Testament."

"One general tip: here at Wheaton, we have different kinds of professors—"

Peter said, "Which ones are best?"

Prof. Johnson said, "Different professors are best for different students. Throughout your tenure at Wheaton, ask your friends and learn which professors have teaching styles that you learn well with and mesh well with. Consider taking other courses from a professor you like. Now we have a lot of courses which we think expose you to new things and stretch you—people come back and see that these courses are best. Do you like science?"

"I like it; I especially liked a physics lab."

Prof. Johnson began to flip through the course catalogue. "Have you had calculus?" Prof. Johnson's mind wandered over the differences between from the grand, Utopian vision for "calculus" as it was first imagined and how different a conception it had from anything that would be considered "mathematics" today. Or should he go into that? He wavered, and then realized Peter had answered his question. "Ok," Prof. Johnson said, "the lab physics class unfortunately requires that you've had calculus. Would you like to take calculus now? Have you had geometry, algebra, and trigonometry?"

Peter said, "Yes, I did, but I'd like a little break from that now. Maybe I could take calculus next semester."

"Fair enough. You said you liked to read."

"Magazines and newspapers."

"Those things deal with the unfolding human story. I wonder if you'd like to take world civilization now, or a political science course."

"History, but why study world history? Why can't I just study U.S. history?"

Prof. Johnson said, "The story of our country is intertwined with that of our world. I think you might find that some of the things in world history are a lot closer to home than you think—and we have some real storytellers in our history department."

"That sounds interesting. What else?"

"The Theology of Culture class is one many students find enjoyable, and it helps build a foundation for Old and New Testament courses. Would you be interested in taking it for A quad or B quad, the first or second half of the semester?"

"Could I do both?"

"I wish I could say yes, but this course only lasts half the semester. The other half you could take Foundations of Wellness—you could do running as homework!"

"I think I'll do that first, and then Theology of Culture. That should be new," Peter said, oblivious to how tightly connected he was to theology and culture. "What else?"

Prof. Johnson said, "We have classes where people read things that a lot of people have found really interesting. Well, that could describe several classes, but I was thinking about Classics of Western Literature or Literature of the Modern World."

Peter said, "Um... Does Classics of Western Literature cover ancient and medieval literature, and Literature of the Modern World cover literature that isn't Western? Because if they do, I'm not sure I could connect with it."

Prof. Johnson relaxed into his seat. "You know, a lot of people think that. But you know what?"

Peter said, "What?"

"There is something human that crosses cultures. That is why the stories have been selected. Stories written long ago, and stories written far away, can have a lot to connect with."

"Ok. How many more courses should I take?"

"You're at 11 credits now; you probably want 15. Now you said that you like *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. I'm wondering if you would also like a philosophy course."

Peter said, "*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* is... I don't suppose there are any classes that use that. Or are there? I've heard Pirsig isn't given his fair due by philosophers."

Prof. Johnson said, "If you approach one of our philosophy courses the way you approach *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, I think you'll profit from the encounter. I wonder if our Issues and Worldviews in Philosophy might interest you. I'm a big fan of thinking worldviewishly, and our philosophers have some pretty interesting things to say."

Peter asked, "What does 'worldviewishly' mean?"

Prof. Johnson searched for an appropriate simplification. "It means thinking in terms of worldviews. A worldview is the basic philosophical framework that gives shape to how we view the world. Our philosophers will be able to help you understand the basic issues surrounding worldviews and craft your own Christian worldview. You may find this frees you from the Enlightenment's secularizing influence—and if you don't know what the Enlightenment is now, you will learn to understand it, and its problems, and how you can be somewhat freer of its

chain."

Peter said, "Ok. Well, I'll take those classes. It was good to meet you."

Prof. Johnson looked at the class schedule and helped Peter choose class sections, then said, "I enjoyed talking with you. Please do take some more candy—put a handful in your pocket or something. I just want to make one more closing comment. I want to see you succeed. Wheaton wants to see you succeed. There are some rough points and problems along the way, and if you bring them to me I can work with them and try to help you. If you want to talk with your RA or our chaplain or someone else, that's fine, but please... my door is *always* open. And it was good to meet you too! Goodbye!"

Peter walked out, completely relaxed, and was soon to be energized in a scavenger hunt searching for things from a dog biscuit to a car bumper to a burning sheet of paper not lit by someone in his group, before again relaxing into the "brother-sister floor fellowship" which combined mediocre "7-11 praise songs" (so called because they have "7 words, repeated 11 times") with the light of another world shining through.

It was not long before the opening activities wound down and Peter began to settle into a regular routine.

Peter and Mary both loved to run, but for different reasons. Peter was training himself for various races; he had not joined track, as he did in high school, but there were other races. Mary ran to feel the sun and wind and rain. And, without any conscious effort, they found themselves running together down the prairie path together, and Peter clumsily learning to match his speed to hers. And, as time passed, they talked, and talked, and talked, and talked, and

their runs grew longer.

When the fall break came, they both joined a group going to the northwoods of Wisconsin for a program that was half-work and half-play. And each one wrote a letter home about the other. Then Peter began his theology of culture class, and said, "This is what I want to study." Mary did not have a favorite class, at least not that she realized, until Peter asked her what her favorite class was and she said, "Literature."

