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Evangelical Feminism: Reflections on the State of the "Union" (Part II)

by Harvie Conn

Where Do We Go From Here?

Obviously it is now apparent that evangelicals are divided. They find themselves willing to say to women, Let us be *all* we're meant to be. But they also keep asking, What is it anyway that we are *meant* to be?

A deep part of the reason for this is their struggle over Scripture's meaning. The general focus of most of the materials we have examined remains in this area of discussion. Only recently has the debate begun to be expanded into the sociological arena. And this, in fact, may be part of the reason why we cannot agree on exegetical questions. Socio-cultural predispositions have a heavier influence on the way we look at the Bible than even evangelicals are quick to see. Our commitment to what has been called "objective grammaticohistorical" techniques of study still raises few disclaimers or qualifications about the meaning behind that verbal symbol, "objective."

Which side must we choose, if we decide to choose any? Surely our final decision must begin with a fundamental affirmation, a basic biblical touchstone around which all biblical pericopes orbit. The touchstone? Christ has come not to put women down but to lift them up, to remove the tarnish of sin's subordinationist drive and exalt women their original place as images of God.

Consistently throughout the Scriptures that defense of the full humanity of womanhood is made. Against the background of Babylonian and Assyrian law codes, in which women are basically property, the Bible moves far ahead. For the Egyptians only Pharaohs were living images of the gods. The king was closest of all men to the realm of the gods. But in Israel imagehood belonged to women as well as men, scullery maids as well as Pharaohs (Gen 1:27). In the ancient near east, life was cheap and especially female life. Who but the male could rule? In counterpoint to this, Genesis places rule over the creation at the feet of women as well as men. "And God blessed *them* and God said to *them*, . . . Rule" (Gen 1:28).

In a chauvinist world where honor was due to the male, God said, "Honor thy father and thy mother" (Ex 20:12). In a male world where women waited on their masters in the harem, the writer of Proverbs 31 asks, "An excellent wife, who can find her? For her worth is far above all jewels" (31:10). And then he describes the activities of this "excellent wife"—she is involved in real estate purchasing (16); she moves about in the business world, manufacturing and selling (24); her long hours and careful supervision of the servants bring blessing and honor to her husband and to herself (31:23–31). "Let her works praise her" not in the kitchen and the bedroom but "in the gates" (31:31).

In the first century world of Judaism which apparently classed women with "slaves," "heathen" and "brutish men," Jesus' gospel entourage was filled with women (Lk 8:1–3). Among his "disciples" were women. In a day when rabbis said that women could not study the Torah and debated the existence of their female soul, Jesus commended Mary for staying out of the kitchen and "listening to what he said" (Lk 10:38–42). In a day when women could not function as legal witnesses, it is women who are called upon by the angel at an empty tomb to witness the resurrected Christ (Lk 24:1–10). They stand at the cross with "all his acquaintances" (Lk 23:49).

In a world where synagogues were male gathering places, the Messianic gatherings became places so filled with women talking that Paul feared the non-Christian or Hebrew world might not understand their liberty in Christ. He urged them, for the sake of these outsiders, to exercise their liberty with restraint. He did not take it away. As in other situations, the strong (in this case, the women) ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength (in this case, the men).

Are women second-class citizens of the kingdom for Paul? However we understand some of his difficult writing on the subject, women are never that for him. They are "the glory of man" (I Cor 11:7). That is why they must pray in public worship with "covered head."[20] Their glory is so bright it will distract from the glory of God. The glory of man, woman, must be covered. To possess glory is not to be subordinate. To possess glory is to possess worth, importance, honor. To describe a person as the glory of someone else is to define that person in terms of weight, importance. So woman is the glory of man. Only with him can she really be woman and only with her can he be fully man.

How can this help us in evaluating our alternatives? It provides us with a criterion as we listen to evangelical scholarship. If egalitarianism should slip into a reverse sort of chauvinism, we must cry, "A woman is glory, but glory in mutality with man before God. When hierarchical views slip into subordinationism (a more present danger), we must cry, "Christ restores women as images of God to rule the creation." The pattern of social roles, the pressure of cultural chauvinism, must not be allowed to create any categories, any exegetical judgments, which diminish her personhood before God and with men. All people are created equal and males are not more equal than females. The Bible does commend a basic sociality of the gospel. Interpersonal relationships are constitutive in the life of the new humanity. But they do not flow out of superior and subordinate roles. They flow out of covenant mutuality, man and woman together before God.

