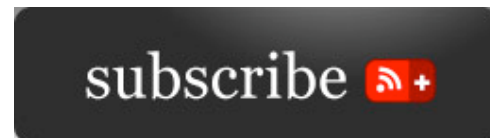


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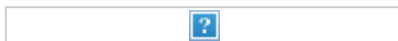
SEARCH



Does Christianity Squash Women?

Rebecca Jones

In her book, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us*, Danielle Crittenden makes the following statement:



"Unfortunately, there is no contemporary model for a marriage in which our modern belief in sexual equality could be reconciled with the inherent differences of our sexual natures." (p.110)

I hope to inspire you this evening by showing you how the Christian faith offers just such a model. By providing the transcendent marriage relationship of everlasting love between God the Creator/Redeemer and His people (the heavenly marriage which is the climax of redemptive history), Christianity provides a taproot into genuine power, lasting love and true freedom and reproduces just such fruits in the marriages of those who belong to Christ.

What Are Women Seeking?

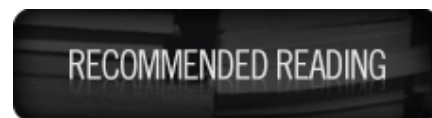
In my own experience with women in the thirty years since I graduated from college, I have found that most of them--whether Christian or atheist, single or married, aged twenty or seventy--long for the same things. In their relationships with men, they want faithful fathers, brothers, husbands and sons who love and respect them, rather than mocking, ignoring, or hurting them. They want fun, but meaningful sexual relationships. In their relationships with women, they want honesty, and true sisterhood, as well as older women who can mentor them. They want the satisfaction of bearing and rearing children well. They want a place to call home--not simply an apartment, but an affectionate, safe "sit by the fire" home where they can be themselves without fear and where

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What is the Resurgence?

The Resurgence is a movement that resources multiple generations to live for Jesus so that they can effectively reach their cities with the Gospel by staying culturally accessible and Biblically faithful.



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others can come to receive something from them. They want a sense of significance, of doing something that really counts in the world. Something only they can offer.

Because some of these desires seem mutually exclusive, women have given up their hopes in one realm in order to explore a path of satisfaction in another. Thinking that freedom from authority structures might give them a sense of individual identity, they have advocated autonomy. Remember Kate Millett's statement in 1970: "Women's autonomy is what women's liberation is all about."¹ Thinking that men needed to learn some things about treating women with respect, they have tried to power them into that behavior. Thinking that they could assert their worth and individuality by affirming their control over their own bodies, they have chosen to claim a right to sexual satisfaction without constraints and to abortion without guilt. Thinking that the best way to bear and rear children is to have fewer children later in life, they have placed career before children, both chronologically and sometimes in terms of value. Thinking that freedom must behead the king, they have stormed the palace of the ultimate Patriarch, the Christian God.² (Take, for example, the statement by Virginia Mollenkott, until recently identified by Christians as an evangelical, "Patriarchy is a profoundly mistaken social system that has caused misery to millions and could yet cause the destruction of human kind and the planet we share together."³)

No one will deny the revolution which women have affected in the last thirty years. I will not list all the changes that have occurred. But where are women now? Are they any happier than they were when I graduated from Wellesley College in 1971, in the middle of the full feminist march to independence?

Has the Sexual Revolution Made Women Happier?

Danielle Crittenden describes her research into this question. "Women today enjoy unprecedented freedom and opportunity," she states.


So why, I'd wondered, were the articles in women's magazines so relentlessly pessimistic? I'd pulled thirty years' worth of back issues of *Mademoiselle*, *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *McCall's* from the stacks of the Library of Congress, It was partly from reading magazines like these that Betty Friedan had concluded in 1963 that the women of her generation felt unhappy and stifled. A huge social transformation had taken place...Had it made women any happier?

...From...a general gauge of mood,...the answer was, resoundingly, no.⁴

According to Crittenden, women today are more likely to be divorced or never married, more likely to bear children out of wedlock, more likely to be junkies or drunks or to die in poverty. They are more likely to shoulder the lion's share of the housework, even if they work outside the home. Her thought-provoking way of stating the problem is to say that thirty years ago too many women were not treated as humans, while today, too many humans are not treated as women. She quotes one frustrated female college student who says about men, "All the men want to do is



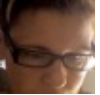





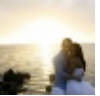



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Real Men Are Bridesmaids
"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not

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"Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under

hook up--and most of them don't even call in the morning....the more casual that women allow their physical relationships with men to become, the less respect they earn. Men don't date us because they don't have to."⁵

As the mother of five daughters, only one of whom has found "her man," I hear a daily critique of today's young men, who float like spineless jellyfish, adrift in a sea of uncertainty, without direction, purpose or courage.

Is it possible to find balanced relations between the sexes? Can a woman find and commit to a man who is neither tyrant nor wimp? Can she find satisfaction in her home without losing a sense of identity in the larger world? Can she rear children without becoming their slave?

Covenant Relationships Satisfy a Woman's Desires

Women can have satisfying relationships. They can discover worth both within and outside of the family. They can hope to create a true home, and to bear children to men who are faithful to them. A happy woman, like a happy man, is a woman whose relationships are grounded in a covenant. I realize that this word is obsolete. In San Diego, it is used to describe a particularly desirable and expensive neighborhood. Everyone dreams of living in "The Covenant." Tonight I would like you to open your thinking to the possibility of living in The Covenant., an even more desirable and expensive neighborhood than its reflection in San Diego.

A covenant is a contractual agreement between two parties in which each is to fulfill certain responsibilities. Rewards result when the covenant is kept. Consequences occur when the covenant is broken. We enter into covenants constantly. We sign credit card agreements, mortgages, software licenses, educational loans, and our tax returns. Our signature states our promise to abide by certain rules and affirms that we realize the consequences of breaking those rules. Though we sometimes regret having signed certain promises, we are often glad, on the other hand, that our signature guarantees us protection and coverage. Remember the relief you experienced when you went back to the fine print and discovered that your credit card insurance *does* cover that accident you had in the rental car?