When Christmas came, they went to their respective homes and spent the break thinking about each other, and they talked about this when they returned. They ended the conversation, or at least they thought they did, and then each hurried back to catch the other and say one more thing, and then the conversation turned out to last much longer, and ended with a kiss.

Valentine's Day was syrupy. It was trite enough that their more romantically inclined friends groaned, but it did not seem at all trite or syrupy to them. As Peter's last name was Patrick, he called Mary's father and prayed that St. Patrick's Day would be a momentous day for both of them.

Peter and Mary took a slow run to a nearby village, and had dinner at an Irish pub. Amidst the din, they had some hearty laughs. The waitress asked Mary, "Is there anything else that would make this night memorable?" Then Mary saw Peter on his knee, opening a jewelry box with a ring: "I love you, Mary. Will you marry me?"

Mary cried for a good five minutes before she could answer. And when she had answered, they sat in silence, a silence that overpowered the din. Then Mary wiped her eyes and they went outside.

It was cool outside, and the moon was shining brightly. Peter pulled a camera from his pocket, and said, "Stay where you are. Let me back up a bit. And hold your hand up. You look even more beautiful with that ring on your finger."

Peter's camera flashed as he took a picture, just as a drunk driver slammed into Mary. The sedan spun into a storefront, and Mary flew up into the air, landed, and broke a beer bottle with her face.

People began to come out, and in a few minutes the police and paramedics arrived. Peter somehow managed to answer the police officers' questions and to begin kicking himself for being too stunned to act.

When Peter left his room the next day, he looked for Prof. Johnson. Prof. Johnson asked, "May I give you a hug?" and then sat there, simply being with Peter in his pain. When Peter left, Prof. Johnson said, "I'm not just here for academics. I'm here for you." Peter went to chapel and his classes, feeling a burning rage that almost nothing could pierce. He kept going to the hospital, and watching Mary with casts on both legs and one arm, and many tiny stitches on her face, fluttering on the borders of consciousness. One time Prof. Johnson came to visit, and he said, "I can't finish my classes." Prof. Johnson looked at him and said, "The college will give you a full refund." Peter said, "Do you know of any way I can stay here to be with Mary?" Prof. Johnson said, "You can stay with me. And I believe a position with UPS would let you get some income, doing something physical. The position is open for you." Prof. Johnson didn't mention the calls he'd made, and Peter didn't think about them. He simply said, "Thank you."

A few days later, Mary began to be weakly conscious.

Peter finally asked a nurse, "Why are there so many stitches on her face? Was she cut even more badly than—"

The nurse said, "There are a lot of stitches very close together because the emergency room had a cosmetic surgeon on duty. There will still be a permanent mark on her face, but some of the wound will heal without a scar."

Mary moved the left half of her mouth in half a smile. Peter said, "That was a kind of cute smile. How come she can smile like that?"

The nurse said, "One of the pieces of broken glass cut a nerve. It is unlikely she'll ever be able to move part of her face again."

Peter looked and touched Mary's hand. "I still think it's really quite cute."

Mary looked at him, and then passed out.

Peter spent a long couple of days training and attending to practical details. Then he came back to Mary.

Mary looked at Peter, and said, "It's a Monday. Don't you have classes now?"

Peter said, "No."

Mary said, "Why not?"

Peter said, "I want to be here with you."

Mary said, "I talked with one of the nurses, and she said that you dropped out of school so you could be with me.

"Is that true?" she said.

Peter said, "I hadn't really thought about it that way."

Mary closed her eyes, and when Peter started to leave because he decided she wanted to be left alone, she said, "Stop. Come here."

Peter came to her bedside and knelt.

Mary said, "Take this ring off my finger."

Peter said, "Is it hurting you?"

Mary said, "No, and it is the greatest treasure I own. Take it off and take it back."

Peter looked at her, bewildered. "Do you not want to marry me?"

Mary said, "This may sting me less because I don't remember our engagement. I don't remember anything that happened near that time; I have only the stories others, even the nurses, tell me about a man who loves me very much."

Peter said, "But don't you love me?"

Mary forced back tears. "Yes, I love you, yes, I love you. And I know that you love me. You are young and strong, and have the love to make a happy marriage. You'll make some woman a very good husband. I thought that woman would be me.

"But I can see what you will not. You said I was beautiful, and I was. Do you know what my prognosis is? I will probably be able to stand. At least for short periods of time. If I'm fortunate, I may walk. With a walker. I will never be able to run again—Peter, I am nobody, and I have no future. Absolutely nobody. You are young and strong. Go and find a woman who is worth your love."

Mary and Peter both cried for a long time. Then Peter walked out, and paused in the doorway, crying. He felt torn inside, and then went in to say a couple of things to Mary. He said, "I believe in miracles."

Then Mary cried, and Peter said something else I'm not going to repeat. Mary said something. Then another conversation began.

The conversation ended with Mary saying, "You're stupid, Peter. You're really, really stupid. I love you. I don't

deserve such love. You're making a mistake. I love you." Then Peter went to kiss Mary, and as he bent down, he bent his mouth to meet the lips that he still saw as "really quite cute."