In all this, I clearly move toward the egalitarian side of our debate. But I see a danger in it as I do also in the traditional views. "There is a tendency among egalitarians to take a dualistic approach to Scripture, isolating the time-bound from the universal, the human from the divine, the rabbinic from the Christian."[21] It is clearly and harshly present in Mollenkott, clearly and quietly present in Jewett.

The traditional view suffers from a parallel tendency. It spiritualizes the Bible by treating it a-historically. It often allows no time-bound, no situation-bound, context to mediate God-given truth. The egalitarian stumbles over the Bible's humanness; the traditionalist over Scripture's "supercultural," "supernatural" character. The former seems overcome by Scripture's time-relatedness; the latter seeks to deny this time-relatedness any real significance. Neither approaches Scripture as at one and the same time fully and completely God's Word-in-human-words.

I both fear and commend also the effects of the different agendas of the two groups. The egalitarian group seems consistently to be more sensitive to the social dimensions of chauvinism. Its concerns move much more regularly outside of narrow church-centered questions or the evangelical "Brady-bunch" type topics. This is its strength but also its danger. For the Bible is never concerned simply about society or about woman's place in it. Biblical perspectives never deal simply with the sequence of history as creation. The sequence is always creation/fall/redemption.

That is to say, what we have now in society is not what God intended. The picture of male-female mutality drawn in Genesis 1 and 2 has been marred by human sin. And God's curse on that disruption of solidarity, always appropriate to the sin, has been the introduction of the battle of the sexes. We have no intention of introducing the reality of the curse in Genesis 3:18 here as one more divine sanction on female put-down. Put-down remains curse, not blessing, in the Bible.

We are simply trying to remind egalitarians that an essential key to the biblical understanding of female personhood in all its fulness

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is the Christological appeal to the Messiah who levels the pride of the male and lifts up humiliated women. The wide and warm concerns of the egalitarian for society must continue to relate questions of equality or, better yet, interdependence, constantly to what Christ restores, not simply what human cultures do not now display.

And similarly, the traditional group suffers from the reverse problem. Its agenda is heavily oriented to the institutional church and those feminist questions related to that narrowed interest. In Knight and Foh, for example, one senses that feminist issues are not really as crucial or as central to their concerns as is the more restricted issue of inerrancy. We do not mean to minimize the importance of that topic. We simply point out that it seems to have more controlling place in their list of priorities than those of the women's issue on a larger scale.

As a result, traditionalist positions can be more easily perceived by the non-church community as parochial and ultimately self-serving. If the egalitarian stands in danger of minimizing the importance of the fall in redemptive history, the traditionalist stands in danger of maximizing it. To those outside the church, the traditionalist is perceived as commending ecclesiastical sainthood, not humanization. And that sainthood again is seen as restricting female standing in the body of Christ to a "spiritual" role of equality, shorn of any implications for her cultural, economic or social roles. In the name of Galatians 3:28, an "ecclesiastical number" has been done on her. Even the non-Christian perceives "this is just not fair" when he or she sees the disparity between speaking of "spiritual" standing in Christ regarding the male/female pole but not of the Jew/Gentile or the slave/free poles.

Perhaps both groups could find some balance to their studies if they introduced into their work the biblical call for justice on behalf of women. Old Testament legislation shows an abiding awareness of the dangers of the abuse of power. And much of that concern for justice for the oppressed is aware also of the woman as the object of oppression. The widow (Ex 22:22–24), women taken captive in war (Dt 21:10–14), a virgin seduced (Ex 22:16–17), all offer samples of that sensitivity for justice, and compassion for the "sinned against."

There is no indication our Lord minimized those pleas for justice. In fact, He reinforced them on behalf of women. In his judgment against lust, He did not resort to the rabbinic tradition that blamed the presence of a woman. It was the sinful thoughts of the male which could lead to committing adultery (Matt 5:27–28). In the same way, He tightened the growing rabbinic looseness that misused the Mosaic "permission" of divorce (Dt 24:1–4) and sanctioned chauvinist anger at poorly cooked meals or a badly kept house as grounds for female dismissal (Matt 19:3–9). The background of these passages lies rooted in a call for justice or "righteousness." That needs to be more at the center of evangelical discussions.

