

**TOWARDS RESOLVING THEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL TENSIONS AROUND
VIEWS OF WOMEN IN UK EVANGELICAL CHURCHES**

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Abstract

Evangelical churches in the UK are wrestling with how to reconcile modern views of women with traditional interpretations of Scripture. An over-reliance on a limited number of ambiguous biblical texts has resulted in a fracturing along the lines of the full or limited involvement of women in the life and ministry of the Church. Such division can only be reconciled through the legitimate and rigorous hermeneutics that in large part define evangelicalism. The emergence of Narrative Theology in recent decades offers an additional and potent hermeneutical lens through which to re-examine the inclusion and depiction of women within the whole scriptural narrative, along with ever more comprehensive Contextual understanding of the Old Testament and Greco-Roman cultures.

This dissertation deploys the methodologies of Narrative Theology and Contextuality to challenge the anomalous and increasingly anachronistic view of women in Scripture that continues to rely on patriarchal and superficial biblical interpretations. It presents the case for re-examining our view of gender within the scriptural eschatological trajectory that culminates in the restoration of the New Creation. It further argues that the seemingly restrictive Pauline verses should be interpreted within the full Pauline corpus, in particular the normative and comprehensive context of Paul's letter to the Romans.

The ongoing subjugation of women, justified and propagated through an inadequate patriarchal interpretation, has consequences for women within the church and in the wider world, for the use all of God's giftings within the body of the church, and for the soul of evangelicalism. Resolving the women's issue necessitates an urgent, more honest, faithful and holistic re-interpretation of Scripture, leading to the sanctified and unrestricted deployment of the spiritual giftings of the whole body of Christ, and restoring the integrity of evangelicalism and its perception in the world.

Declaration

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RE Campbell

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Chapter 1. Context, Methodology, Terminology and Scope

1.1. Introduction and context

Women are loved, cherished and valued by God. Women share an equal God-given mandate to rule His creation, and have an equal missiological commission to be a blessing to the nations. Furthermore, women form approximately half the population of the United Kingdom,¹ and make up somewhat over half of church attendees.²

In light of both God's love for women and their prominence within the Church, one might reasonably expect that the Church's implicit and explicit message would reflect the equal value, mandate and commission that women share with men. However, the blessing and potency of this message are frequently lost behind an androcentric engagement with and presentation of Scripture that limits women to a passive engagement with faith, a subjugation to male authority and a denial of their spiritual giftings.

This dissertation examines how Narrative Theology and Contextuality offer a basis for interpreting the scriptural view of women more holistically, in a way that resolves some of the tensions that UK churches are currently navigating, tensions that can reduce women's engagement with Church and faith to an esoteric abstraction with little positive intersection between gender, growth to spiritual maturity and the active deployment of spiritual giftings.³ A critical component of this intersection is the theological interpretation of the profile of women within Scripture itself. This is particularly true in those churches that are proud to

¹ The 2011 census indicates 51% of the population are female; <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/male-and-female-populations/latest>.

² Tony Walter, "Why are Most Churchgoers Women? A Literature Review," *Vox Evangelica* 20 (1990): 73-90.

³ Alice P. Mathews, *Preaching that Speaks to Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 9, adopts the phrase "the intersection of two subjects: gender and preaching" in her analysis of one critical component of the wider intersection between women and faith.

claim evangelical credentials. Evangelicalism is in part defined by its high regard for and adherence to the Scriptures, with its definition anchored in Paul's words to Timothy, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16).

John Stott, a prominent British advocate of evangelicalism in the last century, described Evangelical Anglicanism as "more a coalition than a party",⁴ a view true of Evangelicalism more universally. Evangelicalism's broad coalition expresses a diverse understanding on a range of significant issues. That is especially the case with regard to the 'women issue'. The result has been a fracturing along the line of the full or limited inclusion of women in the practices of the Church.

The debate concerning the place of women in fellowships, marriage and society more generally has often neglected the broader narrative of "All Scripture" in favour of a restricted focus on a few, mainly Pauline, texts (Gen 1-3; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:26-40; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Extensive scholarship from both sides of the debate has further reduced the focus to nuanced interpretations of the original Greek text in order to offer confident, yet often unpersuasive, proofs of their theological position.⁵ Linda Belleville, advocating a fully inclusive role for women in the Church, assesses, "The interpretative approach of traditionalists, in particular, has been notably selective. The focus has been on one or two highly debated passages (first and foremost, 1 Tim. 2:11-15), with little acknowledgement of the roles of women in Scripture as a whole."⁶

⁴ David L. Edwards and John Stott, *Essentials: A Liberal-Evangelical Debate*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 34.

⁵ For representation of these diverse views, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical Theological Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014) and Kevin Giles, *What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women* (Kindle, 2018).

⁶ Linda L. Belleville, Craig L. Blomberg, Craig S. Keener and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 21.

The objective of the current dissertation is to show that there is a perspective on the controversial and restrictive verses that is legitimate in terms of orthodox evangelical interpretation and more consistent with the narrative arc of Scripture and the context of these verses, and that helps to resolve the tensions between theology and church practice with respect to women.

1.2. Methodologies

This dissertation responds to Belleville's appeal to consider how the whole of Scripture speaks into the value of women within the Church and in the wider world, by employing the companion methodologies of Narrative Theology and Contextuality. Seeking a resolution to the inclusion of women within evangelical churches will never involve less than a thorough analysis of the text in its original languages, but the limitations of textual analysis, inadequately grounded in a broader regard for the arc of Scripture, has resulted in an entrenched impasse. In the meantime, the value and experience of women in the contemporary evangelical Church remain casualties of this unresolved debate.

A dual understanding of the narrative of Scripture and the cultural context in which the Scriptures were written is embedded in the rigorous hermeneutical credentials that are essential pre-requisites for any evangelical study. R.T. France's 1995 Didsbury Lectures were later written into a book *Women in the Church's Ministry*, in which he clarified through the subtitle that this issue is, in fact, *A Test Case for Biblical Interpretation*.⁷ If, as evangelicals, we genuinely submit to rigorous interpretation against accepted hermeneutical principles, then this issue stands as a test case for that rigour and commitment.

⁷ R.T. France, *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test Case for Biblical Interpretation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997).

France wrote his book in the aftermath of the decision to allow women into the Anglican priesthood, with a mind to the evangelical element within the Church of England that continued to reject women as priests. He assessed that when addressing the issue of women's ministry, "the 'real' subject is biblical hermeneutics."⁸ John Armstrong similarly recognises that this is not essentially about the authority of Scripture, but about the proper interpretation of Scripture.⁹ As evangelicals we stand or fall, not on the conclusions of our considerations (which may well be shared with others who reach the same conclusions via different means), but on our interpretive approaches and their hermeneutical legitimacy and rigour.

Within the scope of legitimate and accepted hermeneutical tools (see Andrew Bartlett's list of seven tools, for example¹⁰), Narrative Theology provides a relatively new lens through which to view and navigate the impasse over problematic texts, while adhering to orthodox evangelical principles of interpretation.¹¹ Narrative Theology invites a re-examination of the value bestowed upon women throughout the whole of Scripture, rather than the distortion that occurs when the Scriptural view is strained through a handful of over-emphasised verses. The resulting realignment then allows consideration of how women should be viewed, both corporately and individually, in the ongoing narrative of the Church.

Narrative Theology recognises that the majority of Scripture is in narrative form¹² and that one of God's principal means of communicating His self-revelation is through stories. As a methodology it emphasises the overall message of the Bible, considering each portion as a

⁸ France, *Women in the Church's*, 12.

⁹ John H. Armstrong, "Lessons my mother taught me without trying." in *How I Changed my Mind About Women in Leadership*, ed. Alan Johnson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 25.

¹⁰ Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from Biblical Texts* (London: IVP, 2020), 359.

¹¹ David A. Hampton, *Narrative Theology as a Hermeneutic Approach* (Lulu Publishers, 2009), 5.

¹² Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all its Worth* (London: Scripture Union, 1988), 73.

contribution to the whole. Its value within the debate arises from seeing women within Scripture embedded within the context in which their narratives occur and within the narrative progression of the Bible as a whole.

1.3. Terminological precision

Most contributors to the women debate use the terms ‘Egalitarian’ and ‘Complementarian’, while noting the imprecision and deficiencies of these terms. Bartlett observes that both are “new interpretations of Scripture”¹³ compared with the traditional view, then comments, “It is difficult to imagine more unsuitable labels than these for identifying the differences between the new interpretations. The differences are neither over whether women and men are equal, nor over whether they are complementary.”¹⁴

The parameters of terminology were initiated with the 1987 Danvers Statement of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and the subsequent Piper and Grudem book,¹⁵ the subtitle of which, *A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, aimed to establish the terminology for the view that CBMW sought to oppose. In response, Christians for Biblical Equality, formed in 1988, issued its own statement emphasising that “The Bible teaches the full equality of men and women in Creation and in Redemption”, and not using the words ‘feminist’ or ‘egalitarian’. The terms ‘complementarian’ and ‘egalitarian’ have emerged as convenient and relatively respectful shorthand for the two views. Köstenberger and Köstenberger’s continued use of the term ‘evangelical feminist’ as an alternative to ‘egalitarian’ appears intended to load that side of the debate with particular connotations;¹⁶

¹³ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 9.

¹⁴ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 10.

¹⁵For Danvers Statement see John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), Appendix 2, 469-471.

¹⁶ Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God’s Design*, 311.

however, Stackhouse, writing from an egalitarian perspective, and being careful to clarify his usage, embraces the term.¹⁷

More problematic is the word 'complementarian'. Piper and Grudem defend its adoption against some alternatives:

We prefer the term complementarian, since it suggests both equality and beneficial differences between men and women. We are uncomfortable with the term 'traditionalist' because it implies an unwillingness to let Scripture challenge traditional patterns of behaviour, and we certainly reject the term 'hierarchicalist' because it overemphasizes structured authority while giving no suggestion of equality or the beauty of mutual interdependence.¹⁸

'Traditionalist' also fails to acknowledge the relatively recent elevation of the 'equal but' theological perspective into a full doctrine, or its significant departures from the actual traditional view. Bartlett notes "General belief in the full, inherent equality of men and women is an obvious novelty, compared with the traditional view. Less obvious at first sight is the full novelty of the complementarian position. When complementarians claim that their position is 'historical', this is a misconception."¹⁹ Bartlett also offers a helpful clarification of the current parameters of the debate: "Both egalitarians and complementarians now regard women as inherently equal and now affirm that women may be leaders in wider society. But complementarians insist on male leadership in the church and in marriage."²⁰

It is important to acknowledge the novelty of the complementarian position, given how it has led to a distortion of primary and accepted orthodoxy in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity such that, in an attempt to legitimise male headship, a pseudo-hierarchy has been created in the Godhead. Giles considers, "In their concern to more securely ground their

¹⁷ John G Stackhouse, *Finally Feminist: A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 17.

¹⁸ Piper and Grudem, *Recovering*, xv.

¹⁹ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 10.

²⁰ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 16.

teaching on the male-female relationship, they have embraced an old error that undermines the most fundamental truth of all – the Christian doctrine of God.”²¹ This considerable source of theological acrimony, with its echoes of the fourth-century Arian heresy,²² has become known as the Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS). ESS is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

N.T. Wright believes “‘complementary’ is too good and important a word to let that side of the argument have it all to themselves.”²³ Giles takes a similar view:

They chose the term *complementarian* to take the high ground The truth is that both sides are complementarians, believing God has made us distinctly women and men – the two sexes being intended to complement each other. On the one side are hierarchical-complementarians who believe the Bible sets men over women in the church and in the home, and on the other side are egalitarian-complementarians who believe the Bible makes the ideal women and men standing side by side, equal in dignity and authority in the world, the church and the home.²⁴

Stanley Gundry believes ‘complementarian’ was adopted as a more palatable euphemism and that ‘patriarchal hierarchicalism’ is actually the most descriptive and accurate term.²⁵ The current author concurs that ‘patriarchal hierarchicalism’ is the most meaningful terminology in terms of the actual heart of the debate (“male leadership in the church and in marriage”), and the most accurate description of the tangible lived experience of many women in the conservative evangelical church. However, in the current dissertation ‘hierarchicalism’ and ‘complementarianism’ are used interchangeably.

²¹ Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordination: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 109.

²² Alister McGrath, *Heresy* (London: SPCK, 2009), 143.