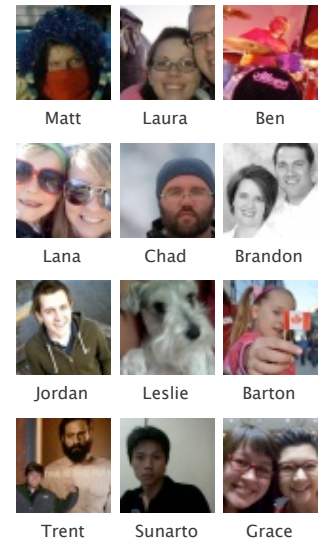
Both women and men need covenantal structure if their relationships are to be satisfying. Covenant relationships are based on mutual trust, which is in turn based on commitment.

Covenant Relationships Are Sure

Though human promise is not infallible, it is genuinely valuable. We prize those people in our lives whose word is true. We choose friends who are honest about themselves and about life, even if their honesty sometimes reminds us of our own weaknesses. But honesty is not the only criterion for a promise. For a covenant arrangement to take place, trustworthiness is joined by commitment: "I will be faithful to you until death." A man's trustworthiness is useless to a woman until he makes that promise to her. And his promise is worthless unless it is backed by his trustworthy

but willingly,
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character.

But here we have a problem. Two human beings cannot promise such fidelity to each other without accepting the notion of sacrifice. A man and a woman who promise fidelity to each other are declaring that self-sacrifice is a necessary element in making another person happy. A covenant promise of faithfulness implies a promise of sacrifice: I will put your needs above my own. Or, as my college motto goes, *non ministrari sed ministrare*. Not to be ministered unto, but to minister. I sometimes tell my children that there is only one argument I would like to hear: "You go first!" "No, you go first!"

Covenant Relationships Are Personal

Promises engage us as individuals. They assume that we are other than rocks and trees. There is a "face to face" notion about vows that recognizes an equal value to each individual and an equally important value to the unit created by the joining of those two individuals. Adam's first reaction to Eve was the Hebrew equivalent of a "Wow!" followed by the "in your face" nature of Eve's relationship to him: "Wow! Surely *this* is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones."

Some personal promises are corporate. Legal contracts can treat a group of individuals as a single person. Communities are bound by the promises their legislators make for them in relation to the state. A class of children can commit with a teacher to presenting a play for the school. In class action lawsuits, individuals share a particular identity in order to present a case. But in the marriage vow, the commitments are made by one individual to another.

Covenant Relationships Involve the Whole Person

The promises made in a covenant marriage structure are such that both body and soul are engaged. For true marital fidelity, these two must be kept together, in order to avoid the two extremes created when a Gnostic split between the physical and the spiritual is allowed. When such a split occurs, the body can be given over to debauchery (since it is of lesser importance) or controlled by asceticism (which denies bodily joys because the physical is considered evil). True covenant relationship between a man and his wife allows a man to see his wife's physical beauty and rejoice, while also loving her as a person. It allows a woman to absorb the physical attention of her husband without refusing the soul attachment that is linked to it. Spirituality and physicality join for true communion.

Covenant Relationships Are Intimate

Trust allows honesty. Honesty within a couple means that love continues in spite of weak or willfully selfish behavior. The grace necessary in such relationships engenders tenderness and forgiveness which when received, creates a desire to render in kind. When a woman senses that her man knows everything about her and loves her still, she is truly able to experience intimacy. As Lord Peter Wimsey, speaking to his wife Harriet says, in Dorothy Sayers and Jill Pator Walsh's, *Thrones, Dominations*: "You have unmasked me, and loved me all the same." This intimacy is founded on grace and forgiveness.

All of the above elements are impossible to create in one's own strength. An absolutely sure promise can only come from an absolutely honest, absolutely sacrificial person. A truly personal relationship can only be created between two perfect people. A perfectly unity of body and soul can only come from someone who understands and controls both. And true intimacy can only occur between two people who are either perfect, or perfectly able to forgive at all times.

The Christian Gospel is the Only Basis for Covenant

So how can two faithless human beings expect honesty and trust from each other? How can women trust men, after all that men have done to them, whether in history or on a personal level? And how can men trust women not to manipulate them or take advantage of their willingness to be vulnerable?

There is only one source of certainty, of wholeness, of personality, of intimacy. This source is the creative Person who made the world to reflect such qualities, found initially only in the Creator. All humans are capable of covenant because they are made in the image of the One who created them. However, those who rely on the Creator for the strength, humility and love to live out their own marriage covenants (or other human covenantal relationships), will construct stronger bonds than those who are "borrowing" qualities they do not respect or claim as their own.

The Christian understands the fundamental, created order which God has placed in this world, and receives the power to overcome evil, which has twisted that order, making a parody of it. For us to understand the limited covenant a woman makes with a man in marriage, we must understand that such a covenant is only a shadow of a greater Covenant.

The Family Covenant Reflects God the Creator's Nature

Unbreakable--"I Am Who I Am"

God has set up a covenant structure with His creatures. There is a great Cosmological Arrangement, a Contract with the Universe, that carries promises and consequences. Of course, when two human beings enter into an arrangement, they seal it before some court or authority that will move in to administer justice, should something go wrong. However, God can swear by nothing greater than Himself. As the author to the book of Hebrews says,

Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms that is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. (**Hebrews 6:16-19**)

This unshakable nature of God and His oath, sworn on His own being and name, provides the foundation for the Cosmic Covenant, and serves

as the court of justice for all human relationships. Only when we understand and commit to the terms of this greater covenant can we understand the implications of the lesser ones, for they are all intimately related in purpose and function to that universal covenant. Both God's creation and His covenants reflect his character and show us something of who He is.

Separate--Face to Face

In the person of God exists the separateness that we grapple with in the couple. In God the Father is authority, initiating love, creative power, and the origins of compassion. In God the Son is the equal but submissive expression of the Father, "the radiance of the Father's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). The Son both expresses the Father's glory and receives the Father's glory. The Spirit is the great communicator, the heart-changer, who reveals the nature of God, convicts of sin, shows the beauty of God's righteousness, reveals the truth of God's Word, guides, urges, counsels, conquers, and woos on behalf of the Father and the Son.