The stress did not stop. The physical therapists, after time, wondered that Mary had so much fight in her. But it stressed her, and Peter did his job without liking it. Mary and Peter quarreled and made up and quarreled and made up. Peter prayed for a miracle when they made up and sometimes when they quarreled. Were this not enough stress, there was an agonizingly long trial—and knowing that the drunk driver was behind bars didn't make things better. But Mary very slowly learned to walk again. After six months, if Peter helped her, she could walk 100 yards before the pain became too great to continue.

Peter hadn't been noticing that the stress diminished, but he did become aware of something he couldn't put his finger on. After a night of struggling, he got up, went to church, and was floored by the Bible reading of, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." and the idea that when you do or do not visit someone in prison, you are visiting or refusing to visit Christ. Peter absently went home, tried to think about other things, made several phone calls, and then forced himself to drive to one and only one prison.

He stopped in the parking lot, almost threw up, and then steeled himself to go inside. He found a man, Jacob, and... Jacob didn't know who Peter was, but he recognized him as looking familiar. It was an awkward meeting. Then he recognized him as the man whose now wife he had

crippled. When Peter left, he vomited and felt like a failure. He talked about it with Mary...

That was the beginning of a friendship. Peter chose to love the man in prison, even if there was no pleasure in it. And that created something deeper than pleasure, something Peter couldn't explain.

As Peter and Mary were planning the wedding, Mary said, "I want to enter with Peter next to me, no matter what the tradition says. It will be a miracle if I have the strength to stand for the whole wedding, and if I have to lean on someone I want it to be Peter. And I don't want to sit on a chair; I would rather spend my wedding night wracked by pain than go through my wedding supported by something lifeless!"

When the rehearsal came, Mary stood, and the others winced at the pain in her face. And she stood, and walked, for the entire rehearsal without touching Peter once. Then she said, "I can do it. I can go through the wedding on my own strength," and collapsed in pain.

At the wedding, she stood next to Peter, walking, her face so radiant with joy that some of the guests did not guess she was in exquisite pain. They walked next to each other, not touching, and Mary slowed down and stopped in the center of the church. Peter looked at her, wondering what Mary was doing.

Then Mary's arm shot around Peter's neck, and Peter stood startled for a moment before he placed his arm around her, squeezed her tightly, and they walked together to the altar.

On the honeymoon, Mary told Peter, "You are the only person I need." This was the greatest bliss either of them had known, and the honeymoon's glow shined and shined.

Peter and Mary agreed to move somewhere less expensive to settle down, and were too absorbed in their wedded bliss and each other to remember promises they had made earlier, promises to seek a church community for support and friends. And Peter continued working at an unglamorous job, and Mary continued fighting to walk and considered the housework she was capable of doing a badge of honor, and neither of them noticed that the words, "I love you" were spoken ever so slightly less frequently, nor did they the venom and ice creeping into their words.

One night they exploded. What they fought about was not important. What was important was that Peter left, burning with rage. He drove, and drove, until he reached Wheaton, and at daybreak knocked on Prof. Johnson's door. There was anger in his voice when he asked, "Are you still my friend?"

Prof. Johnson got him something to eat and stayed with him when he fumed with rage, and said, "I don't care if I'm supposed to be with her, I can't go back!" Then Prof. Johnson said, "Will you make an agreement with me? I promise you I won't ever tell you to go back to her, or accept her, or accept what she does, or apologize to her, or forgive her, or in any way be reconciled. But I need you to trust me that I love you and will help you decide what is best to do."

Peter said, "Yes."

Prof. Johnson said, "Then stay with me. You need some rest. Take the day to rest. There's food in the fridge, and I have books and a nice back yard. There's iced tea in the—excuse me, there's Coke and 7 Up in the boxes next to the fridge. When I can come back, we can talk."

Peter relaxed, and he felt better. He told Prof. Johnson.

Prof. Johnson said, "That's excellent. What I'd like you to do next is go in to work, with a lawyer I know. You can tell him what's going on, and he'll lead you to a courtroom to observe."

Peter went away to court the next day, and when he came back he was ashen. He said nothing to Prof. Johnson.

Then, after the next day, he came back looking even more disturbed. "The first day, the lawyer, George, took me into divorce court. I thought I saw the worst that divorce court could get. Until I came back today. It was the same—this sickening scene where two people had become the most bitter enemies. I hope it doesn't come to this. This was atrocious. It was vile. It was more than vile. It was—"

Prof. Johnson sent him back for a third day. This time Peter said nothing besides, "I think I've been making a mistake."

After the fourth day, Peter said, "Help me! I've been making the biggest mistake of my *life*!"

After a full week had passed, Peter said, "*Please*, I *beg* you, don't send me back there."

Prof. Johnson sent Peter back to watch a divorce court for one more miserable, excruciating day. Then he said, "Now you can do whatever you want. What do you want to do?"

The conflict between Peter and Mary ended the next day.

Peter went home, begging Mary for forgiveness, and no sooner than he had begun his apology, a thousand things were reflected in Mary's face and she begged his forgiveness. Then they talked, and debated whether to go back to Wheaton, or stay where they were. Finally Mary said, "I really want to go back to Wheaton."