²³ N.T. Wright, “Women’s Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis”, N.T. Wright Online, 2016, <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/womens-service-in-the-church-the-biblical-basis/>.

²⁴ Giles, *Trinity and Subordination*, 157.

²⁵ Stanley Gundry, “From *Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives, and Women Preachers* to *Women Be Free: My Story*.” in *How I Changed*, 100.

1.4. Scope and outline

The scope of this work focusses on the UK conservative evangelical context in light of the decision made by the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) in 2012 to adopt what it terms a complementarian stance. However, the situation in the UK reflects a wider discussion within the global conservative evangelical community, in which, “The loudest voices have been raised in the USA. Despite the vigorous life and growth of the church in South America, Africa and the far east, the USA remains dominant as regards publications and resources.”²⁶

While acknowledging the vital contribution of textual analysis to this debate, the scope of this current work prioritises Narrative Theology and Contextuality over textuality. Similarly, whilst recognising the discernible momentum towards evangelical egalitarianism, analysis of that trend is confined to the table in Appendix 2.

In considering how to move towards resolving theological and practical tensions around views of women in UK evangelical churches, Chapter 2 outlines how the current landscape exposes and reinforces existing gender inequalities. Chapter 3 then examines the contributions that Narrative Theology and Contextuality offer in understanding how women are viewed throughout the Scriptures. In light of this more holistic understanding, Chapter 4 considers how the gender debate has become inextricably linked with the urgency to invigorate, and even rescue, evangelicalism itself.

²⁶ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 2.

Chapter 2. The Landscape of Evangelical Practice within the UK

We have the highest doctrine of Scripture of anybody in the Church We must therefore acknowledge with deep shame that our treatment of Scripture seldom coincides with our view of it. We are much better at asserting its authority than at wrestling with its interpretation. We are sometimes slovenly, sometimes simplistic, sometimes highly selective and sometimes downright dishonest. John Stott¹

2.1. The UK landscape

In March 2019 conservative evangelicals from around the world gathered in London for the annual Ligonier Ministries conference. Ligonier Ministries is an extension and continuation of the ministry of American conservative evangelical R.T. Sproul. The gathering concluded with a question-and-answer panel discussion on the future of the Church in the UK. Mez McConnell's inclusion on the panel caused quite a stir within the audience that day and on social media, as McConnell's casual attire contrasted with the other panel members who were all in suits (Figure 2.1).² The picture presented was that the future of the conservative evangelical church in the UK lay in the sole keeping of white male pastors and academics, devoid of ethnic diversity and with no representation of the gender that makes up the majority of its congregations and that undoubtedly undertakes a disproportionate amount of its unpaid ministries. It is intensely sad that when discussing the future of the UK church, the presence of a man in a beanie hat elicits more reaction than the absence of a female voice.

¹ Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 49.

² The panel consisted of Sinclair Ferguson, Mez McConnell, Paul Levy, Michael Reeves and Jeremy Walker. The sixth man is the moderator.



Figure 2.1. The Ligonier panel³

This snapshot is illustrative of the broader conservative evangelical landscape in the UK. Most churches of this nature are affiliated to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC). The FIEC, founded in 1922, is a growing affiliation of around 550 independent churches without denominational association. Although member churches adhere to a doctrinal statement of faith, theological diversity exists on issues of baptism, internal church governance, predestination, creationism, eschatology and the use of spiritual gifts today.

In November 2011, the FIEC Annual Assembly voted in favour of making adherence to complementarian theology a condition for membership, prompting a “very small number of churches [to leave] the Fellowship either because they already had female leaders functioning as elders, or they wanted to have female leaders functioning as elders, or they did not wish to belong to an association of churches that was exclusively complementarian in practice.”⁴

³ Photo from <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/conferences/light-world-2019-london-conference/the-church-in-the-united-kingdom/>.

⁴ John Stevens, “Why are we complementarian?” FIEC, 2012, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

This decision effectively elevated the view of women within the church from a secondary issue to a central tenet of belief.

Evangelicalism is in large part distinguished by its reliance on the Bible for all matters of faith and doctrine. Evangelicals link their high regard for Scripture to the Reformation's key principle, *sola scriptura*. The Reformation's removal of priestly intermediaries and Roman Catholic tradition created a vacuum of biblical interpretation. Recognising the danger of uninformed scriptural exposition, leading Reformers, such as Luther and Calvin, were prompted to write material to support clergy and laity in appropriate interpretation.⁵ "No one wanted the Bible in the hands of Germans more than Martin Luther. But Luther knew that bad interpretations create schisms and problems."⁶

In the centuries since, these concerns over interpretative diversity and schism have been realised, giving birth to a plethora of Protestant denominations and groupings, a fragmentation that Alister McGrath explores in *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*. McGrath observes that the constant revision of Protestantism and "the variety of approaches to biblical interpretation within specific Protestant groupings [forces] a difficult discussion of the accepted limits of diversity."⁷

The acceptable limit of diversity on the issue of the equality or otherwise of women in church and marriage is represented by the opposing positions adopted by the FIEC and the other significant body representing evangelicalism in the UK, the Evangelical Alliance (EAUK). EAUK, founded in 1846, has a membership made up of churches (including those who still maintain denominational affiliation), individuals and parachurch organisations. The EAUK

⁵ Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 31.

⁶ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 30.

⁷ Alister McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution – A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2007), 468.

statement of faith is orthodoxly evangelical and similar to that of the FIEC. However, unlike the FIEC, the EAUk is visibly ethnically diverse, and its full endorsement of the ministry of women was recently expressed in an article titled *Created Equal*.⁸

It is in recognition of this disunity over the full inclusion of women within the Church that British QC Andrew Bartlett's comprehensive book begins with the stark warning that "Bible-based Christianity is threatened with a needless schism."⁹ This schism, reflected in the British context by the dichotomy of views held by the EAUk and the FIEC, is disproportionately influenced by US evangelicalism that adheres to a patriarchal interpretation of Scripture. Patriarchalism has the power to coerce churches, suppress spiritual giftings, limit mission and even, as we will see later, distort Trinitarian doctrinal orthodoxy. It is therefore imperative to find a resolution to the entrenched egalitarian and hierarchicalist positions.

As this is a debate within the evangelical community, resolution has to be sought through a rigorous hermeneutical examination of Scripture, requiring "Not a wooden conformity to its letter... but a profound penetration into demanding implications for the life of the kingdom. For the supremacy of Scripture carries with it a radical calling into question of all human traditions and conventions, however ancient and sacred."¹⁰ Selective textuality has proved inadequate in finding this resolution, and therefore a broader understanding of the context and narrative of Scripture, as presented in Chapter 3, is urgently required. It is only through that depth of honest, holistic hermeneutical rigour that tensions can be resolved and a consensus wrested from entrenched divisions.

⁸ Christine Uhlig, "Created Equal", Evangelical Alliance, 2020, <https://www.eauk.org/news-and-views/created-equal>.

⁹ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 1.

¹⁰ Edwards and Stott, *Essentials*, 88.

2.2. The core of the controversy: the nature of evangelicalism

Complementarianism's predilection for an immutable and selective Scriptural interpretation, and its inclination to diminish the hermeneutical credentials of those holding the alternative view, are reflected in a 2012 article written by FIEC Director John Stevens.¹¹ Entitled 'Why are we complementarian?', Stevens' article was written in a climate that questioned whether parachurch organisations should hold what many consider to be a secondary issue as a pre-requisite for membership. Stevens provides four justifications for the FIEC's formalisation of its hierarchical stance. A consideration of each point in turn helps to establish the issues under debate.

i) Because egalitarianism threatens the ultimate authority of Scripture

Stevens perceives Egalitarians as those who "all too often fail to reflect on *a priori* commitment to the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture" and who, with a few exceptions, adopt a hermeneutical approach that "could be used to undermine many biblical doctrines."¹² This claim to a more faithful interpretation of Scripture reflects the influence of Piper and Grudem, who despite expressing a reluctance to "impugn each other"¹³ nevertheless malign others: "Imagine what it would mean if we took no stand on things because they were disputed. It would mean that Satan's aim to mislead us would be made much easier. He would not have to overthrow the truth of Biblical texts; he would only have to create enough confusion that we would put the important ones aside."¹⁴ Such declarations stoke a fear

¹¹ Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

¹² Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

¹³ Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical*, 84.

¹⁴ Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical*, 90.

among many evangelicals that to support women in ministry will foster liberalism and even agnosticism.¹⁵

ii) Because egalitarianism undermines historic evangelical convictions

In his second point, Stevens makes the legitimate observation that egalitarianism is “inherently a revolutionary movement that wishes to overturn a long established position.”¹⁶ In so doing, he fails to acknowledge, as noted above, that complementarianism is also a departure from the traditional view and a “novelty”¹⁷ and “innovation”¹⁸. In questioning the “hermeneutic methodology of egalitarians” he is essentially dismissing a long list of credible evangelical egalitarian scholars including, among many others, F.F. Bruce, R.T. France, N.T. Wright, Scot McKnight and Lucy Peppiatt. In *Paul and Gender*, Cynthia Long Westfall emphasises that it is precisely her commitment to rigorous hermeneutics that calls into question interpretations of Paul that have led to this entrenched hierarchicalism:

Traditional reading of texts on gender are not based on hermeneutics that are consistently applied to passages addressing or concerning gender, nor are they consistent with hermeneutics that we generally apply to other texts to determine what a text originally meant. Within the tradition of interpretation, the passages that concern gender have not been understood in the contexts of the discourses in which they occur, the biblical theology of the Pauline corpus as a whole, the narrative of Paul’s life, a linguistic understanding/analysis of the Greek language, or an understanding of the culture that is sociologically informed.¹⁹

Stevens warns that those “who regard themselves as evangelical and egalitarian are all too often those who would no longer affirm penal substitutionary atonement, the inerrancy

¹⁵ Beth Allison Barr, *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2021), 177.

¹⁶ Stevens, <https://fiiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

¹⁷ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 10.

¹⁸ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 198.

¹⁹ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 3.

of the Scriptures, salvation through conscious faith in Christ alone, and the reality of eternal conscious torment for those outside Christ in death.”²⁰ These spurious and unsubstantiated aspersions mask the hierarchicalists’ own departure from orthodoxy through their promotion of the doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS). ESS is in essence a resurrection of the fourth-century Arian heresy that was decisively rejected by the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. Kevin Giles strongly refutes the ESS heresy, recognising that ESS has arisen purely as a justification for subordinating women. Quoting the Athanasian Creed, Giles concludes, “Each divine person in the Trinity is differentiated from the other, yet each is of equal dignity and authority: ‘none is afore, or after other; none greater, or less than another ... the whole three Persons are ... co-equal.’”²¹ Barr concurs, recognising how complementarians have manipulated orthodox and central teachings on the Trinity purely to exert control over women.²²

Grudem is one who holds firmly to this distortion of trinitarian orthodoxy. Though he denies the charge of heresy, he claims ESS is an accepted doctrine where the Trinity has an “*equality in essence and subordination in role.*”²³ ESS is a view rejected by some complementarians, including Aimee Byrd who has been vocal in challenging such heresy. Byrd recognises that while most evangelicals accept the equal value and dignity of men and women, organizations such as CBMW have unbiblically distorted the distinctions between genders to one where men have ontological authority. This has in turn led them to err on the intrinsic nature of the Trinity.²⁴ This error has filtered through to individual churches, causing

²⁰ Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

²¹ Giles, *Trinity and Subordinationism*, 267.

²² Barr, *Making of*, 194.

²³ Grudem, *Recovering Biblical*, 457.

²⁴ Aimee Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2020), 102-103.

Barr to recall her horror when she heard her evangelical pastor boldly declaring Christ's eternal subordination to the Father, a heresy so serious that Athanasius refused to acknowledge those who supported it as Christian.²⁵

Barr's background as a professor of medieval church history allowed her to detect heresy masquerading as biblical truth, but what about those of us without her enviable credentials? Where do we look for Scriptural understanding and theological orthodoxy? Many in conservative evangelical churches might accept what we hear in sermons from trusted pastors, read popularly endorsed books or refer to the output of the body to whom our independent church is affiliated, the FIEC. It is in this dissemination of heresy through trusted means that the greatest danger lies.