The equality of person-ness and the separateness of functions is one of the great beauties and mysteries of the trinity. I do not pretend to wrap my small mind around this infinite treasure, but one thing I know. God created structures in this universe to show us Himself. The separateness and equality of people in a family--the male as husband and father, the female as wife and mother, and children of both sexes as equal reflections of both the mother and the father, yet separate individuals in subjection to their parents--these human relationships, mysterious enough as they are, reflect the greater depth and breadth of love expressed in the fathomless trinity.

United

In that relationship of triune perfection we have the source of infinite love, of absolute communion, of indivisible fidelity, of burning honesty, of intense joy, and ultimate peace. In our society today a great urge for unity sweeps the globe. We all sense that one-ness is necessary if our world is to make sense. In the trinity we find ultimate unity, the basis for our own human unity. Jesus prays to the Father for His disciples, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one" ([John 17:11](#)). Christians know how to maintain their identity, yet find true unity with one another. And a Christian man and his wife have this foundation laid out for them in their marriage.

God Created Men and Women

I am not implying that by looking at human relationships as God has created them we will be able to understand everything there is to know about the person of God. But God freely offers a great wealth of knowledge about Himself, which He shows us both in His world and in His Word. And we never want to define Him by our understanding. We will find great satisfaction, however, in defining ourselves by His.

Separate

God created men and women to be not only separate individuals, as are two men or two women, but separate kinds of individuals, made to complement one another and to "fit" together, thus reflecting a greater truth about God than any two or more members of the human race could show in any other relationship. Marriage has a special place in God's creation both as an expression of His being, and as an expression of His redemptive plan. In creating such objective differences, God underlines in the very structure of His creation, the one underlying difference we must admit--the separateness of God Himself from His creation.

However, this separateness is not one of isolation or cosmic loneliness. We are made separate, but we are made for communion.

Equal

God creates men and women equal. The Bible is full of evidence of the ontological equality of men and women before the throne. They are both heirs of the covenant of grace, accomplished by Jesus' death and resurrection ([Gal. 3:28](#); [1 Peter 3:7](#)). Both are in God's image ([Gen. 1:27](#)). Both answer to God for their own sin. Both receive the Spirit and are made sons of God. Both are commissioned to subdue the earth and to fill it ([Gen. 1:28](#)). Both, by faithfully fulfilling their roles of husband and wife, participate in the incarnation of Christ.⁶

Both receive spiritual gifts with which they serve Christ, His church and the world.

In His Image

When we speak of being created in the image of God, we must not define the Creator in terms of the creature. The queen of underland in C. S. Lewis' book, *The Silver Chair*, tries to argue Puddleglum, the Prince, Jill and Scrubb into thinking that underland is the only world there is. The three friends, under the thrumming spell of the queen's music, and the magic power of a powder she has thrown on the fire, struggle to affirm the reality of the sun. "Then came the Witch's voice, cooing softly, "What is this sun that you speak of?...What is it like?"...

"You see that lamp," replies the Prince. "Now that thing which we call the sun is like the lamp, only far greater and brighter." The queen laughs. "When you try to think out clearly what this sun must be, you can only tell me it is like the lamp. Your sun is a dream."⁷

Although created things do give us a hint about God's nature, we cannot create God merely by what we see. We understand that the created structures in which we live, though valid and good, are but a weak reflection of His being. Thus for mankind to be created in the image of God, male and female, is not to say that "God" is both "male and female," some kind of androgynous reflection of human nature. Rather, we must say that both "male and female" reflect something of who God is. God's

person-ness is much greater than ours, yet our created, personal nature reflects God's personhood.

For Relationship with Him and with Each Other

We are created for relationship with our Creator first of all, and then also for relationship with other human beings. God is a relational being. Within His own nature He was already communicating, loving, initiating, responding, rejoicing, and experiencing community before human beings ever existed. He did not create man because He was inherently lonely. But when He did create man, He created Him in His image for relationship first of all with Himself, and also with other humans. The first human relationship God created was that of husband and wife. God did not need the vows of the man to the woman or the woman to the man, promising fidelity to each other, though perhaps they made them. He created that first male-female relationship as a *de facto* marriage. Adam's faithfulness to God implied a faithfulness not only to his role of caretaker of creation, but also in his faithfulness to the woman God created. And Eve's faithfulness to God implies a faithfulness to the man already created. We were created already in relationship to God, already in relationship to one another, male and female.

First in their state of perfection and later in their fallen state, God asks of them obedience and promises them His presence.

Relationship in Families

God has set us in families. "Sing to God," says [Psalm 68:4ff](#). "His name is the Lord--a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families and leads forth prisoners with singing." In [Ephesians 3:14](#), the apostle Paul says he "kneels before the Father, from whom all fatherhood derives its name." God has placed family structures in the world not only for our benefit but to show us a shadow of the beauty of the trinity, for in God's person are caught up all the glories of personal relationship, communion, communication, fellowship, love and face-to-faceness.

In Societies

An extension of the order of the family is found in society. Though the structure of the only eternal Kingdom is obviously a theocracy, such an order cannot be imposed politically. Jesus reprimands Peter when he takes up the sword in a vain attempt to establish Christ's rule by use of the sword. I am not a political theorist, but perhaps it is fair to say that the best expressions of the various political structures reflect some aspect of God's rule. Democracy is evidence of the individual value with which God has endowed men. Monarchy reflects the benevolent rule of God, the King of kings. A theistic communism might emphasize the sacrificial kindness that humans ought to be showing to one another. It seems to me that if you put perfect people into any political structure, society would work just fine. I am not competent to think through the implications of the Christian faith in the area of political science. However, God has asked us to be obedient to the authorities insofar as their requests do not require us to disobey God's commands. "Everyone must submit himself to the

governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" ([Acts 13:1](#)). However, there is a hierarchy of authority structures, and obedience to God comes above all other fidelity: "Peter and the other apostles replied (to the Jewish authorities), "We must obey God rather than men!" ([Acts 5:29](#)).