Peter began to shyly approach old friends. He later misquoted: "I came crawling with a thimble in the desparate hope that they'd give a few tiny drops of friendship and love. Had I known how they would respond, I would have come running with a bucket!"

Peter and Mary lived together for many years; they had many children and were supported by many friends.

The years passed and Peter and Mary grew into a blissfully happy marriage. Mary came to have increasing health problems as a result of the accident, and those around them were amazed at how their love had transformed the suffering the accident created in both of their lives. At least those who knew them best saw the transformation. There were many others who could only see their happiness as a mirage.

As the years passed, Jacob grew to be a good friend. And when Peter began to be concerned that his wife might be... Jacob had also grown wealthy, very wealthy, and assembled a top-flight legal team (without taking a dime of Peter's money—over Peter's protests, of course), to prevent what the doctors would normally do in such a case, given recent shifts in the medical system.

And then Mary's health grew worse, much worse, and her suffering grew worse with it, and pain medications seemed to be having less and less effect. Those who didn't know Mary were astonished that someone in so much pain could enjoy life so much, nor the hours they spent gazing into each other's eyes, holding hands, when Mary's pain seemed to vanish. A second medical opinion, and a third, and a fourth, confirmed that Mary had little chance of recovery even to her more recent state. And whatever

measures been taken, whatever testimony Peter and Mary could give about the joy of their lives, the court's decision still came:

> The court wishes to briefly review the facts of the case. Subject is suffering increasingly severe effects from an injury that curtailed her life greatly as a young person. from which she has never recovered, and is causing increasingly complications now that she will never again have youth's ability to heal. No fewer than four medical opinions admitted as expert testimony substantially agree that subject is in extraordinary and excruciating pain; that said excruciating pain is increasing; that said excruciating pain is increasingly unresponsive to medication; that subject has fully lost autonomy and is dependent on her husband; that this dependence is profound, without choice, and causes her husband to be dependent without choice on others and exercise little autonomy; and the prognosis is only of progressively worse deterioration and increase in pain, with no question of recovery.
>
> The court finds it entirely understandable that the subject, who has gone through such trauma, and is suffering increasingly severe complications, would be in a state of some denial. Although a number of positions could be taken, the court also finds it understandable that a husband would try to maintain a hold on what

> cannot exist, and needlessly prolong his wife's suffering. It is not, however, the court's position to judge whether this is selfish...
>
> For all the impressive-sounding arguments that have been mounted, the court cannot accord a traumatized patient or her ostensibly well-meaning husband a privelege that the court itself does not claim. The court does not find that it has an interest in allowing this woman to continue in her severe and worsening state of suffering.

Peter was at her side, holding her hand and looking into his wife's eyes, The hospital doctor had come. Then Peter said, "I love you," and Mary said, "I love you," and they kissed.

Mary's kiss was still burning on Peter's lips when two nurses hooked Mary up to an IV and injected her with 5000 milligrams of sodium thiopental, then a saline flush followed by 100 milligrams of pancurium bromide, then a saline flush and 20 milligrams of potassium chloride.

A year later to the day, Peter died of a broken heart.

# Knights and Ladies

I would like to talk about men and women and the debate about whether we are genuinely different or whether this aspect of our bodies is just packaging that has no bearing on who we are. I would like to begin by talking about three things:

- "Egalitarianism," which says not only that men and women are due equal respect but the differences are differences of body only and not differences of mind, heart, and spirit.

- "Complementarianism," which says that there are real and personal differences, and men and women are meant to complement each other.

- Why the debate between egalitarianism and complementarianism is like a car crash.

# Egalitarianism, Complementarianism, and Car Crashes

I was in a theology class when the professor argued emphatically that for two claims to contradict each other, one *must* be the exact opposite of the other. With the example he gave, it sounded fairly impressive, and it took me a while to be able to explain my disagreement.

Saying, for one claim to contradict another, that one must be the *exact* opposite of the other, its mirror image, is like saying that you can only have an auto collision if the two cars are the same kind of car, with the same shape, and they must be perfectly aligned when they hit each other—because if there's part of one car that doesn't touch the other car, then there hasn't been a *real* collision.

That is simply wrong. In the world of cars, only the tiniest fraction of collisions are two identical cars, hitting each other dead center to dead center. When there's a collision, it is usually two different things which hit off center. And the same is true of ideas. Most collisions in the realm of ideas are two very different things, *not* mirror images. What happens is that one piece of one of them, perhaps the leftmost edge of the bumper, hits one piece of the other, *and in both that one piece is connected to the whole structure*. There is much more involved in the collision, on *both* sides, than that one little bit.

A debate many Christians care about, the debate between the feminist-like egalitarians and the more traditional complementarians, is interesting. (I'll say

'complementarian' for now, even though I don't like the term.) It is interesting as an example of a debate where the collision is *not* between mirror images. Egalitarianism is not the mirror image of complementarianism, and complementarianism is not the mirror image of egalitarianism. They are very different beasts from each other.