One such popular book, *The Grand Design*, is co-authored by American Owen Strachan and British ex-footballer Gavin Peacock, both of whom at the time of publication in 2016 held positions within the CBMW. In order to repeatedly emphasise their belief that women are subordinate, they have yielded to this modern-day Arianism, stating "The Father is the authority of Christ, and always has been. The Son joyfully carries out the plan of His Father... The Father as the Father has authority; the Son as Son obeys the Father."²⁶ This invalid view of the Trinity is then used to support an unrelenting tone of androcentric condescension, demand and prescription with such assertions as "A single woman can be feminine with all men at all times appropriate to her relationship with them. In this way she is helping men to be masculine"²⁷ and "Inside a biblical woman is an attitude of respect for masculine, sacrificial leadership. To put it another way, reverence is the key posture of womanhood This doesn't

²⁵ Barr, *Making of*, 191.

²⁶ Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2016), 75.

²⁷ Strachan and Peacock, *Grand Design*, 77.

mean she has a personality bypass! But she is *bridled* and *under control*.”²⁸ Strachan and Peacock’s book has 18 endorsements from the UK and US, all male (inevitably, underlining the premise of the book that even if women do not agree, their perspective is irrelevant anyway), including John Stevens, who concludes his recommendation with the words, “This will encourage complementarians to be more confident in their convictions, and more faithful and loving in their practice, and will help egalitarians to understand complementarianism at its best.”²⁹

In detailed response to what has become known as the Trinity Debate³⁰ triggered by Byrd, Stevens summarises, “The clear Biblical teaching that the Son learned obedience refers primarily to his incarnate experience but it does not rule out the fact that he was already obedient in eternity.”³¹ Support for ESS is also found in an article on the FIEC website by Sarah Allen, who asserts that the complementarian pattern is so good and is evidenced in the way the Son obeys the Father.³² Although British theologian Michael Ovey disputed the view that ESS was a form of modern day Arianism, his language is reminiscent of that employed to promote the subordination of women: “... the Son’s love is shown in his obedience. To remove the Son’s obedience is to remove the revelation of his love.”³³ Giles refutes these implausible denials by complementarians, recognising that ESS “did not arise out of an independent reconsideration of the Trinity. This innovative form of subordinationism arises entirely in

²⁸ Strachan and Peacock, *Grand Design*, 80-81 (emphasis added).

²⁹ Endorsement for Strachan and Peacock’s *Grand Design*.

³⁰ Byrd, *Recovering from*, 101.

³¹ John Stevens, “Are we all heretics now?”, 2016, <http://www.john-stevens.com/2016/06/are-we-all-heretics-now-reflections-on.html>.

³² Sarah Allen, “What is complementarianism?”, FIEC, 2016, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/what-is-complementarianism>.

³³ Michael J. Ovey, *Your Will Be Done: Exploring Eternal Subordination, Divine Monarchy and Divine Humility* (London: Latimer Trust, 2016), 77.

connection with attempts to preserve what to them is a fundamental truth: namely male ‘headship.’”³⁴

iii) Because egalitarianism damages the mission of the Church

Stevens’ third point moves to more practical considerations. Though he titles this point ‘mission’, his first paragraph is about history, opening with the claim that: “Egalitarianism and female church leadership is a relatively recent phenomena (*sic*) and it has yet to pass the test of history.”³⁵ Yet in a talk given in a private capacity and publicized by the FIEC, Stevens was careful to clarify he was promoting “relational complementarity” as opposed to the “ontological complementarity” of history which condemns women to accepted inferiority,³⁶ thus implicitly acknowledging the novelty of the complementarian position and its departure from the actual historical forms of patriarchy. Any claim to historical continuity has to be a cautiously and precisely defined one. While women have never experienced full equality in the Church, Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld relate how women have had prominent roles in the Church since the days of the New Testament.³⁷ Barr similarly evidences the leadership roles in which women have been accepted through the centuries of church history. Referencing an essay by Timothy Larson, Barr counteracts complementarian attempts to eradicate women leaders from history: “Historically, women have flourished as leaders, teachers, and preachers – even in the evangelical world. Instead of opposing women as

³⁴ Giles, *Trinity and Subordinationism*, 109.

³⁵ Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

³⁶ John Stevens, “Affirming women in ministry”, FIEC, 2021, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/affirming-women-in-ministry>.

³⁷ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

preachers and teachers, many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evangelicals did the opposite – they supported women in public ministry.”³⁸

In moving to missiological considerations, Stevens reveals a remarkable display of androcentricity and subjectivity. He challenges the view that “egalitarianism is necessary for mission” on the basis that “I find it hard to think of a growing church led by a woman senior pastor which is seeing significant numbers of conversions in men in the age range 18-50. Male-led churches are often effective in reaching both men and women with the good news of Jesus.”³⁹ Stevens considers this to be vindication of complementarianism as a fulfilment of “God’s commands that church leaders be male.”⁴⁰ This implication that the salvation of men is prioritised over that of women shows the darker pervasive influence of patriarchalism and has dangerous implications for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

iv) Because it is impossible to have a genuinely neutral position on female leadership in the Church

In his final point, Stevens considers the practicalities of admitting into the FIEC churches that are led by women. To do so would allow women the same right to participate in the life of the Fellowship, for example in representation on the Trust Board or speaking at conferences, a level of female participation which he believes many churches would regard as anti-scriptural.⁴¹

Having painted himself into a theological corner, this is an inevitable conclusion for Stevens as Director of the FIEC to come to. Though theological diversity on other issues is

³⁸ Barr, *Making of*, 178-179.

³⁹ Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

⁴⁰ Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

⁴¹ Stevens, <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

accepted within the FIEC, those differing perspectives presumably do not exclude men who hold them from teaching or sitting on the FIEC's Trust Board. A spirit of Christian unity allows the accommodation of incompatible positions on such significant issues as the sovereignty of God, but the same accommodation is not extended to the full inclusion of women within the conservative evangelical Church.

The FIEC's position and its obvious weaknesses and anomalies reflect John Stott's observation that as evangelicals we are often more concerned to assert our high view of the authority of Scripture than to commit to honest, humble and rigorous interpretation. Quite rightly did R.T. France identify the issue of women in the church's ministry as "A test case for biblical interpretation"⁴²; Scot McKnight similarly describes it as a hermeneutical "case study".⁴³ Our standing as evangelicals is only as genuine as our commitment to "correctly handle the word of truth," (2 Tim 2:15). In the meantime, conservative evangelical women wait for their opportunities in the church to be decided, and suffer the consequences of a questionable hermeneutic supported by flawed justifications.

2.3. The broader landscape

The hierarchicalist focus on a few Scriptural verses has led to the dual convictions that "God has commanded that local churches be led by male pastors and elders"⁴⁴ and that men "have a God-given role as the head of the home."⁴⁵ The word 'role' has become somewhat of a battleground. Egalitarian Giles makes a notably robust objection to the terminology of 'roles'. Tracing its origin to theatre rather than common modern English translations of the

⁴² France, *Women in the Church's*.

⁴³ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 195.

⁴⁴ Stevens, <https://fiiec.org.uk/resources/why-are-we-complementarian>.

⁴⁵ Strachan and Peacock, *Grand Design*, 71.

Bible, he observes, “In everyday usage the term refers to characteristic behaviour that can change. In complementarian speak it is a code word for fixed power differences allocated on the basis of gender. What defines a man is that he has been given by God the leadership “role,” and woman the subordinate “role”. This can never change.”⁴⁶

Complementarian Byrd also expresses concern over the word: “We need to stop using the word *role* in reference to permanent fixed identity ... My sexuality is not a role I play. I don’t need to *act* like a woman; I actually *am* a woman. Furthermore, role playing is neither our identity nor our eternal aim.”⁴⁷ Byrd’s book, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* is a reaction to the hard-line hierarchicalism of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*⁴⁸ from which it clearly draws its name and motivation. Byrd illustrates an emergent softer complementarianism, one also presented in Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher’s *Worthy*⁴⁹ which, instead of a focus on a limited number of verses, celebrates a more holistic picture of women in the Bible.

A characteristic of this softer side to complementarianism pushes against what are perceived as the biblical restrictions placed upon women in the Church. *The Gender Agenda* is a discussion between Lis Goddard and Clare Hendry, women ministering in the Church of England who represent the two views. Hendry, advocating for complementarianism, does so despite the fact that she undertakes a preaching ministry, which she justifies because as a Deacon she is not usurping male priestly leadership.⁵⁰ Similarly, in *Hearing Her Voice*, John Dickson detects that in terms of the “numerous public-speaking ministries mentioned in the

⁴⁶ Kevin Giles, *What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women* (Kindle Edition, 2018), 13.

⁴⁷ Byrd, *Recovering From*, 120.

⁴⁸ Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical*.

⁴⁹ Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher, *Worthy: Celebrating the Value of Women*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2020).

⁵⁰ Lis Goddard and Clare Hendry, *The Gender Agenda: Discovering God’s Plan for Church Leadership* (Nottingham: IVP, 2010), 18-20.

New Testament ... Paul restricts *just one of them* to qualified males ... Teaching,”⁵¹ which he views very narrowly, such that he is able to come to the conclusion “that trained and godly women should be allowed to give sermons in our churches.”⁵²

Hopeful though these expressions of an emerging softer complementarianism are, a minority, darker, even abusive side of hierarchicalism remains. One such abuse victim is Ruth Tucker who, while developing a solid academic reputation, was simultaneously being beaten by her church leader husband as a distorted expression of male headship.⁵³ When double sexual abuse survivor and lawyer Rachael Denhollander advised her church leadership that they must take allegations of abuse in the church seriously, she was forced to write a letter of apology to the eldership for appearing to contravene their authority. (She and her husband were subsequently removed from co-ordinating their care group.⁵⁴) These examples illustrate how a worldview constructed around male headship subjugates compassion for female victims. Giles makes this connection directly, comprehensively, systematically and compellingly in his 2020 book *The Headship of Man and the Abuse of Women: Are They Related in Any Way?*⁵⁵

The 2017 #MeToo movement swiftly prompted #ChurchToo which revealed that, rather than protecting women, churches were propagating a theology that has caused pastor after pastor to send women who report their husband’s abuse back into danger, with advice to

⁵¹ John Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice: A Biblical Invitation for Women to Preach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 9-10.

⁵² Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice*, 56.

⁵³ Ruth A. Tucker, *Black and White Bible, Black and Blue Wife: My Story of Finding Hope after Domestic Abuse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 79, 162.

⁵⁴ Rachael Denhollander, *What is a Girl Worth; My Story of Breaking the Silence and Exposing the Truth about Larry Nassar and USA Gymnastics* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2019), 145-148.

⁵⁵ Kevin Giles, *The Headship of Man and the Abuse of Women: Are They Related in Any Way?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020).

pray for and submit to their husband more.⁵⁶ Emily Joy, co-founder of #ChurchToo in November 2017, identifies patriarchy, purity culture⁵⁷ and male leadership coupled with female submission to be root causes of church abuse scandals.⁵⁸ While the “women’s issue” in recent decades has been dominated by interpretation of texts yielding to an evolving spectrum of implementation, revelations of such appalling sins of commission and protection of abusers within churches has given a new urgency to understanding the biblical view and its outworking in modern society.

The answer to that critical conundrum is unlikely to be found in the constant revisiting of ambiguous verses in order to confirm an existing bias, but rather is to be found through a hermeneutical re-examination of Scripture. Chapter 3 considers how greater application of Narrative Theology and Contextuality might present a more holistic understanding of gender in the Bible in a way that resolves the theological tensions and liberates the standing and spiritual gifts of women. Chapter 4 then considers some of the obstacles that need to be overcome in order for that narrative and contextual biblical resolution to be applied within the broad context of British evangelicalism.

⁵⁶ Hayley Gleeson, “#ChurchToo: Christian victims of abuse join social media outpouring”, ABC News, 2017, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-24/church-too-christian-victims-of-abuse-join-social-media-twitter/9188666>.

⁵⁷ Rachel Joy Welcher explores the impact on those raised in the Purity Culture era of the 1990s when women were made guardians of female and male purity in *Talking Back to Purity Culture: Rediscovering Faithful Christian Sexuality* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020).

⁵⁸ Emily Joy, 2017, <http://emilyjoypoetry.com/churchtoo>.