As a Church

The Redeemed family of God is called His bride. The salvation story is pictured in the book of Hosea, in which God continues to woo His people, though they are unfaithful to Him. Hosea is called to marry a prostitute and to keep on loving her no matter what. Again and again he rescues her. It is hard to explain to those who are not children of God in Christ just what the church represents for those of us who are Christians.

Cutting through all social and economic differences, cutting across all language barriers, the Church is a family that allows honesty, intimacy, trust, and a sisterhood/brotherhood that is quite mysterious. The bonds of love that knit Christians together surpass blood ties. I don't mean to say that Christians are always consistent with the structures God has created for them in the church. We are no more consistent in our church structures than we are in our marriage structures, but the structures are not at fault.

God Communicates with Men and Women

Defines Their Being

I have neither the time nor the ability to show you all the richness of God's communication with us. But pick up a Bible and read it from cover to cover before making declarations about it. Set down an open challenge to God, "If you really exist, God, then I want to know if You are revealing Yourself in this book." I have no trouble believing that I have not created myself and that if I am to find out how to be happy and function in this world, I need to find it out from the person who made me. Christians are sometimes accused of being proud for their exclusivity. But I beg to differ. What humility it takes to allow oneself to be defined from the outside! What arrogance it would be to make myself the starting point of defining my own person or the world around me. No, I wish to discover the real me. I want to know from the One who made it all who I am, who He is, and how to love Him, to discover Him, to glorify Him.

When we moved from France to the United States in 1991, one of my daughters was thirteen. She is a graceful girl and from the time she was very small, had spent many hours putting on dances, plays, songs, and other such "shows" for us. Her natural bent was towards music, acting and singing. However, when she went off to American high school, these gifts were not particularly valued. I watched her struggle to express herself by learning to play basketball. Now, I'm not saying she couldn't have fun learning to play basketball, but she made herself quite unhappy during her high school years, trying to conform to an image imposed on her by those around her, instead of developing the nature she had been given.

Now this is not an exact illustration, for although I had a good idea of my daughter's skills and nature, I didn't create her. But her struggles are a good picture of what we do to ourselves. God, who created us, knows exactly what will make us happy. If we bother to ask Him, He will show us how to flower and develop, how to follow our true nature. However, if we listen to the voices of those around us, we are more than likely to end up miserable and unfulfilled, trying to play basketball, so to speak, rather than dancing. Why should I think that a group of selfish, limited human beings who don't know me and won't care what happens to me, should know more about what will make me happy than my heavenly Father, who made me, who grieves over my loneliness, who has shown me the blueprint of my life, and who has sent His own Son to die for me?

Defines their Roles

God defines how we are to relate to Him and to one another. Fortunately, we are not left to guess these things. He has revealed His mind about them. In the Bible I find a reliable, unified, deeply satisfying expression of God's will and work in the world. I've written a few children's stories, and when I see how complicated and difficult it is to tie the threads of even a few characters' lives together in a way that makes sense for the whole story, I am amazed when I see God's story. Written over hundreds of years, by scores of authors, the Bible has a unity unparalleled in literature. Take almost any theme and follow it through from Genesis to Revelation and you will find the most amazing truths brought together. The characters are realistic. Their behavior is consistent. Their lives fit together in a stunning tapestry of history. The drama of man against evil begins in the first chapters and finds its infinite climax at the death of the incarnate Author, who stepped into the pages of His story to save His characters. Quite astounding.

God the author of History is also the author of the Word that informs us of His will and intentions, of His design for our lives. I trust Him to define for me the kind of life that will give me true satisfaction, even if it leads, as it is bound to for now, through the slough of despond and the swamp of despair or suffering.

Claims Their Obedience

God claims our obedience. We are subject to His kingship because we are His creatures, created by Him and for His glory. There is no point in denying the overwhelming claims of God. He expects us to believe Him, to trust Him, to serve Him, to give our hearts to Him, to conform our wills to His, and to "bring every thought captive to Christ." In this sense, Christianity doesn't just squash women. It squashes everyone. All who claim the name of Christ begin by dying to self. Only as the seed dies and is placed into the ground can it bring forth new life.

Promises Them His Presence

But with those demands, God promises His presence. His children are never alone. "I will neither leave you nor forsake you," He promises. As

Moses said, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?" ([Deuteronomy 4:7-8](#))

This nearness of God, increased infinitely when Christ broke down the barrier of separation caused by the Fall. This nearness is the very foundation stone of Christian fidelity. Without the near presence of God, Christians could no more be faithful to their spouses than could any other people.

God Redeems Men and Women

Had sin not come into the world, we would not have found conforming to God's design for our lives to be a constraint. Rather, it would have been completely natural to act within the framework of that understanding. However, sin darkens our understanding and hardens our will, so that we seek freedom from what we now perceive as constraints and bondage. Consider the Gadarene demoniac to whom Christ came. He was perfectly free to do whatever he liked. His crazed, superhuman strength made him unstoppable. No one could control him. No one could imprison him. No one could tell him what to do. He didn't even bother to wear clothes. He was utterly autonomous.

But he spent his days shrieking and cutting himself, and he lived naked in the graveyard, a picture of misery, anger and insanity. His total autonomy drove him into "solitary places," as the biblical text says ([Luke 8:29](#)), and deprived him of his identity, since he could not give his own name (v. 30). Was the apostle Peter, who had witnessed this event, thinking of that man when he wrote the following words: "Men...promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him" ([2 Peter 2:19](#))? When the Gadarene demoniac met Christ, the forces of evil knew they had met their match. The authority of the son of God hurled out those demons and reached into that mess of a human being to rescue the man made in God's image. And what sort of image do we have when Christ has finished His work? A man sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. A man commissioned by Christ to "Return home and tell how much God has done for you" (v. 39).