Although this is only the outer shell, egalitarians are usually better communicators than complementarians. Most egalitarians make an explicit claim and communicate it very powerfully. Complementarians usually have trouble *explaining* their position, let alone presenting it as compellingly as egalitarians do. This has the effect that people on *both* sides have a much clearer picture of what egalitarian stands for than what complementarianism stands for. The egalitarian claim is often backed by a coherent argument, while the complementarian claim may have Biblical proof texts but often has little else.

I would like to try and suggest what complementarians have so much trouble explaining.

# Colors

When I took a cognitive science class, the professor explained a problem for cognitive science: 'qualia'. A computer can represent red and green as two different things. As far as theory problems go, that's *easy* to take care of. The problem is that the computer knows red and green are different only as we can know that two numbers are different. It can't deal with the redness of the red or the greenness of the green: in other words it lacks *qualia*. It can know things are different, but not experience them as really,

*quali*tatively different.

Some people can only hear complementarianism as rationalising, "White is brighter than black." Yet it is foundationally a claim of, "Red is red and green is green."

I don't like the term 'complementarian.' It tells part of the truth, but not enough—a property you can see, but not the essence. I would suggest the term 'qualitarian,' for a belief in qualia and qualitative differences. The term's not perfect either, but it's describing some of the substance rather than detail. From here on I'll say 'qualitarian' rather than 'complementarian' to emphasise that there are qualia involved.

With that mentioned, I'd like to make the most unpalatable of my claims next, and hope that if the reader will be generous enough not to write me off yet, I may be able to make some coherent sense.

# The Great Chain of Being

This is something that was important to many Christians and which encapsulates a way of looking on the world that *can* be understood, but takes effort.

**God**

**Angels**

**Humans**

**Animals**

## Plants

## Rocks

## Nothing

The Great Chain of Being was believed for centuries. When the people who believed it were beginning to think like moderns, the Great Chain of Being began to look like the corporate ladder. If there were things above you, you wanted to climb higher because it's not OK to be *you* if someone else is higher than you. If there were things above you, you wanted to look down and sneer because there was something wrong with anything below you. That's how heirarchy looks if the only way you can understand it is as a copy of the corporate ladder.

Before then, people saw it differently. To be somewhere in the middle of the great order was neither a reason to scorn lower things nor covet higher places. Instead, there was a sense of connection. If we are the highest part of the physical creation, then we are to be its custodian and in a real sense its representative. If we are spirits as well, we are not squashed by the fact that God is above us; the one we should worship looks on us in love.

Unlike them, our culture has had centuries of democracy and waving the banner of equality so high we can forget there are other banners to wave. We strive for equality so hard that it's easy to forget that there can be other kinds of good.

The Great Chain of Being is never explained in the

Bible, but it comes out of a certain kind of mindset, a mindset better equipped to deal with certain things.

There's an old joke about two people running from a bear. One stops to put on shoes. The other says, "What are you doing?" The first says, "I'm stopping to put on tennis shoes." The second says, "You can't outrun the bear!" "I don't need to outrun the bear. I only need to outrun you."

One might imagine a medieval speaking with a postmodern. The medieval stands in his niche in the Great Chain of Being and stops. The postmodern says, "Why are you stopping?" The medieval says, "I want to enjoy the glorious place God has granted me in the Great Chain of Being." The postmodern says, "How can you be happy with that? There are others above you." The medieval says, "Not all of life is running from a bear."

What am I trying to say? Am I saying, for instance, that a man is as high above a woman as God is above an angel? *No*. All people—men, women, young, old, infant, red, yellow, black, white—are placed at the same spot on the Great Chain of Being.

The Bible deals with a paradox that may be called "equality with distinction". Paul writes that "In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek", yet claims that the advantage of the Jew is "much in every way." Biblical thinking has room to declare both an equality at deepest level—such as exists between men and women—*and* recognize a distinction. There is no need to culturally argue one away to defend the other. Both are part of the truth. It is good to be part of a Creation that is multilayered, with inequality and not equality between the layers. If this is so, how much more should we be able to consider distinction with fundamental

equality without reading the distinction as the corporate ladder's abrasive inequality?

One writer talked about equality in relation to containers being full. To modify her image, Christianity wants *all* of us to be as full as possible. However, it does not want a red paint can to be filled with green paint, nor a green paint can to be filled with red paint. It wants the red and green paint cans to be equally full, but does not conclude that the green can is only full if it has the same volume of red paint as the red paint can. It desires equality in the sense of everyone being full, but does not desire e-*qual*-ity (being without a *qual*-itative difference), in the sense of *qualia* being violated.

# Zen and the Art of Un-Framing Questions

May we legitimately project man-like attributes up on to God?

Before answering that question, I'd like to suggest that there are assumptions made by the time that question is asked. The biggest one is that God is gender-neutral, and so any talking about God as masculine is projecting something foreign up on to him.

The qualitarian claim is *not* that we may legitimately project man-like attributes up on to God. It is that God has projected God-like attributes down on to men. Those are different claims.

> A feminist theologian said to a master, "I think it is important that we keep an open mind and avoid confining God to traditional categories of gender."

The master said, "Of course. Why let God reveal himself as masculine when you can confine him to your canons of political correctness?"

I can't shake a vision of an articulate qualitarian giving disturbing answers to someone's questions and sounding like an annoying imitation of a Zen master:

**Interlocutor:**
What would you say to, "A woman's place is in the House—and in the Senate!"?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Well, if we're talking about disrespectful, misogysnistic... Wait a minute... Let me respond to the intention *behind* your question.