Chapter 3. Narrative and Contextual Methodologies

The appeal of narrative theology is such that it will be attractive to those concerned with reclaiming the centrality of Scripture in modern theology. David Hampton¹

3.1. Applying a narrative methodology

In recent decades, narrative theologians have re-focussed our attention on the great narrative arc of God's work among His people.² Storkey is among those who have applied a narrative methodology to women within the Bible:

We should not underestimate the part played by narrative theology in both framing our doctrine and shaping our understanding of faith. The stories of people in Scripture are case histories of God's relationship with humankind For the Bible is full of stories [and] though the Scribes may be male, and the context reflect the patriarchal culture where male voices predominate, I believe many stories are authentically those of women.³

Bauckham supports this view, observing that women are repeatedly the subject of verbs in the Gospels, which he interprets as evidence of their eyewitnesses credibility.⁴

Sadly, the wealth of those narratives is often reduced to a 'how to' manual for Christian living: "Because reading the Bible as story takes more time, thinking, and discerning, we've developed routines and techniques that get us to our goal sooner."⁵ The contribution and inclusion of women in the ongoing narrative of the Kingdom of God have fallen victim to such simplification. The situation is further compounded by a neglect of the eschatological direction and resolution of the biblical narrative.

¹ David A. Hampton, *Narrative Theology as a Hermeneutic Approach* (Lulu, 2009), 77.

² Alan Jacobs, "What Narrative Theology Forgot", *First Things*, 2003, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2003/08/what-narrative-theology-forgot>.

³ Elaine Storkey, *Women in a Patriarchal World: Twenty-five Empowering Stories from the Bible* (London: SPCK, 2020), xiii.

⁴ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of Named Women in the Gospels* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), 297.

⁵ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 43.

Within the conservative evangelical context, any quest to rectify that neglect requires insulating the Scriptures from a perceived attack on its inerrancy. Consequently, a feminist “hermeneutic of suspicion”⁶ that categorises “the canon as a patriarchal construction”⁷ is itself considered suspicious. Feminist reworkings of the biblical texts⁸ are regarded as antithetical to evangelicalism. Alice Mathews discerns, “Feminist theologians often use women’s experience as the starting point for their theological work. As an orthodox Christian anchored in the Bible, I cannot use my or any other women’s experience as my starting point. Scripture must always be the starting point.”⁹ Storkey similarly admits that her own approach pairs a hermeneutic of suspicion with a hermeneutic of faith.¹⁰

Yet to disregard feminist scholarship entirely risks diminishing biblical interpretation. A feminist hermeneutic that locates the voice of God in and through the actions and words of biblical women recognises that, though fewer in number, authentic gynocentric texts provide a critical counter-balance to the androcentric perspectives of the majority of biblical texts.¹¹ Fiorenza offers a solution to this interpretative issue:

This lack of general knowledge about the women of Scripture is partially due to the androcentrism of religious instruction and liturgical anamnesis that has decisively shaped Christian imagination It is necessary, therefore, to develop a remedial approach that attempts to rediscover all the information about women that can still be found in biblical writing.¹²

Storkey concurs that the issue is one of centuries of male interpretation that has created a wedge between the biblical narrative and the theology of the Church.¹³ A rigorous scriptural

⁶ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1992), 57.

⁷ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 15.

⁸ Such as Fiorenza’s conception of what Herodias’ thoughts might be within the narrative of Mark 6:17-29, *But She Said*, 48-50.

⁹ Alice Mathews, “How I Changed my Mind about Women in Leadership.” in *How I Changed*, 162.

¹⁰ Storkey, *Women in*, xiv.

¹¹ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, xix.

¹² Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 22.

¹³ Elaine Storkey, “Atonement and feminism,” *Anvil* 11.3 (1994), 227-235.

interpretation of what the Bible says about women must therefore resist both the feminist inclination to exaggerate the gynocentricity of the text, and also, and more significantly within the conservative evangelical context, the extrication of an honest and holistic understanding from the patriarchal interpretations and language that continue to prevail.

3.2. Women in the Old Testament

The scriptural narrative conforms to the most basic story structure, with a beginning rooted in eternity, a middle played out within the confines of time and creation, and an ending or final resolution anchored in the eternity of the New Creation. Critically, the biblical narrative has direction¹⁴ progressing towards this final restoration – a culmination of God’s salvation plan for His errant people.

God’s plan has discernible phases that are distinguished by key biblical markers such as the call of Abraham and the birth of Christ. Christ’s ascension forms the penultimate marker initiating the age of the Church, a period of salvation history that we share with the New Testament writers, and one that anticipates the final phase of salvation history, the New Creation to be ushered in when Christ returns. The Church is in effect a prologue to what is anticipated, purposed with gospel proclamation and reflecting the perfection of the New Creation.

Though the markers delineating the periods of salvation history remain constant, scholars trace different themes through the biblical storyline. Vaughan Roberts, for example, traces a Kingdom theme that culminates in the *Perfected Kingdom* when Christ returns.¹⁵

¹⁴ Sidney Greidanus maintains that narrative passages of Scripture should be preached in ways faithful to the forward movement of the narrative itself. *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting Preaching and Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 151.

¹⁵ Vaughan Roberts, *God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (London: IVP, 2002), 14.

Roberts' motive for writing, "to help Christians find their way round the Bible,"¹⁶ is tacit acknowledgement of common ignorance of the Bible's narrative structure. Alternatively, McKnight highlights a theme of *Oneness*, discerning how the Creation *Oneness* between God and His people, and between man and woman, was distorted by the Fall to become *Otherness*. Only when Christ returns will the harmony of being *Perfectly One* be fully restored (Revelation 21-22).¹⁷ Though their thematic threads vary, McKnight and Roberts both describe a narrative progression to a perfected eternity. When considering gender within the Bible's narrative arc, this trajectory is critical, and any chosen theme, be it *Oneness* or *Kingdom* or anything else, is only the route through which this final destination is presented.

Complementarian theology that elevates isolated verses risks distorting the scriptural arc and neglecting the context in which verses occur. Two of these disputed texts reference Creation, by inference in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, and more directly in 1 Timothy 2:12-15. This leads to a nuanced interpretation of Genesis 2 that maintains that male leadership and female submission existed in perfect harmony prior to the Fall.¹⁸ Bartlett assesses, "The distinctive feature of complementarian interpretations of Genesis 1-3 is that they are based on implication rather than on the express words."¹⁹ In effect, this interpretation, using Paul's circumstantial letters to extrapolate the meaning of Genesis 2, reverses the direction of the Scriptural narrative and raises the question, if Eden was harmoniously hierarchical, shouldn't the resolution of human history in the eternal glory of the New Creation be similarly hierarchical? Yet there is no biblical evidence to support such a trajectory. Instead, the Bible presents a vision of the New Creation where the only discernible division is between those

¹⁶ Roberts, *God's Big Picture*, 23.

¹⁷ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 74.

¹⁸ Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God's Design*, 34-35.

¹⁹ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 80.

whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, and those whose names are not (Rev 20:12), and the only hierarchy is between the exalted Godhead and the redeemed (Rev 22:3). As the anteroom to this New Creation, the Church's focus and practice, particularly in reference to how women are cherished, included and utilised, should reflect these two eschatological realities.

In contrast, egalitarian theology believes that prior to the Fall, men and women existed in a state of mutuality where they shared the same mandate:

For both of them the job description was the same: fruitfulness, multiplication, subduing, ruling. No role was reserved for one over the other. Both were created with equal value in the image of God, both were created with equal authority given by God (rulership), and both were created with equal opportunities to fulfil the purposes of God.²⁰

This acknowledgement of the mutuality of Creation is consistent with the presentation of the New Creation, and brings cohesion to the scriptural narrative.

Michelle Lee-Barnewell implements a "literary approach"²¹ in an attempt to avoid these polarised interpretations of Genesis 1-3.²² She discerns that the biblical narrative conforms to a standard literary structure that revolves around a central conflict that she identifies as the struggle between obedience and disobedience.²³ The key principles of that conflict are first presented in the story of Adam and Eve, and prominent among them is the recognition that the disunity between men and women was a consequence of disobedience.²⁴ Lee-Barnewell's innovative approach elicits textual meaning often obscured by preconceptions, and presents challenges to both complementarianism and egalitarianism. The challenge to

²⁰ Katie Adams, *Equal: What the Bible Says about Women, Men and Authority* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2019), 31.

²¹ Michelle Lee-Barnewell, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 122.

²² Schreiner considers such detached objectivity impossible, *Women in Ministry*, 267.

²³ Lee-Barnewell, *Neither Complementarian*, 128.

²⁴ Lee-Barnewell, *Neither Complementarian*, 141.

complementarianism considers that Adam's failure to preserve marital unity contests the whole concept of male headship.²⁵ The challenge to the functional equality of egalitarianism revolves around the recognition that the text makes clear distinctions between Adam and Eve's responsibilities, actions and consequences.²⁶

The biblical narrative proceeds through discernible stages from the destruction of the harmony of Creation to the reinstatement of that harmony in the anticipated New Creation. A theology of gender within the Church needs to recognise the contributions of women in each stage of that biblical narrative, acknowledging that our post-resurrection position on that trajectory is intended to foreshadow the unity and inclusivity of Eden restored.

The centrality of women within the purposes of God is embedded in the curse issued in Genesis 3. God's promise of a Deliverer, a Serpent-Crusher, directs us to "watch the woman."²⁷ Consequently, OT "women viewed their primary role as building God's kingdom through the birth of the Promised One."²⁸ And certainly within the OT metanarrative, female identity and purpose are strongly linked to motherhood. Complementarian theology's predilection for motherhood as the ultimate expression of womanhood²⁹ clings to the OT emphasis on the numerical and biological expansion of the Israelite race within the framework of the anticipation of a Deliverer. This emphasis on biological motherhood as women's ultimate calling fails to recognise that in the post-resurrection era of the Church, our emphasis is now on new or spiritual birth.

²⁵ Lee-Barnewell, *Neither Complementarian*, 142.

²⁶ Lee-Barnewell, *Neither Complementarian*, 143.

²⁷ Fitzpatrick and Schumacher, *Worthy*, 19.

²⁸ Fitzpatrick and Schumacher, *Worthy*, 77.

²⁹ Gloria Furman's *Missional Motherhood: The Everyday Ministry of Motherhood in the Grand Plan of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016) does precisely that.

However, even within the OT, the narrative does not confine women solely to motherhood. Egalitarians justify the place of women in contemporary church leadership by using the examples of OT women such as Deborah, “a leader of considerable authority”³⁰ and Huldah “who was revered as wise and prayerful before God.”³¹ In contrast, complementarians cast doubt over the genuineness of female leadership; Deborah “served as a prophetess and *possibly* as a judge;”³² Miriam “*apparently* exercised the prophetic gift;”³³ and for Huldah “there is no presumption of authority exercised over Josiah.”³⁴ Schreiner’s summary is characteristically pre-judgemental and dismissive: “those women who had the authoritative gift of prophecy in the Old Testament did not exercise it in a public forum as male Old Testament prophets did [because] a public exercise of authority would contradict male headship.”³⁵

The OT anticipation of a Deliverer is in part heightened through the narratives of those who provide limited and temporary deliverance for God’s people but who foreshadow One who will provide complete and eternal deliverance. An androcentric interpretation of Scripture limits those who foreshadow the Saviour to men only, whereas a more inclusive reading considers women who also foreshadow the Saviour. In the story of Jael, for example, (Judges 4-5), after Sisera, the commander of the Midianite army, is defeated in battle, he seeks sanctuary in Jael’s tent. Jael waits until Sisera is asleep before driving a tent peg into his temple. Julie Walsh argues that the biblical description that Jael “crushed his head” (Judges 5:26) is reminiscent of Genesis 3:15, “he will crush your head,” which predicts Christ’s victory

³⁰ Storkey, *Women in*, 30.

³¹ Storkey, *Women in*, 73.

³² Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God’s Design*, 67 (emphasis added).

³³ Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God’s Design*, 67 (emphasis added).

³⁴ Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God’s Design*, 69.

³⁵ Thomas Schreiner, *Recovering Biblical*, 217.

over death on the cross.³⁶ Like the other (male) God-sent deliverers in the OT, Jael foreshadows Christ by bringing peace and deliverance to God's people through the piercing of an enemy who has inflicted death and destruction.