This is the privileged position of the Christian--to have been delivered from the bondage of our own autonomy and be seated at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in our right mind, commissioned to share the good news with our family and friends. It is this great salvation which is our sure hope. Without it, we pump a little faithfulness, love and self-sacrifice from the world's natural aquifer of moral resources, which, by the way, seems to be sinking, as it dries up under the hot sun of God's holy anger.

I heard a commentary on PBS a few days ago about ecology. It went so far as to state that crime was due to pollution. Although I would not argue against the cyclical effects of crime and pollution, I think we have it backwards. The trouble with the world is not so much man's physical pollution of its waters, which is only a picture of the real tragedy. The real problem is man's moral pollution of the earth. God brings a charge:

"There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds and bloodshed follows bloodshed" ([Hosea 4:2](#)). Columbine, the federal building in Oklahoma City, a president who prevaricates, "it all depends on what you mean by 'is.'" What happens to a culture that follows this path? Hosea goes on to show the results: "Because of this the land mourns and all who live in it waste away; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea are dying....they exchanged their Glory for something disgraceful" ([Hosea 4:3](#)).

So what happens to the covenant? If God has entered into the agreement and His own justice is the final court of appeal, what hope do we have of ever discovering true communion and fellowship with one another, let alone with our Maker? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" ([Hebrews 10:31](#)) "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" ([Isaiah 33:14](#))

Sure, not Shaky

In the dry desert, as we wander, lost and despairing, we have a rock. Paul says that the rock in the desert actually "followed" God's people and provided them with living water ([1 Corinthians 10:3](#)). The very Rock on which we stand also nourishes us and quenches our thirst. Jesus Christ provides the only solid ground, the rock on which we can build our homes and marriages.

He provides us with the protection from God's wrath. The Old Testament shows a story of God's cutting a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15). In this cultural covenant ceremony, two parties would walk between animals that had been cut in two. "If we do not keep this promise, let us be cut in half like these animals," was the sense of the rite. But when God cuts a covenant with Abraham, His presence alone walks through the animals. He alone bears the consequence of our broken covenant. Christ's sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection provide a way back into fellowship with God. The curtain to the holy of holies, that special room in the temple, where God's presence is represented, is torn from top to bottom. God moves out among His people. The way is cleared. The heat shield of Christ protects us from God's holy anger. He comes to seek and to save the lost.

The Spirit that moves in our hearts to give us faith in Christ is the new creation breath of life that turns hearts of stone to hearts of flesh and allow us to love God first, to love others and to be at peace with ourselves. When we drink from the water He offers, we are never thirsty again. Men find in Him the humility to be compassionate, loving leaders. Women find in Him the power to be strong servants. Children find in Him the faith to obey sinful parents.

Personal, Not Impersonal

The God we serve is not an impersonal force or a relentless moral imperative. He makes Himself known. He comes to speak to us. He has

become flesh, sharing our weak, sin-assailed bodies. Jesus came in the flesh, lived with us and suffered all that we have suffered so we would know the extent of His love. As Paul put it in [Romans 8: 38](#): "I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is the love on which a Christian bases his or her life. The sacrifice of Christ paves the way for ours, until the day comes when this created order is changed and sin has no more hold.

Whole, Not Shattered

Jesus redeems both our soul and our bodies. He is, in His resurrection the first true *homo noeticus*. Those redeemed by His blood make up a new race for a new world which is coming. We live under no illusion that our bodies will die, but, as Paul put it, "though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" ([2 Corinthians 4:16](#)). "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" ([2 Cor. 4:8-10](#)). The Christian faith is realistic and powerful. It stimulates the mind, creates joy in sexual union, and allows suffering and pain to become instruments of power and peace.

Intimate, Not Lonely

God's design for intimacy is wholly fulfilled in Christ. Men and women, as Jews and Gentiles, have no barrier of animosity between them. Sin is what destroyed the joyful intimacy between God and His creation. It also destroyed the pure communion of Adam with Eve. Instead of an intimate companionship, they received the curse of strife and competition in their relationship. Eve wants to "have" Adam (just as sin was crouching at the door to "have" Cain--[Genesis 4:6](#)). Adam will "dominate" Eve instead of caring for her as God intended. The relationship between the sexes and in families is immediately corrupted, producing strife, competition, jealousy, and murder (Cain and Abel). But God comes to seek out Adam and Eve and to provide a covering for their sin. He initiates the first sacrifice, and covers them with animal skins.

God restores intimacy with His people, and though we live in a situation of "already/not yet" (already redeemed, not yet in possession of our new bodies; already rescued, not yet out of earshot of our enemy; already perfect in Christ, not yet done with the old sinful nature), one day we will see God face to face and live with Him eternally. The power of Christ's death and resurrection gives men and women the power to restore relationships as God intended them to be in marriage, and indeed to go beyond the creational structures into the first explorations of the new-creation structures.

The Woman Within the Covenant

I've been very theological and I haven't spoken much about women. But it has been of utmost importance to describe the context of my worldview. Within it, you will see and understand my attitude to women. I know that whether I'm from Mars or Venus, my worldview will certainly be foreign to you, unless you are a member of the King's family. I was an oddball at Wellesley in the '60s and I'm sure I still come across as an oddball to you today. But in order to explain to you why I have chosen the vocation of wife and mother, I had to give you the big picture.

When I arrived at Wellesley College at the age of 17, I had my career path all charted out. I wanted to be the wife of a pastor, to bear children and love them, to support and encourage a godly man in his efforts to serve Christ. I was eager to get the best possible education, in order to use my mind to its fullest capacity in this calling and so that I could support myself if the Lord decided that I should stay single.

I met my future husband the first semester of college. I added an extra course each term, and graduated in January of my senior year. We married on Jan. 30th of 1971 and are still married today, twenty-nine years later. I have seven children from 12 to 27 and three grandchildren. I have never for one moment regretted the choice I made. However, it would not be true to say that I have not entertained the tempting whispers of my feminist surroundings. "Children are wonderful," I tell myself sometimes, "but if you were really disciplined to write, you could write a better novel than that one." And I begin to imagine having written a *really influential* book. On occasion, I have given in to various mental promptings to discovering "real" value. Sometimes they have fit into our family structure very well, and proven to be good and proper. Sometimes they were the whispers of conceit.