A Third Evangelical Option

Though the bulk of evangelical writing belongs to the polarities of egalitarian/traditional, there is also evidence of the growth of a third and more centrist option. In fact, this writer suspects with others that, although the literature as a whole does not yet reflect it, the grassroots level of evangelical feminism moves in this centrist area. Its attitude toward the Scripture is more uneasy with Jewett than with Hurley. And its approach to male/female relationships is functionally more egalitarian in slant than traditionalist. But, even here, at the center, there are traditionalists whose agenda concerns and hermeneutical solutions are remarkably close to the egalitarians. Donald Bloesch's *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1982) is an example of this to me. The sub-title of his book sounds in a centrist posture. He seeks to go "beyond feminism and patriarchalism."

Closer to the egalitarian side of the center, but unhappy with an egalitarian viewpoint that resolves the problem through Pauline rationalizations or "contradictions," is that of Patricia Gundry. Her 1977 work, *Woman, Be Free!* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House) sees no need to look for theological schizophrenia in allegedly evolving Pauline perceptions. In a style that focuses more on the existential cash value of the text for the spirit, she aims for a soft-sell exploration of egalitarianism. "Pat is a bridge person," says Letha Scanzoni. "She is not hostile. She truly believes God gave gifts to both women and men."[22] This brief book, and those that have followed it, *Heirs Together* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1980) and *The Complete Woman* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), place her firmly in a centrist position on Scripture. And closer on the egalitarian side of the continuum to the center than the far left of the scale.

Her 1977 work does not have the academic polish or exegetical sophistication of a Jewett or a Mollenkott. But that, plus her commitment to a position on Scripture identifiable with the vast bulk of evangelicals, may be her greatest asset. What I would call her devotional use of Scripture has always been a part of the evangelical's practical method of hermeneutics. It has always been a way of gaining access to the evangelical's heart. Gundry can speak to evangelicals in a way not possible for Jewett or Mollenkott.

A much more technical work, and more limited in scope, also belongs with Gundry as a representative of this more centrist posture. Richard and Joyce Boldrey re-issued a 1972 essay as a book in 1976. Entitled *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), the volume was brief but made a solid contribution to the discussion. It flowed out of their concern to demonstrate that "the Bible is not a straight jacket for women. . .Much of the traditional view is half-truth, part pure conjecture, and the rest totally false."[23]

The orientation of the book was around the hermeneutical question of Pauline harmonization. But the Boldreys sought resolution without recourse to an alleged Pauline rationalization. Rather they saw Paul, in his pastoral concerns for women and their new liberty in Christ, as attempting to build a bridge. The bridge sought to cross over the real tension between radical Christian concepts and a Hebrew establishment society. Within the new order brought by Christ, mutual respect and interdependence was seen as characterizing the Pauline view of male-female relationships.[24] And, in those areas where tension rose between the old and the new orders of understanding, the Boldreys saw Paul making pastoral adjustments to a culturally conditioned setting.[25] But never at the expense of the liberty won for women by Christ in the new day. "If he did not seem to go far enough, let it be remembered that he went much farther than society as a whole would then sanction."[26]

The Boldrey study has significance beyond its size. Though limited strictly to Pauline data, it was one of the first book-length works by evangelicals to place the question of "cultural relativity" at the heart of their study. And it did that while refusing to relativize what the authors called "timeless truths" of Christian freedom which they perceived as counter-cultural. And all this on behalf of egalitarianism. Still another feature unique to it was its usage of "the old and new orders" as a key for understanding the Pauline practice. For the first time to my knowledge, evangelicals were using the redemptive-historical categories of "already-not yet" as a foundation for exegesis on this issue.

Donald Bloesch's 1982 title belongs in the center, with a tilt toward the traditionalist side. But he is as far from that end of the spectrum as Gundry and the Boldreys are from theirs. With many egalitarians he supports the ordination of women to the church's teaching office. Yet with many traditionalists, he fears an ideological egalitarianism that obliterates any sense of differentiation in male/female relationships.

Calling his own point of view "covenantalism," he sees the goal of men and of women as more than ensuring the continuity of the family (as in what he calls patriarchy and what we have called hierarchism). Nor does he see it as the realization of human potential (as in egalitarianism). Rather it is "to become a sign and witness of the new age of the kingdom, to be a herald and ambassador of Jesus Christ. . .Christian covenantalism stresses the interdependence of man and woman, as well as their mutual subordination. At the same time, it makes a place for a differentiation of roles, recognizing both the dependency of woman on man and the necessity of woman for man in the orders of creation and redemption.[27]

For Bloesch the biblical alternatives transform both poles of the debate. From the traditional side the principle of superordination and subordination is transformed by our common subordination to God, placing the glory of God before human happiness and the interests of our neighbors before our own. Headship is realized

through service, just as Christ was exalted in his humiliation. From the egalitarian side the principle of feminism sees woman now as the covenant partner of man. Yet the covenantal view seeks not the emancipation of woman (from home and family), but her elevation as a fellow-worker with her husband and her brothers and sisters in Christ in the service of the kingdom.