The narratives of other OT women similarly prefigure the promised Messiah. Deborah dispensed justice from a tree. Esther approached a throne to seek justice and deliverance for her people. Abigail interceded for her household in the face of an avenging enemy.³⁷ And Ruth left her homeland and substituted Naomi's hopeless plight for her own.³⁸

This latter example is symptomatic of the type of imposed androcentric interpretation that focusses on male characters above female. The book of Ruth is not only named after a woman, but makes women the focus of the narrative. A patriarchal focus on the kinsman-redeemer aspect of Boaz, important though it is, overlooks Ruth and Naomi as the embodiments of the rich and potent theological themes of widowhood and barrenness "that run through Scripture and which, when unearthed, reveal God's amazing heart for women and the power of what he is doing in our lives today."³⁹

Ruth and Naomi exemplify the biblical theme of vulnerable women bereft of male protection. Israel's leaders were instructed to protecting the weak and vulnerable.⁴⁰ Failure to do so was indicative of growing apostasy. A connection is then established between sin and the maltreatment of vulnerable women, evidence of which is found in the book of Judges where repeated cycles of disobedience, judgement, repentance and the sending of a deliverer present an overall trajectory of Israel falling further into sin. The connection between sin and

³⁶ Julie Walsh, *The Cross and the Tent Peg: How Jesus Retraced Jael's Story* (Kindle, 2018).

³⁷ Storkey, *Women in*, 53-55.

³⁸ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 6.

³⁹ Carolyn Custis James, *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 52.

⁴⁰ David Prior, *The Message of Joel, Micah and Habakkuk* (Nottingham: IVP, 2010), 136.

the abuse of women is depicted in the gratuitous maltreatment of the nameless concubine in Judges 19, and in the way women are traded as commodities in the Judges 20-21. The treatment of women within these closing chapters of Judges is the crescendo to the final comment: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."

3.3. Women in the New Testament

The birth of Jesus realises the Old Testament's long anticipation of a Saviour. Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy sectioned into fourteen generations of male descent, indicative of a complete passing of time. This pattern is interrupted by five women interspersed through the generations who, with the exception of Mary, are Gentiles: "With such a list, Matthew gives us clues about the kinds of people that the Messiah came to save. He was to be a Savior for women and men ... Jews and Gentiles."⁴¹ Mary herself embodies the connection between the Old and New Testaments. She was the one chosen to be what all OT women hoped to be – the mother of the Messiah. But the Gospel writers portray her not just as a mother but as a faithful disciple, conveying her thoughts and actions (some of which are less than favourable). Ally Kateusz surveys a timeline of portraits of Mary to make the case that she was a now overlooked leader of the Early Church and that her leadership has been lost behind her patriarchal reinvention as a demure, idealised woman.⁴² Certainly, in Mary we see the transition from the OT emphasis on motherhood in favour of an increasing emphasis on NT discipleship.

⁴¹ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 2008), 42.

⁴² Ally Kateusz, *Mary and Early Christian Women: Hidden Leadership* (Kindle edition, 2019), 26-29.

The Gospel writers intentionally and purposefully shaped their selective narratives⁴³ to convey a Messiah who perpetually challenged and subverted the dominant racial and patriarchal assumptions, addressing the polarity of “patriarchy versus the discipleship of equals.”⁴⁴ Ben Witherington identifies that “Both Jesus and especially Luke indicate their desire to see women as equally worthy to be examples, equally objects of God’s grace, and equally an accepted part of their audiences.”⁴⁵ Bailey concurs, detecting at least twenty-seven sets of stories in Luke’s Gospel that balance a focus on a man with a comparative focus on a woman.⁴⁶

Christ’s interactions with women powerfully convey female inclusion and employment in the new Kingdom, and is evidenced in two noteworthy interactions. The first incident is significant enough to be recorded in all three synoptic Gospels and involves a widow who, as a consequence of bleeding for twelve years, was considered unclean and ostracised from society. In desperation she flouts regulations and in faith touches Jesus’ garment. Witherington recognises the significance of this interaction: “If a woman with a blood flow is not defiled or defiling ... the way is paved for women to participate more fully in Jesus’ own community.”⁴⁷ In the second encounter, Jesus engages with a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4). John locates this incident after Christ’s interaction with Nicodemus, encouraging a comparison between the two. Nicodemus is a respectable, male Jew who chooses to encounter Jesus at night, but leaves disappointed. The woman is a disreputable Gentile whom Jesus chooses to encounter in the noonday sun. Her spiritual transformation commissions her

⁴³ Jeffrey W. Aernie, *Narrative Discipleship: Portraits of Women in the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 12.

⁴⁴ Carolyn Osiek and Margaret MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 1.

⁴⁵ Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), 63.

⁴⁶ Bailey, *Jesus Through*, 59.

⁴⁷ Witherington, *Women and the Genesis*, 83-84.

to become “an evangelist to her own community and foreshadows the women who witness to men regarding the resurrection.”⁴⁸ Adams notes the significance of the commissioning of a Samaritan woman even before the sending out of the Twelve or the seventy-two.⁴⁹ These two events portray a Saviour who removes ontological, racial and religious restrictions on women and endorses a mutuality in Gospel proclamation, “releasing women alongside men into all forms of ministry, leadership, work and service on the basis of character and gifting rather than on the basis of biological sex.”⁵⁰

Aernie’s work on narrative discipleship in Mark’s Gospel compares and contrasts the twelve disciples with the women that Jesus encounters: “These women are exemplars of discipleship who serve as narrative representatives of the way in which God’s in-breaking kingdom renews creation and reorders humanity.”⁵¹ That reordering of humanity is exemplified in the way Jesus honoured women as disciples, most notably in His commendation of Mary of Bethany. When Mary usurps the position exclusively afforded to male disciples by sitting at her Teacher’s feet, she is not doing so merely to acquire knowledge passively or theoretically; she is positioning herself to become like her Teacher and to be a messenger for His message.⁵² Christ’s approval of Mary’s discipleship signifies the universality of the Gospel as a message for *all*, to be taken by *all* into *all* the World.

Ultimately, the Gospel writers construct their narratives in ways that direct us to the Cross. While women are prominent in the birth, passion, and resurrection narratives,⁵³ it is at the Cross that all four writers consolidate their presentation of faithful female discipleship, in

⁴⁸ Bailey, *Jesus Through*, 215.

⁴⁹ Adams, *Equal*, 60.

⁵⁰ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering*, 1.

⁵¹ Aernie, *Narrative Discipleship*, 2.

⁵² Adams, *Equal*, 56.

⁵³ Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, xiii.

marked contrast to the male disciples who fled the scene.⁵⁴ John records Christ's first resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene. Mary is called by name and then sent "to the other disciples, with the incredible message of his resurrection and coming ascension. Jesus commissions Mary as the apostle to the apostles."⁵⁵

That model of inclusive discipleship and commissioning is confirmed at Pentecost. Where at Babel an attempt to usurp the authority of God was punished by the dissipation of the nations, at Pentecost the Spirit empowers a linguistic, and therefore racially, inclusive Gospel proclamation (Acts 2:4). Peter's sermon, quoting the prophet Joel, emphasises the shared male and female responsibility and involvement in Gospel proclamation. And as befits this gender and racial Kingdom inclusivity, the Jewish male-exclusive act of circumcision is replaced by the gender and racially inclusive act of baptism.

3.4. Contextualising Paul through the lens of Romans

"Context is always king."⁵⁶ It is therefore imperative to interpret the contentious Pauline texts within this framework of Kingdom inclusivity and New Creation trajectory. While textual examination is beyond the scope of this work, a number of points need to be made about the context in which Paul ministered. Significantly, Paul's "first-century mission to the gentiles needed strategies to survive within the Greco-Roman culture."⁵⁷ Paul therefore promotes a duality of conduct. Externally believers were to keep a low profile,⁵⁸ while

⁵⁴ Carolyn Custis James, *Lost Women of the Bible: Finding Strength and Significance Through Their Stories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2005), 193.

⁵⁵ Storkey, *Women in*, 156.

⁵⁶ Bartlett, *Men and Women*, 363.

⁵⁷ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 3.

⁵⁸ Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006), 55.

internally their character and relationships were to be transformed to be like Christ's, equipped for radical missional activity:

Life in the Christian community is supposed to be an eschatological reflection of a believer's status, seen in their ethics, their spiritual experience and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. However, this eschatological fulfilment involves a continuing mission to the gentiles, so that Paul and his churches live as missionaries who contextualize the gospel for the Greco-Roman culture and who live their lives according to the standards of this culture.⁵⁹

Where Paul encountered behaviour that contravened those values and jeopardised the missional purposes of the Church, he was swift to redress it. Given this contextual understanding, it is a legitimate and coherent perspective that the controversial verses that seemingly restrict women in ministry were written by Paul to rectify behavioural or doctrinal error in churches he had founded. Recognising the legitimacy of this contextual interpretation liberates us from the over-emphasis and misinterpretation of the controversial verses and opens a more holistic interpretation, consistent with the narrative arc of Scripture and with the context of the rest of the NT.

Paul's letter to the Romans stands in contrast to his circumstantial letters to other churches and individuals. In Romans Paul expresses his most fully and systematically developed theology, with the purpose of establishing sound doctrinal understanding in churches he had not yet taught in person. John Drane describes Romans as Paul's *magnus opus*, his "last will and testament."⁶⁰ Similarly, Bird styles Romans the "greatest letter-essay, the most influential letter in the history of Western thought, and the singularly greatest piece of Christian theology."⁶¹ If male headship were a primary doctrine to be universally established in all churches for all time, then one might reasonably expect that Paul would

⁵⁹ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 143.

⁶⁰ John Drane, *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to F.F Bruce* (eds. D.A. Hugner and M.J. Harris; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 212, quoting Günther Bornkamm, 223.

⁶¹ Bird, *Bourgeois Babes*, 21.

have included it within the “detailed and systematic exhibition of the doctrines of Christianity”⁶² expressed in Romans. However, Paul presents no hint of hierarchy or gender-differentiation, and instead uses the metaphor of the Body to convey a Church united in valuing and utilising the spiritual gifts of all its members.⁶³ Paul therefore includes a list of those spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6-8), with similar lists in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 27-30 and Eph. 4:11. Notably, teaching is prioritised in all three letters. Nowhere do these lists suggest that this teaching is a male-only duty.⁶⁴ This leads us to two significant conclusions: firstly, teaching is critically important within the Church; and secondly, teaching is not gender-specific.

This gender-inclusive ministry is confirmed by the lists of co-workers with which Paul concludes his letters and in which women are notably commended for their Christian activity.⁶⁵ “Paul not only names some women coworkers (Phil 4:2-3) but he names more women coworkers (*sic*) than men in his greetings.”⁶⁶ Yet, in conservative evangelical churches the ministries of these NT women are either ignored or their ministry credentials attacked, the most notorious example of which is the three-pronged assault on the apostolic credentials of Junia. The first component of the attack on Junia was to contort her name into an acceptable masculine form, Junias, for which there is no extant evidence that this name ever existed.⁶⁷ Secondly, in androcentric Bible translations, such as the ESV, Andronicus and Junia are diminished to ‘well known to the apostles’ (Roms 16:7) rather than the more accurate translation “that they were well known not only to the apostles but eminent among the

⁶² Robert Haldane, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Banner of Truth, 1958), 1.

⁶³ Drane, *Pauline Studies*, 221.

⁶⁴ John Stackhouse, “How to produce an Egalitarian Man.” in *How I Changed*, 36.

⁶⁵ Andrew Clarke, *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. Peter Oakes; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 119.

⁶⁶ Ronald Sider, “From Soft Patriarchy to Mutual Submission.” in *How I Changed*, 228.

⁶⁷ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 292.

apostles themselves.”⁶⁸ The third attack lessens Andronicus and Junia to ‘messengers’ rather than fully endorsed ‘apostles.’⁶⁹ Hierarchicalists similarly diminish Priscilla’s contribution to a “significant and important ministry but not necessarily a public leadership role,”⁷⁰ rather than recognise that the placement of her name before Aquila’s in four of the six occasions that the couple are mentioned indicates her prominent ministry.⁷¹

Paul’s inclusion of women within “the didactic life of the church”⁷² is further exemplified by Phoebe, whose proven ministry credentials, as a deacon to the church at Cenchrae and as a patron to Paul, qualify her for the substantial responsibility of delivering Paul’s letter to Rome and likely becoming the first person to exposit it to a church.⁷³ Markedly, the contributions of women such as Phoebe, Tryphena and Tryphosa⁷⁴ (Roms 16:12) are dependent on their spiritual gifting and maturity, not their unspecified marital status.