Do you know the Bible story about the Woman at the Well?

**Interlocutor:**
Yes! It's one of my favorite stories.

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Do you know its cultural context?

**Interlocutor:**
Not really.

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Most Bible stories—including this one—speak for themselves. A few of them are much richer if you know

cultural details that make certain things significant.

Every recorded interaction between Jesus and women, Jesus broke rules. To start off, a rabbi wasn't supposed to talk with women. But Jesus *really* broke the rules here.

When a lone woman came out and he asked for water, she was shocked enough to ask *why* he did so. And there's something to her being alone.

Drawing water was a communal women's task. The women of the village would come and draw water *together*; there was a reason why *this* woman was alone: no one would be caught dead with her. Everyone knew that *she* was the village slut.

Her life was dominated by shame. When Jesus said, "...never thirst again," she heard an escape from shamefully drawing water alone, and she asked Jesus to help her hide from it. When he said to call her husband, she gave an evasive and ambiguous reply. He gave a very blunt response: "You are right in saying you have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband."

*Yowch.*

Instead of helping her run from her shame, Jesus pulled her *through* it, and she came out the other side, running without any shame, calling, "Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did!"

There's much more, but I want to delve into one specific detail: there was something abnormal about her drawing water alone. Drawing water was women's work. Women's work was backbreaking toil—as was men's work—but it was not done in isolation. It was something done in the company of other people.

It's not just that one culture. There are old European paintings that show a group of women, bent over their washboards, talking and talking. Maybe I'm just romanticizing because I haven't felt how rough washboards are to fingers. But I have a growing doubt that labor-saving devices are all they're cracked up to be. Vacuum cleaners were introduced as a way to lessen the work in the twice-annual task of beating rugs. Somehow each phenomenal new labor-saving technology seems to leave housewives with even more drudgery.

I have sympathy for feminists who say that women are better off doing professional work in community than doing housework in solitary confinement. I think feminists are probably right that the *Leave It to Beaver* arrangement causes women to be lonely and depressed. (I'm not sure that "Turn the clock back, *all* the way back, to *1954!*" represents the best achievement conservatives can claim.)

The traditional arrangement is not Mom, Dad, two kids, and nothing more. Across quite a lot of cultures and quite a lot of history, the usual pattern has kept

extended families together (seeing Grandma didn't involve interstate travel), and made those extended families part of an integrated community. From what I've read, women are happier in intentional communities like Reba Place.

**Interlocutor:**
Do you support the enfranchisement of women?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Let me visit the dict.org website. Webster's 1913 says:

> Enfranchisement \En*fran"chise*ment\, n.
> 1. Releasing from slavery or custody. —Shak.
>
> 2. Admission to the freedom of a corporation or body politic; investiture with the privileges of free citizens.
>
> Enfranchisement of copyhold (Eng. Law), the conversion of a copyhold estate into a freehold. —Mozley & W.

WordNet seems less helpful; it doesn't really mention the sense you want.

> enfranchisement
> 1: freedom from political subjugation or servitude
> 2: the act of certifying [syn: certification] [ant: disenfranchisement]

If I were preaching on your question, I might do a Greek-style exegesis and say that your choice of languages fuses the egalitarian request to grant XYZ with the insinuation that their opponents' practice is equivalent to slavery. Wow.

I think you're using loaded language. Would you be willing to restate your question in less loaded terms?

**Interlocutor:**
Ok, I'll ask a different way, but will you *promise* not to answer with a word-study?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Ok, I won't answer with a word-study unless you ask.

**Interlocutor:**
Do you believe that women have the *same* long list of rights as men?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Hmm... I'm trying to think about how to answer this without being misleading...

**Interlocutor:**
Please answer me *literally*.

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
I'm afraid I'm going to have to say, "No."

**Interlocutor:**
But you at least believe that women have *some* rights, correct?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
No.

**Interlocutor:**

*What?!?*

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
I said I wouldn't give a word-study...

Is it OK if I give a comparable study of a *concept*?

**Interlocutor:**
[Quietly counts to ten and takes a deep breath:] Ok.

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
I don't believe that women have any rights. I don't believe that men have any rights, either. The Bible doesn't use rights like we do. It answers plenty of questions we try to solve with rights: it says we shouldn't murder, steal, and so on. But the older Biblical way of doing this said, "Don't do this," or "Be like Christ," or something like that.

Then this really odd moral framework *based on* rights came along, and all of a sudden there wasn't a universal law against unjustified killing, but an entitlement not to be killed. At first it seemed not to make much difference. But now more and more of our moral reasoning is in terms of 'rights', which increasingly say, not "Don't do this," or "You must do that," but "Here's the long list of entitlements that the universe *owes* me." And that has meant some truly strange things.

In the context of the concrete issues that qualitarians discuss with egalitarians, the Biblical concept of seeking the good of all is quietly remade into seeking

the enfranchisement of all, and so it seems that the big question is whether women get the same rights as men —quite apart from the kind of situation where language comparing your opponents' behavior to slavery is considered polite.