Bloesch, we suspect, comes very close to expressing a position that most evangelicals practice but do not necessarily preach (aside from his commitment to ordination). Future study may well expand the exegetical basis for a centrist position and enlarge its support base among evangelicals.

A Study Agenda for the Future

To achieve that goal, an evangelical study agenda will have to pay more serious attention to the following questions of hermeneutic. I still do not see them fully or adequately explored in any of the evangelical alternatives we have sketched.

1. How have our culturally formed sexist biases inhibited us from "seeing" the message of the Bible? Jewett argues for a conflict between the Paul of Galatians 3:28 and the Paul of Ephesians 5. Is the problem in the apostle or in Jewett? Is it fair to ask if Jewett's cultural commitment to egalitarianism is stronger than his commitment to analogia fidei? On the other side with a similar problem is George Knight. Rarely does he examine the traditionalist cultural put-down of women. And his strong defense of hierarchism, without this examination, does not keep the reader from assuming the two are really one for him.

2. How can we deal more adequately with what has been called "the horizon of the ancient text"? To understand the Bible, we must go through at least two different worlds of thought, the Bible and our own. How can we best try to reconstruct the situation of the original readers? More specifically, how was the text an answer to *their* problems, a response to *their* needs? When God commanded us not to covet our neighbor's ox or ass or wife (Ex 20:17), was that an affirmation to those first readers of women as an object of male property? Or an attempt, in a chauvinist culture of the ancient near east, to provide a defense of her integrity and worth? This means a deeper exploration of the original context, the *sitz im leben*, the setting, than most (excepting Hurley) are willing to try. The Scripture is not a literary and metaphysical gloss on a literal and systematic structure that it otherwise hides.[28] Its cultural universals come to us imbedded in the occasional, particular character of the Bible.

3. How shall we understand the nature of "creation ordinances" referred to frequently by traditionalists? Knight's exposition gives them a timeless quality. Let us grant, as I think we must, their normativity in providing us with guidelines for understanding relationships.[29] But how may we see them without presupposing also that they favor some subordinationist position and were so understood by Paul? Must we not also explore the pastoral way in which Paul, for example, handles them in his admonition against a woman's "teaching or having authority" over a man in worship (I Timothy 2:12–14)? The Paul who oposed Peter on the issue of circumcision (Gal 2:11–12) on another occasion circumcised his fellow worker to avoid offending a particular set of cultural sensitivities (Acts 16:3). Paul's concern for the perceptions of freedom in Christ by "those outside" (I Cor 11:5, 13–14) makes us ask, "Were creation ordinances 'the one and only' factor in making Christian decisions regarding women?"

4. This suggests still another question. Call it, as does Anthony Thiselton, "the horizon of the original readers."[30] How did Moses or Jesus or Paul seek to communicate "timeless truth" to the original readers in their given culture? Specifically, how was it done in such a way that did not present women's liberation in Christ as the destroyer of their social setting but clearly as its transformer, its "possessor"?[31] How did the woman's liberty keep far enough ahead of a particular time and culture to continue being called "liberation" and yet, not so far ahead that it did not continue to touch and alter that context? I see this as a problem for both options we have studied.

5. There is still a third horizon we need to explore. It is the horizon of our century and, more specifically, its non-Christian eavesdroppers. Understanding comes when we fuse these three horizons into an evangelistic packet, when the twentieth century listener's horizons engage with those of the text.

This we see as the major drawback of almost all the work we have reviewed. The egalitarian position comes closest to perceiving this need. Its presentation does not transform good news for women into bad news for our society nearly as much as the traditionalist perspective. Scanzoni and Hardesty's work remains the shining example in this connection. On the traditionalist side, Hurley is a far-back second place.