Romans provides the normative framework by which the restrictive, circumstantial and controversial verses can be interpreted. Romans is also indicative of the “progressive trajectory of increasing freedom and opportunity for women throughout Scripture.”⁷⁵ However, an evangelical reclamation of that trajectory after centuries of patriarchal interpretation is a challenge that arguably extends as far as the survival of evangelicalism itself, to which we move next.

⁶⁸ F.F. Bruce, *The Pauline Circle: Engaging Portraits of Paul’s Friends, Co-workers, Hosts and Hostesses* (Kindle), Ch 11.

⁶⁹ McKnight, *Blue Parakeet*, 291.

⁷⁰ Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God’s Design*, 141.

⁷¹ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 232.

⁷² Bird, *Bourgeois Babes*, 21.

⁷³ Bird, *Bourgeois Babes*, 35.

⁷⁴ F.F. Bruce suggests these women might have been twin sisters in *Romans: Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series*, (Leicester: IVP, 1994), 260.

⁷⁵ Adams, *Equal*, 251.

Chapter 4. Implications of Narrative and Contextual Interpretations for Women in Contemporary Evangelicalism

Every location, every generation, every challenge forces the community of faith to reread the Bible asking what it might have to say in this situation. Alister McGrath¹

4.1. The historical precedent

In *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, McGrath quotes Puritan John Robinson "I am verily persuaded the Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of His Holy Word."² McGrath then observes, "To be a Protestant is to set out on an intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage that is never complete."³ The present challenge to conservative evangelicalism is to reignite a desire for that pilgrimage through a re-engagement with Scripture on an issue that has been elevated to untouchable doctrine, in order that the gender inclusive trajectory of the NT Church might be re-established.

That inclusive ministry trajectory can only be restored by robustly challenging the prevailing patriarchal interpretation of Scripture. Schreiner recognises the issue, "I believe that the role of women in the church is the most controversial and sensitive issue within evangelicalism today."⁴ What Schreiner perceives as controversy and sensitivity suggests a reluctance to disturb the patriarchal status quo, and must be balanced by Mathews' warning that: "Satan wins a great victory every time the gifts God gave women are put on the shelf simply because the image bearers are female."⁵

¹ McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 466.

² McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 466.

³ McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 466.

⁴ Schreiner, *Women in Ministry*, 265.

⁵ Mathews, *How I Changed*, 163.

Evangelicalism has previously faced and resolved a similar interpretative challenge over the issue of slavery when, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

Christians were led to realise that Scripture speaks with more than one voice on the issue, and that the simple appeal to the cultural pattern which appears on the surface of the biblical text may need to yield to more fundamental ethical principles which, while not explicitly applied to slavery in Scripture, must ultimately lead to its abolition.⁶

Such in-depth biblical study meant that for second generation evangelicals, an assault on the slave trade became an important cause.⁷ In America, Northern Abolitionists were handicapped by an absence of specific biblical texts condemning slavery, whereas Southerners, who clung to a more literal Scriptural understanding, substantiated their case for slavery by quoting one explicit text after another.⁸ “These southern evangelicals, steeped in reformed theology and committed to the authority of Scripture, were convinced that the Bible endorsed both the practice and the institution of slavery.”⁹

When Cornelius Plantinga examined the biblical dialogue between those holding pro- and anti- slavery views, he was struck:

with the force of revelation that the female subordination texts and the slave subordination texts were in the same hermeneutical boat In both cases you could maintain an egalitarian position only by going to the spirit of the Bible, the general direction of the Bible, the doctrine of the image of God in the Bible, the majestic assertion of the Bible that in Christ ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28).¹⁰

⁶ France, *Women in the Church's Ministry*.

⁷ Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitfield and the Wesleys*, (London: IVP, 2016), 243.

⁸ Cornelius Plantinga, “How I Changed my Mind about Women in Church Leadership.” in *How I Changed*, 191.

⁹ Kevin Giles, “The biblical argument for slavery: Can the Bible mislead?” *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 1994, http://www.gospelstudies.org.uk/biblicalstudies/pdf/eq/1994-1_003.pdf.

¹⁰ Plantinga, *How I Changed*, 192.

Following a similar comparison of the biblical texts, Giles offers the encouraging perspective that the biblical evidence supporting the subordination of women is significantly less than that used to support slavery.¹¹

4.2. Challenges to a gender inclusive re-interpretation of Scripture

The abolition of slavery offers the hope that a positive engagement with the whole narrative of Scripture can lead to a favourable and faithful resolution to the current debate. Stroup recognises the potency of narrative theology for wrestling with contemporary challenges:

Each new situation and each new moment in the community's history require a subtle shift in the identity narrative. The dynamic that prompts this constant change in the community's narrative is its incessant need for interpretation. Simply because a community's predecessors found that Christian narrative enabled them to make sense out of their world and behavior in it does not mean that subsequent communities can use the same interpretation.¹²

Encouragingly, there is a discernible trend towards egalitarianism, illustrated by Giles' extensive, though not comprehensive, list of those who "were all once complementarians [and] have changed their mind."¹³ In the British context this shift is evident in the influential conservative evangelical Bible Speaks Today (BST) series. When the original series editor, John Stott, wrote the commentary for 1 Timothy, he expressed a restrictive view of women in ministry, but concluded "further theological reflection is needed."¹⁴ Current series editor, Derek Tidball, and his wife Dianne combined narrative and contextual methodologies to present an egalitarian perspective on the biblical theme of *Women*, admitting, "It may be

¹¹ Giles, http://www.gospelstudies.org.uk/biblicalstudies/pdf/eq/1994-1_003.pdf.

¹² George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology*, (London: SCM, 1984), 166.

¹³ Kevin Giles, *What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women*, (Kindle), 25-26. For full list see Appendix 1, which also lists those who contributed to *How I Changed my Mind about Women in Leadership*, and Appendix 2 which presents an analysis of the principal influences reported by the contributors to that book.

¹⁴ John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus: The Bible Speaks Today*, (Leicester: IVP, 1996), 88.

helpful to know that this was not the starting point of one of the authors, who has come over many years to change position through the reading of Scripture and observation of what God is doing in his church.”¹⁵

Influences for the movement towards egalitarianism are complex, and a full examination is beyond the scope of this work. However, an analysis of the twenty-one contributors to the 2010 publication *How I Changed my Mind About Women in Leadership* (see Appendix 2) indicates that a leading factor in that change was the numerous anomalies and contradictions of belief and practice that complementarianism must accommodate. Such incongruities are also expressed by historian Beth Barr, who relates how male headship ideology meant that, despite her thorough grounding in Scripture and her solid academic profile, she was prohibited from teaching the Bible to teenage boys.¹⁶ Such absurdities are further illustrated by another historian, Kate Bowler, who relates how she returned as an adult to her Summer youth camps because they needed someone to revise their Bible studies: “In a calculus that only evangelicals can understand, I would never be allowed to preach but I could speak directly to the entire camp daily on theological matters as long as I wrote them down.”¹⁷

Barr and Bowler have been joined by fellow historian, Kristin Kobes Du Mez, to articulate an increasing challenge to the patriarchal distortion of US evangelicalism. Du Mez’s contribution in *Jesus and John Wayne*¹⁸ has gained sufficient popularity to enter the New York Times June 2021 Bestseller list. *Jesus and John Wayne* systematically traces the ingrained association between patriarchal evangelicalism and right-wing politics that found its ultimate

¹⁵ Derek and Dianne Tidball, *The Message of Women: The Bible Speaks Today*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2012), 26.

¹⁶ Barr, *Making of*, 5, 129, 176-7.

¹⁷ Bowler, *Preacher’s Wife*, x.

¹⁸ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, (New York, NY: Liveright, 2020).

expression in the election of President Donald Trump. “Evangelical support for Trump was ... the culmination of evangelicals’ embrace of militant masculinity, an ideology that enshrines patriarchal authority.”¹⁹

Du Mez’s book elicits multiple examples of the patriarchal stranglehold on such organisations as the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC):

Between 1975 and 1985, the number of women ordained in the SBC increased significantly. These women insisted on interpreting biblical texts contextually, attentive to the settings in which they were produced. Conservatives, however, insisted on a ‘populist hermeneutic,’ a method of privileging ‘the simplest most direct interpretations of Scripture.’²⁰

Consequently, in the mid 1990s, and despite the opposition of both students and academic staff, the CBMW took up residence in the SBC’s Southern Seminary and enacted a policy of hiring only faculty members who were opposed to the ordination of women.²¹

Trump’s candidacy and election further galvanised those opposed to the noxious mix of patriarchal politics and evangelicalism. A prominent voice of dissent came from Jen Hatmaker, whose “Never Trump” stance and comment, “We will not forget. Nor will we forget the Christian leaders that betrayed their sisters in Christ for power,”²² led to death threats against her and her family.

Verbal abuse and intimidation are consistently targeted at those who challenge hard-line patriarchalism. When Byrd’s book, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* was issued for pre-release in 2019, she was subjected to vitriolic verbal abuse.²³ Perhaps the

¹⁹ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 3. Du Mez records how Grudem declared Trump “a morally good choice,” 261.

²⁰ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 108.

²¹ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 168.

²² Tiffany Stanley, “This evangelical leader denounced Trump”, Politico Magazine, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/17/is-jen-hatmaker-the-conscious-of-evangelical-christianity-216068/>.

²³ Abuse against Byrd has reignited since she published a letter condemning patriarchalism in her own denomination, the OPC, <https://aimeebyrd.com/2021/04/05/an-open-letter-to-the-opc-on-abuse/>.

most infamous expression of such verbal abuse occurred in October 2019, when John MacArthur declared from a conference platform that fellow complementarian and influential speaker Beth Moore should, “Go home!”²⁴ In March 2021 Moore announced that she was no longer worshipping as part of the SBC.²⁵

Extreme patriarchalism has caused many to no longer identify as evangelicals. Hatmaker is one: “I think that the way most people would understand the word ... I do not identify with that label anymore.”²⁶ While most of these ‘exvangelicals’²⁷ remain orthodox believers, for others the pain that they have endured within the evangelical fold has caused them to abandon their faith.

This distancing from the description ‘evangelical’ is detected in the less extreme British context where churches are abandoning the word from their names. In their discussion of the future of the Church in the UK, the members of the Ligonier panel (see Chapter 2) were similarly reluctant to describe themselves as evangelical.²⁸ In a very real sense, the complementarian/egalitarian debate has evolved into a survival for the meaning and practice of evangelicalism itself.

Many are exchanging the description ‘evangelical’ for that of ‘reformed.’ While such relabelling reflects a more traditional theological distinction, ironically it conflicts with the broad-church stance of the FIEC, which prioritises complementarianism above other doctrinal diversity. ‘Reformed’ implies a Presbyterian Church governance, theologically distanced from

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeNKHqpBcgc>. Moore was not present at the time.

²⁵ Bob Smietana, Religion News, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/03/09/bible-teacher-beth-moore-ends-partnership-with-lifeway-i-am-no-longer-a-southern-baptist/>.

²⁶ Stanley, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/12/17/is-jen-hatmaker-the-conscious-of-evangelical-christianity-216068/>.

²⁷ Josiah Hesse, “‘Exvangelicals’: why more religious people are rejecting the evangelical label”, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/03/evangelical-christians-religion-politics-trump>.

²⁸ <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/conferences/light-world-2019-london-conference/the-church-in-the-united-kingdom/>.

denominations such as Baptist or Congregational where church authority rested more with its membership than with a small number of male elders. However, where in the past eldership-led churches were at least answerable to their denominational body, in the independent context that balance of power has been removed, risking churches employing “narcissistic pastors [who] tend to gravitate toward non-denomination church or non-accountable church structures where they answer to no one.”²⁹

The adoption of the term ‘reformed’ has deeper implications. Reformed beliefs are derived from the type of wrestling with Scriptures that defines evangelicalism, but it promotes the beliefs themselves over the Scriptural engagement by which they were derived. This is comparable to those who are able to repeat mathematical formulae but have insufficient understanding to be able to formulate them from first principles. It is therefore imperative that the promulgation of beliefs in every generation is anchored afresh in Scripture, not merely accepted from what previous generations have interpreted.