**Interlocutor:**
Couldn't we listen to, say, Eastern Philosophy?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
There's a lot of interesting stuff in Eastern philosophy. The contrast between Confucian and Taoist concepts of virtue, for instance, is interesting and worth exploring, especially in *this* nexus. I'm really drawing a blank as to how one could get a rights-based framework from Asian philosophy. And I'm not sure African mindsets would be much more of a help, for instance. Even if you read one Kwaanza pamphlet, it's hard to see how individual rights could come from the seven African values. The value of Ujima, or collective work and responsibility, speaks even less of individual rights than, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

**Interlocutor:**
Ok, let me change the subject slightly. Would you acknowledge that Paul was a progressive?

**Articulate Qualitarian:**
Hmm... reminds me of a C.S. Lewis book in which Lewis quotes a medieval author. The author is talking about some important Greek philosopher and says,

> "Now when we come to a difficulty or ambiguity, we should always ascribe the views most worthy of a man of his stature."
>
> Lewis's big complaint was that this kind of respect *always* reads into an author the biases and assumptions of the reader's age. It honors the author enough to think he believed what we call important, but not enough that the author can disagree with our assumptions *and be able to correct us*.
>
> When we ask if Paul is a progressive, there are two basic options. Either we say that Paul was not a progressive, and relegate him to our understanding of a misogynist, or we generously overlook a passage here and there and generously include him as one of our progressives.
>
> It seems that *neither* response allows Paul to be an authority who knows something we don't.

On second thought, maybe it's a *good* thing there aren't too many articulate qualitarians.

# Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus… and Gender Psychologists are from the Moon

When pop psychology talks about gender, it is trying to make academic knowledge available to the rest of us. An academic textbook by Em Griffin illustrates Deborah Tannen's theories, saying, "Jan hopes she's marrying a 'big

ear'." This thread is picked up very well in popular works.

William Harley's *His Needs, Her Needs* is a sort of Christianized *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. Harley devotes a full chapter to explaining that one of the most foundational needs for a husband to understand is a woman's need for listening. He devotes a full chapter to convincing husbands that it is essential that they listen to everything their wives want to say. It was perhaps because reading this work (and *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, part of *You Just Don't Understand*, etc.) that I was shocked when I reread C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*. It was much more than Mother Dimble's words, "Husbands were made to be talked to. It helps them concentrate their minds on what they're reading..."

The shock was deep. It wasn't like having a rug pulled out from under your feet. It was more like standing with your feet on bare floor and having the *floor* pulled out from under your feet.

The gender books I'd read, both Christian and non-Christian, made a seamless fusion of the basic raw material, and one *particular* interpretation. The interpretation was as hard to doubt as the raw material itself—and one couldn't really see the fusion as something that *can* be questioned. It was like looking at a number of startlingly accurate pictures of scenes on earth—and then realising that all the pictures were taken from the moon.

*That Hideous Strength* suggests an answer to the question, "How else could it be?" I'm hesitant to suggest everyone else will have the same experience, but...

If we look at a Hollywood movie targeting young men, there will be violent action, a fast pace, and a sense of

adventure. A movie made for young women will have people talking and delving into emotions as they grow closer, as they grow into more mature relationships. If we sum these up in a single word, the men's movie is full of *action*, and the women's movie is filled with *relationship*.

Aristotle characterized masculinity as active and femininity as passive. It seems clear to me that he was grappling with a real thing, the same thing that shapes our movie offerings. It also seems clear that he didn't quite get it right. Masculinity is active. That much is correct. But femininity is not described by the *absence* of such action. It's described by the *presence* of relationship. It seems that the following can be said:

- Aristotle was grappling with, and trying to understand, something real.

- Even though he's observing something real, his interpretation was skewed.

These two things didn't stop with Aristotle. If a thinker as brilliant as Aristotle fell into this trap, maybe gender psychology is also liable to stumble this way, too. (Or at least *today's* gender psychology stumbles this way. If you're willing to listen to people who look and talk a bit different and are a bit older than us, Charles Shedd's *Letters to Karen* and *Letters to Philip* are examples of slightly older books worth the time to look at.)

# Christian Teaching

About this point, I expect a question like, "Ok, men

reflect the masculine side of God. But don't you have a place for femininity, and can't women reflect the feminine side of God?"

This is a serious question, and it reflects a serious concern. Many Hindus believe that everything is either part of God or evil: your inmost spirit is a real part of God, and your body is intrinsically evil and illusory like everything else physical. I'm told that Genesis 1 was quite a shocker when it appeared—not, so much, because it says we're made in the image of God, but because after the stars, rocks, plants, and animals were created, the text keeps on saying, "And God saw that it was *good*." That's really a staggering suggestion, if you knew the other nations' creation stories. The Babylonians believed that the god Marduk killed the demoness Tiamat, tore her dragon carcass apart, and made half of it the land and half of it the sky. So your body and mine, every forest, every star, is part of a demon's carcass that happens to be left over after a battle.

Please think about this claim for a minute, and then look at part of Genesis 1:

- Creation didn't happen as a secondary result of divine combat. God created the world because he specifically wanted to do so.

- Physical matter, and life, and everything else, is *good*.