Looking back over the first twenty-nine years of married life, I might take stock of my "successes," the kinds of things I could put on a resume: I have helped start a Christian school, made a highly effective method of communicating with the deaf known and popular in France, taught kindergarten, 7th grade, physical education in a school for delinquent girls, Cued Speech in a graduate program for speech therapists and graduate writing skills in a Seminary; I have written and produced several plays for Christian schools and churches, served on the board of various organizations, published articles and a novel, edited a dozen or so theological books and Doctor of Ministry projects, and spoken at numerous women's retreats and functions. However, my real resume, the one God will be holding when I see Him, will have a different list of achievements altogether. The achievements of my human resume may have elements that are mentioned on my real one, but many are rubbish in comparison to the value of bearing, nourishing, nurturing, teaching, loving and training seven fabulously intriguing and rewarding images of God, and having helped to form the image of Christ in my husband.

The joy of laughing over a cup of tea, of resolving a conflict, of seeing a child freed from the grip of temptation, of hearing my family sing around

the table, of watching the happy antics of my grandchildren, of seeing my husband and my children step out of the house encouraged, buoyed up, and able to pronounce the wonders of the name of God to those around them--all through the ministering touches that God has given them through me--these are joys beyond compare.

I highly recommend the calling of wife and mother. If you want the challenge of learning managerial skills, try organizing the lives of nine people living under the same roof. If you want to learn psychology, sit and listen to five daughters mulling over the pros and cons of particular young men they have met. If you want to understand the power of spirituality, face a rebellious twelve year old who stands defiantly in front of you and says, "NO!" What power have you over her heart? Only that of prayer and of faith, for only God can change a heart. Do you want an intellectual challenge? Try explaining atomic energy to your four-year old. Do you want to learn about linguistics, or special education? Try teaching both French and English to a profoundly deaf two-year old. Do you want to develop characteristics of mercy, patience, and wisdom? Then close your mouth and listen to the pains and struggles of your husband as he goes through a career change. Do you want a close circle of friends? Find four women who care about you and pray with them every Monday for two hours.

When I lose sight of these satisfactions, or when they are not enough to make me glad I have chosen to follow my career choice, I imagine that day when I stand before "the judgment seat of Christ," as all of us will do, "to receive what is due, for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10) That day, I will have, by the sustaining grace of Christ, the supreme ecstasy of hearing from my Savior Himself,

Come, blessed by my Father. Take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me...Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me (Matthew 25:34-36,40).

I'm not always sure exactly what it means to be a woman. I have struggled with my own expectations, those of my husband, those of the society around me. I have looked at the Scriptures, which tell me to count holiness to be more important than beauty, but which imply throughout that I should find my feminine body and its seductive power to be a beautiful gift in my relationship with my husband. Like other women, I struggle with these things. And my husband struggles to love my particular body, rather than yearning after some "composite picture," or after the body of other women. We both ask God to power up our romance with the very simple conclusion that I am very feminine because I am a woman, created in God's image. And I must avoid the temptation of imposing on my husband some ideal picture of what it means to be manly. Instead, I choose to love the specific man who is my husband, and I leave the conforming of image to the power of the Spirit. It is not my

husband, Peter's job to conform me to his image, nor is it my job to conform him to my image. Rather it is the Holy Spirit's job to conform each of us, male and female, to the image of Christ.

In Covenant Relationship with God

Designed in the Image of God

My first duty as a woman is to my heavenly Husband, to Him who redeemed the Church. If I develop in my understanding of my relationship to God, I will become more and more womanly. I am in God's image, a woman in God's image. "Male and female created He them." So as I conform to the image of Christ, I will conform more and more to the female image of God that I am. I do not mean to imply by this that I see Christ as some amorphous being. No, Jesus Christ was God incarnate, and he was a male human being. However, in His role as Savior, He understood both submission and authority and can therefore identify with my womanly struggles.

Designed to Reflect Christ

I was designed a woman. Part of that design is to submit myself to my husband. In the struggle against my sinful desire for autonomy, I look to Christ. Jesus is my example of willing submission. He went to the cross out of love. I have never considered Jesus a wimp for going to the cross, for submitting Himself to His Father's will. If ever a human being was in an unjust situation, suffering infinitely for no apparently good reason, it was Christ. The feminist theologians scoff at the cross, denying their need for "folks hanging on crosses and blood dripping and weird stuff."⁸

They call the crucifixion the ultimate in child abuse. But Jesus willingly laid down his life for us. This is not child abuse. There was no other way for him to achieve salvation but to walk through those dark hours of absolute loneliness and utter abandonment. He did it for the glory that was set before Him. He did it out of love for me, and out of love for His Father.

I can identify with Christ. When the pains of childbirth threaten to overwhelm a woman, she looks to the joy that is set before her, and cheers the contractions on, for they bring life and peace and a new beginning. "It is finished!" And a new life emerges, a new beginning. It is finished, yet it has just begun, this adventure of a new person.

But a Christian woman's role is not submission only. She is often called upon to exercise authority--over her children, over a classroom, or in a job she holds. In these areas, a woman must rely on Christ's humility and power to exercise authority in a firm but compassionate way.

In Covenant Relationship with her Husband

Bring All Things Together Under One Head

The Bible teaches us that Christ is the head of the church and that the church's role is to "bring all things together under one head, even Christ."

I see this as a very large umbrella, with Christ's sovereignty as the very tip. Under the protection of that larger umbrella, I imagine a little family sitting under a smaller umbrella. The father is to be the head of that home, in a role of authority over his wife and children (please remember that we have already established the fact that authority does not mean ontological superiority, but is a function of role). The Christian wife's job is to "bring all things under one head," her husband. I do not mean this in an absolute sense, of course. But insofar as she is gathering the experiences and relationships of her family together in submission to her husband, making an orderly, safe, peaceful and welcoming home, she is at the same time bringing things under her husband's lordship and under Christ's. A Christian woman's efforts to bring all things together under her husband's headship is a subset of the efforts of the church to bring all things together under one head, Christ.