And therein lies the problem. Complementarianism has become an intrinsic component of reformed theology. Any challenge to this one doctrine is perceived as an attack on all, and even an attack on the inerrancy of Scripture itself. In her book, *Complementarian Spirituality*, scholar Natalie Brand confirms the linkage between complementarianism and reformed theology, leading to the “dearth of female Reformed theologians [which] is a serious shortcoming to the tradition and to ‘complementarianism’ as a belief system.”³⁰

Given Brand’s observation, it is no surprise that the recent female challenge to patriarchalism in the US has come from historical rather than theological scholarship. What

²⁹ Scott McKnight and Laura McKnight Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists the Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2020), 29.

³⁰ Natalie Brand, *Complementarian Spirituality: Reformed Women and Union with Christ* (Eugene, OR: wipfstock.com, 2013), 5.

makes Barr's book *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* so compelling is the interweaving of an historical perspective with her personal, and often painful, narrative that relates how she was eventually compelled to break her silence concerning the patriarchal dominance within evangelicalism, even apologising for failing to break her silence sooner.³¹ It is little wonder that Barr was reluctant to speak. Complementarian women have been instilled with the rhetoric that "being passive is a proper female posture in life. Generally, women do not believe that they have the power, authority, or competency to act to change the stressful situations in which they find themselves. Only men have the power or authority."³² Simultaneously, "It should honestly be acknowledged that many men have assumed positions of teaching authority who are far less able, gifted or informed than women, to the detriment of the church. One's authority to teach is not a matter of gender but of one's ability to faithfully explain and apply God's word to a congregation."³³

4.3. Re-establishing a New Creation trajectory

Woman in conservative evangelical churches have been effectively silenced, while simultaneously to be male has become the primary requirement for Church leadership. These are consequences of Paul's circumstantial words to Timothy becoming hard-cast by centuries of patriarchal interpretation, resulting in "an abdication of God's mandate where women choose to, or are convinced to, give up on why they were put on earth in order to fall in line with how the church has interpreted a handful of verses."³⁴ It is a theological positioning that gives scant regard to the Church as foreshadowing the perfected gender- and race-inclusive,

³¹ Barr, *Making of*, 7-9.

³² Mathews, *Preaching That Speaks to Women*, 49.

³³ Tidball and Tidball, *Women*, 265.

³⁴ Adams, *Equal*, 44.

covenant-sealed community of the New Creation. The Church is, like those OT foreshadowers, a flawed being, an imperfect reflection of the eternal, cosmic coming together of heaven and earth to be brought about by Christ's return.³⁵ Nevertheless, the Church is divinely purposed with Spirit-enabled proclamation for which it requires, and must utilise, the spiritual gifts of the priesthood of all believers.

That New Testament emphasis on the spiritual gifting of all has been subverted by the "relentless and dominant narrative of male bias"³⁶ that extends even as far as the Scriptural translations themselves. The increasingly popular English Standard Version (ESV) was produced by an all-male group of complementarian scholars, headed by Grudem and released by Crossway in 2001 as "a direct response to the gender-inclusive language debate. It was born to secure readings of Scripture that preserved male headship."³⁷

Extricating the female-inclusive narrative of Scripture from patriarchal translations and interpretations requires the spiritual discernment to recognise that the restrictions Paul imposed on women preaching were primarily to protect the integrity of the teaching itself within that incipient 1st century context. The Church needs to regain the biblical prioritisation of its teaching, recognising that "traditional assumptions and inferences are often unacknowledged and even conferred with an inspired status of being 'what God says.'"³⁸ Only then can the Spirit-gifted teaching of women such as Jen Wilkin on the communicable and incommunicable attributes of God escape the shrouding of floral book covers (Figure 4.1), in

³⁵ Tom Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (London: SPCK, 2018), 8.

³⁶ Peppiatt, *Rediscovering*, 139.

³⁷ Barr, *Making of*, 132.

³⁸ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 2.

a blatant attempt to confine her readership to women, to instead be recognised as a blessing to the whole church.³⁹



Figure 4.1. The floral, women-focussed marketing of Jen Wilkin's books

Only when the Church is driven by the prioritisation of its message, legitimately interpreted and potently delivered through the spiritual gifting of all its members, can those women who write or endorse complementarian books, or indeed who speak at women's conferences, emerge from such imputed credentials as 'pastor's wife.'⁴⁰ The 'Pastor's wife'

³⁹ Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different from Us (and why that's a good thing)*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016) and *In His Image: 10 Ways God Calls Us to Reflect His Character*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018). Wilkin's books are published by Crossway, who publish the ESV and other significant complementarian material such as Piper and Grudem's *Discovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Köstenberger and Köstenberger's, *God's Design*, and Derek Prime's *Women in the Church: A Pastoral Approach*, (Cambridge: Crossway, 1992). For a further example of attempts to restrict readership, see Natalie Brand, *Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation for Every Woman*, (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2020).

⁴⁰ Christine Hoover, author of *Messy Beautiful Friendships: Finding and Nurturing Deep and Lasting Friendships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017) and *Searching for Spring: How God Makes all Things Beautiful in Time* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018) primarily describes herself as 'pastor's wife.' Several of the endorsers of Faith Cook's

description, with its implications of a pervasive and tacit hierarchy, sanctions a wife's ministry by means of her husband's status.⁴¹ Imputed ministry credentials deny and defy God's prerogative to gift those whom He chooses, and contradict the biblical example of such couples as Priscilla and Aquila and Andronicus and Junia, who laboured together for the Gospel. Furthermore, any woman's ministry that is endorsed purely through marital status devalues the gifting of all women, particularly contemporary Phoebes or Lydias whose marital status was inconsequential to their God-ordained calling and gifting.

The FIEC position on women in ministry affirms "that women have a very significant place in the ministry of our churches – not only ... in such areas as care and hospitality, but also in terms of teaching."⁴² This statement reflects a soft complementarianism that allows women to teach other women in gender-segregated environments. Wilkin, herself a soft complementarian, recognises that such forums provide valuable opportunities to develop biblical literacy in order that women might develop a thinking rather than a feeling faith.⁴³ Byrd is similarly intent on developing more robust female biblical literacy through an active, not passive, engagement with the preaching of God's Word.⁴⁴

Critically, however, while segregated discipleship may yield certain benefits, particularly and obviously in counselling situations, segregation contradicts the biblical narrative of mutuality and, by so doing, accommodates the inconsistencies of complementarianism rather than moving towards their theological resolution. Such a stagnant position, reliant on the

And So I Began to Read: Books That Have Influenced Me (Welwyn Garden City: EP, 2016) similarly prioritise the description of 'pastor's wife' above their own accomplishments.

⁴¹ Kate Bowler, *The Preacher's Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities*, (Woodstock: Princeton University, 2020), 14.

⁴² FIEC, "Women in Ministry: Position Statement", 2019, <https://fiec.org.uk/who-we-are/beliefs/women-in-ministry>.

⁴³ Jen Wilkin, speaking to Acts 29 pastors https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qs7dpm9q_Y.

⁴⁴ Aimee Byrd, *No Little Women*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2016).

biblical interpretations of previous generations, succumbs to the “ploy of the enemy of our souls to keep more than half the Christian workforce from fully using the gifts God had given.”⁴⁵ Instead of being alarmed by the toxic patriarchy that has had such a devastating impact on US evangelicalism, British reaction has been confined to a superficial redress of some of its consequences, insulating itself from the transformative re-engagement with Scripture that led earlier evangelicals to champion the abolition of slavery.

4.4. Recommitting to a genuine evangelicalism

From its inception Christianity has been sharpened by its response to schismatic threats exacerbated by superficially plausible, but ultimately inadequate, biblical interpretations. These threats have compelled the faithful to examine and re-examine the Scriptures in order to comprehend and absorb the fullness of Divine revelation. Such understanding can never be reliant upon soundbite, decontextualized proof texts and instead demands a coherent synthesis of the complete Word of God. By such means Athanasius cultivated a comprehensive and orthodox understanding of the nature of the Trinity in response to the Arian heresy. In more recent history, the same holistic biblical interpretation empowered 18th and 19th century evangelicals to lead the charge against the abhorrence of slavery, such that theological opinion that had held sway for centuries was surpassed by a deeper and more faithful engagement with Scripture.

The treatment and value of women is the comparable challenge in our day. Kristof and Wudunn⁴⁶ and Storkey⁴⁷ have documented the disproportionate level of crime committed

⁴⁵ Mathews, *How I Changed*, 158.

⁴⁶ Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl Wudunn, *Half the Sky: How to Change the World* (London: Virago, 2010).

⁴⁷ Elaine Storkey, *Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming the Violence Against Women* (London: SPCK, 2015).

against women such that, “One in three women may suffer from abuse and violence in their lifetime ... an appalling human rights violation, yet it remains one of the invisible and under-recognized pandemics of our time.”⁴⁸ As previous evangelicals fought against slavery, so too must we speak potently into this pandemic of abuse against women. But a conservative evangelical church that binds itself to male headship and patriarchal interpretation, that substitutes procreation for proclamation, and submission for commission, through over-reliance on a limited number of texts and hostility against more holistic and contextual readings, has distorted, obscured and minimised the biblical narrative and its relation to women, and compromised its mandate to be salt and light in a broken world.

This anomalous and increasingly anachronistic interpretation has diminished the narrative and context of Scripture, espousing a sacrosanct complementarian theology that defies accepted hermeneutical principles and is now intersecting with the very identity and perception of evangelicalism. The intersection of the women issue with what amounts to a crisis in evangelicalism is compelling an accelerating momentum towards the full inclusion of women in the Church, based on ever more robust, holistic and persuasive interpretive arguments. The very hermeneutical tools that define the evangelical view of Scripture are demanding a re-oriented eschatology informed by a genuine re-engagement with the narrative arc and fully contextual interpretation of Scripture, expectant of the New Creation, so that the Church might be sanctified and invigorated by the full and unrestricted use of the spiritual gifting of all its members, women and men, and all the inhabitants of the nations, women as well as men, might be blessed.

14999 words

⁴⁸ Nicole Kidman quoted in *Scars Across Humanity*, 4.

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Appendix 1.

Kevin Giles' list of prominent evangelicals who have changed their view from complementarian to egalitarian (from Giles, Kevin. *What the Bible Actually Teaches on Women*. Kindle Edition, Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018, pages 25-26):

F.F. Bruce, Leon Morris, Millard Erickson, Kenneth Kanzer, Elaine Storkey, N.T. Wright, I. Howard Marshall, Gordon Fee, Gilbert Bilezikian, Myron Augsburger, Richard Bauckham, Philip Payne, Walter Kaiser, Ben Witherington, Mimi Haddad, Stanley Gundry, Kenneth Bailey, Aida Besancon Spencer, Walter Liefeld, Joel Green, Cynthia Long Westfall, Ray Bakke, Alan F. Johnson, Ronald Sider, Miriam Adney, Roger Nicole, Craig Keener, Cornelius Plantinga, John Stackhouse, David Hamilton, Ron Pierce, John Phelan, Michael Bird, Roberta Hestenes, (President) Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Stuart and Jill Briscoe, and Paul and Kay Rader.

Several of these also contributed to Johnson, Alan F., ed. *How I Changed my Mind About Women in Leadership: Compelling Stories from Prominent Evangelicals*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010, with additional contributions from:

John H. Armstrong, Ruth Haley Barton, Tony Campolo, Robert and Alice Fryling, Bill and Lynne Hybels, Alice Mathews, John and Nancy Ortberg, Carol and James Plueddemann, Minette Drumwright Pratt, John Bernard Taylor, Bonnie Wurzbacher.

Appendix 2. An analysis of the principal influences on the contributors to *How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership*.

Of the 21 chapters in *How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership*, eleven were contributed by men, four by women and six by couples. Each chapter was read carefully to identify the principal reasons given by the authors that contributed to their change of mind. The analysis was undertaken by Professor Grant Campbell. The following table retains example quotations for one each of the male, female and couple contributions.