- God made us in his image. Only then was his creation very good, and complete.

One thing that comes out of these things is that *God*

*can create good.* God created the physical world without being physical. Our bodies, indeed the whole natural world, are good, because God created something outside of himself. Femininity is like this, only much more so. *Femininity is a created good,* and it is much more beautiful, more mysterious, more wondrous, more powerful thing than physical matter. People are the unique creation where matter meets spirit—no other creation can claim that. Women are the unique point where spirit meets the very apex of femininity.

Every woman is a mystery, and every man is a king. To be a Christian man is to be made like the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There is something kingly and lordly about manhood. Part of this is understood when you realize that this does *not* mean domineering other people and standing above them, but standing under them, like the servant king who washed feet. The sign and sigil of male authority is not a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns.

But all this is a hint. I give sketch here and there, and I hope less to provide an inescapable logical framework than suggest entry points that can look into the Bible and see these things.

I'd like to give a glimpse of the qualities:

# Qualia

### Lord Adam, Dragonslayer

If you could see Adam, you would see a knight, in burnished armor brightly gleaming, astride a white horse. What you wouldn't see is why the armor shines brightly. It is not burnished by him, nor any other human hands, but the claws of the dragons he wars against. Under his helmet

is a lion's mane of thick hair and beard. Under his breastplate are scars, some quite close to his heart.

This knight errant yearns for quests. Something difficult, something dangerous, something active. Some place to prove himself by serving in a costly way. He longs for that battle when his blood will mingle with that of his fellow warriors and he may at last embark on the last great adventure.

He has a lord above him, to whom he owes allegiance and honor. He is also a mentor, turning his face to a squires whom he focuses on and draws up. He draws them, as he was drawn, out of the comfort of home, into the mysteries of life, and into the company of men and society to reconnect more deeply. He has tried to explain that siring a child is something an impudent youth can do, but being a spiritual father is the mark of a *man*.

Once his mind is on a task, it moves forward from beginning to end. It moves with the force of an avalanche. He does one task at a time, and wants to do it well.

There is another side to his seriousness. He can be deadly serious, but there is a merry twinkle in his eye. His force and his energy are too much to contain, and he is capable of catching people off guard. (Especially in his practical jokes.) Like the lion, he is not safe and not tame; he is both serious and silly, and can astound in both. When he plays with children, playing with him is both like playing with a kitten and playing with a thunderstorm.

To his lady Adam turns with reverence. She is a wonder to him. The extravagance of the quests she bids him and he embarks on, is a spectacular offshoot of his more quiet service in private. Though Adam would never see it this

way, he is taller when he bows and kisses her hand, and richer when he gives her a costly gift.

His honor is his life, and wants to live and act as a son of God. He believes that faith *works*, and strives to show virtue and behave in a manner worthy of Christ.

**Favorite Scripture Passage:**

"And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

**A Quote:**

"God, give me mountains to climb and the strength for climbing."

## Lady Eve, Poet's Heart

If you could see Eve at her best, she would be beside a fire, inside a great hall. She would be stoking a fire with one hand, another hand would call forth forth music from a silver harp, another hand would be writing a letter, and she would use both hands to embrace the sorrowing child on her lap in comforting love. And she would do this lightly, joyfully, with a smile from the other side of pain. Though Eve sits still, one can almost see her dancing. It would take time to see all her many layers of beauty... if that were even possible. *What is the secret behind her enigmatic smile? What deep mysteries lie hidden in her heart of hearts?*

Her beauty is as a rose: a ladder of thorns leads up to a flower so exquisite as to be called God's autograph. She toils hard, and it is difficult to see lines of pain in her face only because she has worked through them so that they have become part of her joy. She knows a mother's worry, and she looks on others with a mother's caring eyes. She looks with the joy on the other side of sorrow.

Her home is her castle, and it is a castle she tries to run well. Adam... well, dear man as he is, he isn't very good with managing resources. She runs the castle in an orderly and efficient manner, and as the lady in charge, she handles well a great many things that her lord wouldn't know how to begin doing. The castle is their castle, of course, but there are things that need attending to so that Adam can continue slaying dragons. Yet to say that is to put last things first. The reason she handles so many taxing details is that Adam is the light of her life, her king and her lord, her bright morning star.

She turns to her loom as a place to make wall hangings. At least, that's what someone would say if he missed the point completely. She makes beautiful wall hangings, but there's more.

The loom is a centering place for her, a quieting place. After other things happen that take processing, she settles into that peace. Her heart is quieted as she lets it all sort out.

That quieting is not far from her mystic's heart. She is mystery and lives in connection with the mystery of faith. There is One she is closer to than her lord, and presence, mystical communion, dwelling in the presence of the divine, is precious to her.

**Favorite Scripture Passage:**

"Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

**A Quote:**

"Little surprises and big hugs and kisses.
Musical dances and bright reminisces,
Quiet with stories and roast leg of lamb,
People who value me for who I am,
Something to say and someone who will hear it,
A home in good order and a mystical spirit,
Warm fireside chats and a minstrel who sings,
These are a few of my favorite things."

*Jonathan Hayward*, with thanks to Martin, Phil, Mary, Xenia, Patrick, Yoby, Mom, and Kathryn.