Give and Receive Honor

The Bible's description of couples is rich. The woman accepts the lordship of her husband within the bounds that God has prescribed. But a woman also receives the honor of her husband. 1 Corinthians paints an interdependent circle. Christ is the head of the man, and the man is the image and glory of God. It is no shame to be given that title! And it is no shame for the woman to accept that "the woman is the glory of man." The woman was created for the man, says Paul, and came from the man. Seems mighty sexist so far! Though even this statement is not really "sexist." However, Paul goes on to say, a few verses later: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God."

A woman need not find it humiliating to accept the role of support, encouragement and cheerleader for her husband. All the while she is honoring Christ in this way, she is glorifying her man, who is glorifying Christ, who is glorifying God. God the Father lifts up Christ and glorifies Him. So also, a Christian husband lifts up his wife and glorifies her. Proverbs 31 says,

Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

In spite of the tug for immediate glory that sometimes pulls at my soul, I know that the goal I am pursuing is of much more long-lasting value. I'm not saying that I will never try to write a book, but I do consider the hearts of my children and my husband to be books of eternal worth. And I realize the territory of my home belongs to Christ. I am free, even bound, to use that home for His honor. In deciding not to pursue the call of a career outside the home, I am free to hear the calls of many people who need compassion, wisdom, a bed, or a meal.

I join my voice to that of John Piper, who pleads with Christian women,

That you not assume that secular employment is a greater challenge or a better use of your life than the countless opportunities of service and witness in the home, the neighborhood, the community, the church, and the world; that you not only pose the question: career or full-time homemaker?, but that you ask just as seriously: full-time career or freedom for ministry? That you ask: Which would be greater for the Kingdom--to work for someone who tells you what to do to make his or her business prosper, or to be God's free agent dreaming your own dream about how your time and your home and your creativity could make God's business prosper? And that in all this you make your choices not on the basis of secular trends of upward lifestyle expectations, but on the basis of what will strengthen the faith of the family and advance the cause of Christ.⁹

A Christian Sister

A Christian woman is not an echo of her husband, nor is she to sit idly by while he runs headlong down the path of destruction. She is to call him courageously to obedience. This courageous call has a strength unparalleled when such a call is offered humbly, quietly, without judgment and when the wife's life is a sparkling testimony of the love she expects from her husband. When she speaks peacefully, in love, unveiling sin and covering it in forgiveness, she is a kind of presence of God in a man's life. Some men react badly to this, since a godly woman who watches and says nothing, but goes on loving, is the kind of presence that sin cannot bear. Sometimes a man will break under the strain of such holiness. Peter offers advice to Christian women married to unbelievers: "Wives, in the same way, be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (1 Peter 3:1-2). As Christ empowers a Christian woman to live this way, the hearts of men are won over.

Faith

A Christian woman exercises faith in submitting to a sinner. John Calvin argues that in submitting to the authority of human pastors and leaders, Christians show to the watching world the power of faith. How amazing that men and women should actually grow more godly by submitting themselves to sinful leaders. By this I do not mean that one deliberately follows sinful people into disobedience. However, every leader in the church, whether elder, pastor, or the husband in his home, is a sinner. We do not submit to them because of any natural or automatic respect we hold for them in their sinful nature. Rather, it is an exercise of our faith in Christ that we submit.

In Covenant Relationship with her Children

A Christian woman instructs and disciplines her children.

The relationship of faithful obedience to a covenant relationship with God,

and the subordinate faithful covenant that a woman has with her husband, provides the structure and foundation for her relationship with her children. Here again, the final goal is "bringing all things together under one head, Christ." Keeping this purpose statement in mind will help the Christian woman make good, right decisions in relation to her children. It gives her objective content on which to base moral instruction and household rules. It gives her outside strength so that she does not have to depend on her children's love for her identity. It keeps her from "tearing down her own house," as the book of Proverbs says is the tendency of the foolish woman (14:1). Rather than foolishly undermining the respect her children might have for her husband, she is to do all in her power to foster that respect.

A Christian woman's service to her children is a privilege

The Christian mother does not need to feel the pressure of criticism that she is a "doormat." She realizes that to be a Christian, she starts out as a doormat anyway--laying down her life for others. Of course, she understands that part of her job is to teach them to serve, too. And she does not render them incompetent by continuing to do for them what they should be doing for themselves. However, she has the freedom to lay down her personal "rights," her ego, her need to be right, or to receive honor. All these sacrifices a mother makes continually. Unfortunately, the message women receive today is that they are somehow imbalanced if they have decided to follow a sacrificial path. As a Christian woman, I would hereby like to affirm my God-given right to self-sacrifice!

A Christian woman receives the honor and love of both children and husband

As any giving wife and mother knows, the rewards for sacrifice are many. Children and husbands are often inspired themselves by the example of the mother and wife. Their gratitude is real and their praise genuine. Even openly rebellious children secretly (or even openly) admire and praise a mother who has stuck by them through anguish and suffering. Husbands are honored by the constant respect they are shown, even when they have broken faith in some way. And of course, as I have already mentioned, the Christian woman's highest honor is to be received and recommended by Christ Himself, whose self-sacrifice knew no limits.

In Covenant Relationship with the Church

A Christian woman has creative freedom to use all her gifts.

Teacher, counselor, activities coordinator, gourmet cook, gardener, interior decorator, painter, writer, financial consultant, coach, spiritual guide--all this and heaven too! Though full-time mothering is constraining in many ways, Christian women who dedicate themselves to their husband, their children, and their church also have many occasions to be of service in the community. However, all activities come under the scrutiny of the main goal: bringing all things under Christ's headship. A Christian woman's highest satisfaction comes in seeing her husband, her

children and her friends dedicate themselves to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

Single Women

I have spoken mainly of a married woman. God has set us in families, and marriage is His normative structure. It is not to be the exception, but the rule.