Chapter Title and Author(s)	Personal example of a godly woman or women with evident leadership gifting and God-honouring accomplishments, or historical examples; experience arising from pragmatic acceptance and use of women's gifts	Experience (by women) of opportunities for leadership, leading to conviction that this was genuinely God's calling; and/or frustrations of being denied such opportunities despite evident gifting and calling; observation of such gifting combined with frustrations in women	Male church leaders (or fathers) supporting women in ministry, or prominent and credible evangelical men endorsing a more egalitarian view	Anomalies and contradictions of the complementarian interpretation and its implementation; weakness of traditional/complementarian arguments and outworkings; failures of integrity of the traditional paradigm; poor examples of godliness and integrity from traditionalist/complementarian men	A commitment to genuinely defensible interpretation based fully holistic hermeneutics; an emphasis on the overall arch of Scripture, leading to a re-evaluation and more contextual interpretation of the key passages	The examples of Jesus and Paul in their interactions with women	Experience of marriage, either as deliberately mutually submissive, or through coming to recognise a nominally hierarchical marriage as functionally egalitarian	A sense of conviction in genuinely desiring the church to glorify God through service that draws fully on giftings; a sense that to bury such gifts is at best foolish and at worst sinful and evil; being out of step with social concerns and modern views on women; consequences for evangelism and for being salt and light
Total: 11+4+6=21	10+3+5=18	1+2+2=5	4+2+5=11	5+1+4=10	11+4+5=20	3+2+2=7	5+1+3=9	6+3+4=13
1. Lessons My Mother Taught Me without Trying John H. Armstrong								
3. Renouncing the Love of Power for the Power of Love Gilbert Bilezikian								
5. Is Evangelicalism Sexist? Tony Campolo N.B. A strong influence was the perception that the subjection of women is evil and sinful								
7. From Bobbed Hair, Bossy Wives and Women Preachers to Woman Be Free: My Story Stanley N. Gundry								
9. My Journey from "Male Only Leadership" to "Biblical Gender Equality" Alan F. Johnson	<i>"Though I did not realise it at the time, this woman [my sister] was formative in my strongly positive view of a woman's worth,</i>	<i>"I have witnessed over and over again the frustration, pain, disillusionment and at times even anger of gifted women who were turned away by</i>	<i>"I deeply respected...FF Bruce and others. These deeply committed orthodox Christians had come to a different reading of those few restrictive</i>	<i>"My own attempts to explain why males only had to lead, if we believed the Bible, were rather sketchy, dogmatic, and unpersuasive to</i>	<i>"I found eventually that without any Scripture twisting or abandoning of biblical authority I could now without reservation support and advocate</i>		<i>"Decision-making should be negotiated...This it seems to me is how all but a few of both hierarchical and equal-regard marriages do in</i>	<i>"In this postindustrial type of society marriage and marriage relationships must also change...a Christian marriage in our day and culture</i>

	<i>abilities, intelligence and full personhood.” “This emphasis on women sharing in all aspects of gospel ministries is prominent in earlier orthodox American evangelicalism.”</i>	<i>men from seeking to express their God-given ministries [or] calling.”</i>	<i>biblical texts on women...”</i>	<i>myself, to [my daughters] and to my wife as well.”</i>	<i>the full participation of women as whole persons in all aspects of gospel ministry without male oversight or permission, [a] Paradigm Shift.”</i>		<i>fact make most decisions.”</i>	<i>should emphasise the joint partnership nature of marriage [and] mutual submission of husband and wife to each other.” “An evangelical feminism correctly understood not only commends the gospel to the unchurched but builds stronger Christian families and employs all the gifts of the Spirit...”</i>
11. The Gospel Does Not Change But Our Perception of It May Need Revision I. Howard Marshall								
13. How the Bible Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership Roger Nicole								
15. How I Changed My Mind about Women in Church Leadership Cornelius (Neal) Plantinga Jr.								
18. From Soft Patriarchy to Mutual Submission Ronald J. Sider								
19. How to Produce an Egalitarian Man John G. Stackhouse Jr.								
20. A View from the Church of England: An Evangelical Bishop Tells His Story John Bernard Taylor								
2. How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership Ruth Haley Barton								
12. How I Changed My Mind about Women in Leadership Alice Mathews		<i>“I come alongside scores of other Christian women who, like me, have felt trapped between God’s gifts and a church saying no.”</i>	<i>“Dad believed in me and never gave me any reason to think that, as a woman, I would be limited.” “The academic dean...smiled and told</i>	<i>“Of Paradigms and Anomalies... it is the accumulation of anomalies over time that overwhelms the paradigm. How I changed my mind</i>	<i>“However one reads the two New Testament passages circumscribing women’s activities in the church, they had to be read alongside</i>			<i>“Could it be that this circumscription of women’s ministry gifts was a ploy of the enemy of our souls to keep more than half the Christian</i>

			<i>me to teach whatever I thought needed to be taught."</i>	<i>about women in leadership came through the gradual piling up of anomalies against a powerful but unsustainable paradigm."</i> <i>"The dissonance between stated beliefs and lived experience for many couples caused much anguish... one more anomaly contradicting the paradigm."</i>	<i>Paul's description of women he called his fellow workers in the gospel."</i> <i>"Spending time with four different ideas in the Bible provided the additional rocks that eventually smashed the paradigm."</i> <i>"I had become convinced of the validity of many of the egalitarian approaches to the exegesis of these texts."</i> <i>"Setting up an Excel spreadsheet with each of Paul's letters heading the columns... there on my screen lay dramatic evidence... the final massive rock that crushed the whole paradigm."</i>			<i>workforce from fully using the gifts God had given women for the benefit of the church?"</i> <i>"For both men and women, our responsibility is to accept these gifts, acknowledge them, hone them, and use them for the body of Christ. To do less is to sin by burying the 'bag of gold' in the ground that had been given by God for the blessing of the whole church."</i> <i>"Satan wins a great victory every time the gifts God gave women are put on the shelf simply because the bearers are female. Considered in that light, the proscription of women from leadership in the church is not merely inconvenient; it is sin."</i>
17. How I Came to My Understanding concerning Women in Leadership Minette Drumwright Pratt								
21. Women in Leadership – A High Calling Indeed Bonnie Wurzbacher								
4. Buried Talents Stuart And Jill Briscoe								
6. Joy in Partnership Robert and Alice Fryling	<i>Bob: "The second shift in my perspective came through working with women whom God truly gifted in ministry."</i>	<i>Alice: "I was trying to figure out what to do with the gifts of leadership God had clearly given me... As I struggled with these questions...feelings of inadequacy, guilt and self-doubt continued to plague me... I</i>	<i>Alice: "I found myself speaking, leading and ministering to both men and women – mostly because Bob celebrated these opportunities as they came into my life."</i>	<i>Bob: "I wasn't rebellious. I was just confused."</i> <i>"If the Bible was supposedly singularly clear about the role of women, why was there so much argumentation about it?"</i>	<i>Bob: "I was stunned to realize that the arguments supporting slavery sounded identical to the biblical arguments I had heard in my church regarding women... [this] led me to be more aware of the important effect of</i>		<i>Bob: "Without a doubt, the most significant part of this journey for me has been my marriage relationship with Alice."</i> <i>Alice: "This kind of mutual submission has always been a part of</i>	

		<i>brought my depression into our marriage."</i>		<i>My partnership with women continues to affirm the truth of [the broader teachings of Scripture]. I no longer have to deny, compromise or manipulate my understanding of Scripture."</i>	<i>culture on the understanding and application of Scripture."</i>		<i>Bob's love for me. I began to change [and found] joy in partnership"</i>	
8. Evangelicals and Gender Equality Bill and Lynne Hybels								
10. A Difficult Journey Walter And Olive Liefeld								
14. Beyond Gender Stereotypes John and Nancy Ortberg								
16. How I Changed My Mind about Women in Church Leadership: Transforming Moments in Our Pilgrimage Carol and James Plueddemann								

The most prominent influence, highlighted in 20 of the 21 chapters, was a re-evaluation of Scripture (the only chapter not to mention this is also the shortest contribution and one from a couple, Stuart And Jill Briscoe, whose four pages are focussed mainly on their experience of ministering as a couple). The second most prominent influence was examples of godly women with evident leadership gifting.

The average number of influencing factors is 4.4/8, ranging from just two main factors to 7/8. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the contributor who identified the most influences, 7/8, is the book's editor, Alan Johnson.

Having completed the analysis, it may make sense to reorder the columns from most prevalent to least. However, the order has been retained, as it seems to reflect more naturally the general order with which people experienced this journey: from experience of examples of godly and gifted women; experience or observation of women's struggles and frustrations; encouragement from male leaders and/or prominent male evangelicals; growing awareness of the weaknesses and contradictions of the traditional or complementarian paradigm; leading to a re-examination of Scripture; including noting the examples of Jesus and Paul; with an egalitarian perspective supported by experience of marriage; and with the end goal of releasing the full gifting of the church for evangelism and blessing in the modern world.

Additional influences (and counter-influences) and themes include: a desire for church unity, prompting slowness to act and/or a search for solid ground that can be commonly accepted; a concern about abuse of women and the possibility/likelihood it is exacerbated by a complicit patriarchal system; belief in the priesthood of all believers; a general revulsion against hierarchy and its abuses; a conviction that the patriarchal hierarchical subjection of women is sinful/evil; comparison with slavery; objection to the inappropriateness/hijacking of the term "complementarianism"; the redemptive nature of salvation and the new creation; the transforming activity of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, concern that patriarchal hierarchicalism is contributing to domestic abuse, although mentioned once or twice, did not come through as a strong theme in terms of influences prompting a re-examination of beliefs. This reflects the book's publication date of 2010; post the #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements, and a more general awareness of issues of domestic abuse in society and in the church, more recent commentators (e.g. Tucker, 2016; Denhollander, 2019; Giles, 2020; Barr, 2020) have made this theme more prominent and urgent.

The following adds an analysis of Scot McKnight's story, also titled "How I changed my mind", in *The Blue Parakeet* (p198ff, plus the section entitled FF Bruce on pages 260-261).

Chapter Title and Author(s)	Personal example of a godly woman or women with evident leadership gifting and God-honouring accomplishments, or historical examples; experience arising from pragmatic acceptance and use of women's gifts	Experience (by women) of opportunities for leadership, leading to conviction that this was genuinely God's calling; and/or frustrations of being denied such opportunities despite evident gifting and calling; observation of such gifting combined with frustrations in women	Male church leaders (or fathers) supporting women in ministry, or prominent and credible evangelical men endorsing a more egalitarian view	Anomalies and contradictions of the complementarian interpretation and its implementation; weakness of traditional/complementarian arguments and outworkings; failures of integrity of the traditional paradigm; poor examples of godliness and integrity from traditionalist/complementarian men	A commitment to genuinely defensible interpretation based fully holistic hermeneutics; an emphasis on the overall arch of Scripture, leading to a re-evaluation and more contextual interpretation of the key passages	The examples of Jesus and Paul in their interactions with women	Experience of marriage, either as deliberately mutually submissive, or through coming to recognise a nominally hierarchical marriage as functionally egalitarian	A sense of conviction in genuinely desiring the church to glorify God through service that draws fully on giftings; a sense that to bury such gifts is at best foolish and at worst sinful and evil; being out of step with social concerns and modern views on women; consequences for evangelism and for being salt and light
1. How I changed my mind, P198ff, Scot McKnight, <i>The Blue Parakeet</i>	<i>"Professor Morna Hooker, the great Methodist New Testament scholar at Cambridge University... I realized how much I had learned from Morna Hooker's exquisite and insightful scholarship... I realized my own view was about to undergo a major change... that reading her books was learning from her. If men could learn from a woman scholar's writings about theology and the Bible, if men could learn from a New Testament expert, a woman, who gave substance to their sermons and ideas and theology, then these men were being taught – call it what you want – by a woman."</i>	<i>"I now teach at Northern Seminary in Lisle, Illinois, ... and I have a talented female colleague in systematic theology." "Unintentionally or intentionally, these women were suppressed from exercising their gifts and have been barred from ministries." "The irony of this haunts me. Cheryl is a gifted evangelist. One moment's reflection on the significance of evangelism, from which gift (to my knowledge) women have never been barred, should lead us to some about face changes... After all, what is 'preaching' in the New Testament if not evangelism?"</i>	<i>"Both Walt [Liefeld] and Grant [Osborne] took a stand for women's ordination against the grain at Trinity and helped me in many ways to see the light on this issue." FF Bruce: "I'm for whatever God's Spirit grants women gifts to do."</i>		<i>"My change was gradual, and what most changed it was the study of the New Testament and the realization that I believed the New Testament – all of it – emerged from and therefore was shaped by the first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman culture, including what it said about women. Within a year or two I had become convinced that the traditionalist view was misreading and misusing the Bible."</i>			