However, not everyone is married and God does call some to be single. The single woman is still a woman, however. She will use her nurturing instincts to nurture others' children or younger women. She will bring honor to male leaders in her church and her community. She will work to create a home that brings honor to the name of Christ by serving the homeless, feeding the poor, and harboring the weak. She will obey God's command to multiply by bringing others to the banquet table of Christ and her home can serve in that capacity. She can create a Christian family in her church and find authority structures and council in that larger family. In the Christian body, no one is autonomous. Each needs the other.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Marriage - the Image of God's Fellowship with His Creatures

Jesus taught that in heaven there will be no giving or taking in marriage. I do not believe this should be taken to mean that the distinctions will be lost between men and women, for insofar as those created structures reflect God's very nature, they will probably not fade away. However, human marriage is not the ultimate relational pattern for intimacy, fidelity, personal love, and fruitfulness. The relationship that exemplifies these qualities is that found in the trinity itself, but also that found, by extension, between Christ and His church. Like an enthusiastic and responsible bridegroom, Jesus has gone ahead of His bride, the church, to get the house ready. All that we know of the beauty and intimacy of marriage is a passing shadow in comparison with the love relationship Christ has with His church.

In Revelation the apostle John has a vision of heaven. In it a great multitude shouts: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." Then the angel said to me, "Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (**Rev. 19: 6-9**)

This is the context of marriage. This final marriage provides the groundwork for all human marriage. Only when a husband understands the extent of Christ's sacrifice and the power of his resurrection will he be able to do what Christ asks him to do in a marriage:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church

without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it just as Christ does the church--for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church.

([Ephesians 5:25-31](#))

Only when a woman understands that her worth, value and identity do not rest on how her husband sees her, or on how her world defines her, but on Christ's absolute love for her, will she have the strength to willingly and gladly submit herself to her husband's authority in marriage:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything ([Ephesians 5:22-24](#)).

Humble Ourselves by Receiving the Wedding Dress - Ezekiel 16, Revelation

Does Christianity squash women? Oh yes, it squashes them, as it does any Christian. We are slaves to Christ. I do not own my own body. I am not the master of my soul. It is humbling (though not humiliating) to realize that all my righteousness is "filthy rags" in God's eyes. It is impossibly difficult to swallow my pride and to admit that I have nothing to offer God. To be a Christian is to admit sin, to fall on one's face before a holy God and beg forgiveness. The radical feminist theologians are quite right. If we want to destroy marriage structures as Christianity defines them, we must destroy the ultimate Patriarch.

In Ezekiel 16 we see a highly patriarchal picture. A baby girl is thrown out at birth, and lies in a field, still covered in blood, unwashed, and unloved. A young man passes by and is moved with compassion. He lifts the newborn up and takes her to be washed and cared for. He provides all she needs in the way of clothing and nurture until she is a young woman. One day, he passes to see how she is faring, and is struck with her emerging adult beauty. He buys her a wedding dress, and takes her as his wife.

This is the picture God gives us of his care for us, His people. In today's terms, this allegory is highly offensive. Is a woman dependent on a man's care? Is she to be seen as refuse until a man comes to rescue her? Is she his property that he should be able to ride by one day and seize her as his own? Yet each Christian has had to admit to the reality of that picture. We are dead in our sins--tossed on the trash heap of the world. Though we were born to have value, we are nothing. No one cares. No one is there to rescue us. But Christ comes to rescue us, to wash us clean, to provide the clothes of his righteousness for us. Do you see that Christians are not arrogant, but thoroughly humble? Christians have admitted that they are entirely dependent in life or in death on the grace and mercy of a loving heavenly Husband. Their value is determined by

Him. Their purpose is to please Him. Their existence is to bring His name honor. Their love is all for Him. Their name is His. Their identity is engraved in the hands of the one who died for them.

This humility before Him, this identity in Him, and this obedience to Him is the joy, the strength, the honor, the power, the motivation, the passion and the ecstasy of the Christian believer. If my Creator and my heavenly Father has declared the marriage structure to be good, because it reflects something about Him, and because it will teach me of my Savior, then I will embrace it with all my heart, even when my own sin still cries for me to rebel against it. I renounce the freedom to destroy myself and cling rather to the slavery that brings me life and love. I'll take the beauty that God offers me:

"You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign Lord" ([Ezekiel 16:14](#)).

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" ([Rev. 22:17](#)).

Before the Throne of God Above

by Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841-1923)

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong a perfect plea,
A great high priest whose name is "Love,"
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart;
I know that while in heav'n He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

Behold Him there! The risen Lamb!
My perfect, spotless Righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
the King of glory and of grace.
One with Himself, I cannot die,
My soul is purchased by His blood;
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ, my Savior and my God.

¹ Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 250f.

² "Today we are experiencing the last gasp of a dying order, and in twenty years most of it will be gone....Women will remake religion." Andrew Greeley, *Omni Magazine* (January, 1987), 98.

"The feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Jahweh. Yet very few of the women and men now working for sexual equality within Christianity and Judaism realize the extent of their heresy." Naomi Goldenberg, cited in Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel*, 220.

³ Virginia Mollenkott, *Sensual Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism* (NY: Crossroads, 1992), p. 73.

⁴ Danielle Crittenden, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), p. 13.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶ As an aside for reflection, consider the incarnate Christ. He is human because he was born of a woman. In this sense he derives his created "image of God" human nature uniquely from Mary. However, at the same time, his lineage is proven and verified through Joseph's line--Joseph, Mary's husband. So the official, "patriarchal" structures guarantee that Christ is the son of the promise, just as do the physical, created structures of childbearing. I don't claim to understand the complexity of these issues, but I find it interesting that the woman's obedience in bearing Christ, and the man's obedience in being the head of his home through the marriage relationship both played a crucial role in the birth of our Savior, and in the validation that He was indeed the promised Messiah.

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), p. 155.

⁸ Dolores Williams, *Presbyterian Layman*, 27/1 (January, February, 1994), p. 3.

⁹ John Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. 54.

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