Nevertheless, one does not see in any evangelical treatment a large enough agenda to do this properly. This in turn may be related to commonly shared perceptions of "theology" among so many of the evangelical participants. What is the significance of contemporary motivations for our "doing" theology? Theology, many are finding, does not simply begin with exegesis and then consequently move on to questions of application. Hermeneutic is more like an ascending spiral than a linear progression or even a circle. It is motivated by a need to be supplied (application, to use the traditional language) and then engages in exegesis and the like in an effort to respond to that need (principles we traditionally call this step).[32] It is not the reverse, as Foh argues, [33] or even "occasionally" so, as Johnston comments.[34] We cannot easily talk about "unchanging principles" which "consequently apply" to women and men today. Is this why so few titles delve into the cultural backgrounds against which the Bible was written? Is this why we commend Hurley for his intention but wish it were more systematically used throughout his book?

This principle demands we constantly keep before us our evangelistic purpose in writing and speaking of feminism. After all, we are still evangelicals. We cannot reduce the question to an in-house topic of conversation. The "old/new" structure of the Boldreys' book serves this purpose well. Another, using the creation/fall/redemption analogy, is that of James Olthuis' *I Pledge You My Troth* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

Traditional language may need re-examination in this regard. Is the biblical concept of male "headship" adequately served by language that is still understood in a chauvinist culture as the verbal symbols of control instead of care, of rule and subordination instead of mutual covenant service? Can the traditionalist find other ways of defending his or her point of view without sounding like a subordinationist? How intimately related is the traditionalist understanding of headship to the prevailing chauvinist cultural understanding? Can the egalitarian find other ways of promoting women's liberation without sounding like an advocate for "biblical" lesbianism or a home-wrecker to the more conservative elements of our society? Or is this a propagandistic stereotype either created or exaggerated by traditionalists to discredit legitimate concerns by appealing to fears and emotions? Bloesch's centrist response might seem to indicate possible light at the end of these tunnels.

Role relationships need the insights of sociology and of cultural anthropology as we examine the biblical data afresh. How does our culture shape our understanding of roles in human interaction? How do roles shape our self-images? Are there not multiple roles each of us play in human society? Where will we find their common core? How can the Bible play its part in distinguishing between this "real" self and our socio-cultural personalities? How does language affect communication between culturally assumed roles? How does the Bible function as corrective here too?[35]

What will our answers sound like for the question, "Would Jesus vote for the ERA?" Will they incorporate fully biblical ideas and still sound like the good news of the gospel to so much of our world that has been oppressed and beaten down? That remains the question.

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[1] Robert K. Johnston, *Evangelicals at an Impasse* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), p. 3.
[2] Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1975), p. 14.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 112–113.
[4] Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 119.
[5] Paul Jewett, "A Response from Dr. Jewett," *Theology, News and Notes*, Special Issue (1976), 22.
[6] Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God. A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Comp., 1980), 19–21, 26,29.
[7] Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), p. 104.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 107–119.
[9] J. Ramsey Michaels, review of Paul K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women*, in *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol. XI, No. 4 (1982), 381.
[10] George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 10–11.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[12] *Loc. cit.*
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[14] Foh, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–209.
[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 188–190.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 164–166.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[19] James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1981), pp. 18–19.
[20] Hurley defends the view that the "covering" mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 11 was "of long hair" and not that of a veil (*ibid.*, pp. 168–171, 254–271).
[21] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[22] Russ Williams, "Truth. . . .and Consequences," *The Other Side*, No. 109 (October, 1980), 18.
[23] Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 23.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–53.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[27] Donald G. Bloesch, *Is the Bible Sexist?* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1982), pp. 85–86.
[28] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
[29] Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[30] Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons. New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1980), pp. 10–17.
[31] J.H. Bavinck, *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ. Comp., 1960), pp. 169–190.
[32] For a full discussion of the background to this suggestion, consult John R.W. Stott and Robert Coote, eds., *Down to Earth. Studies in Christianity and Culture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Comp., 1980), pp. 63–94, 316–318.
[33] Foh, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
[34] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
[35] Compare Jacob Loewen, *Culture and Human Values: Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective* (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1975), pp. 412–427.

ETHICS

Diversity and Injunction in New Testament Ethics

by Stephen Charles Mott

Ethical social stances far-reaching in their implications for contemporary life are presented in two recent works on New Testament ethics by Evangelical scholars. Their writings stimulate theoretical consideration of the place of synthesis and the significance of concrete moral injunction in New Testament ethics.

The Great Reversal (Eerdmans, 1984), the title of Allen Verhey's study refers to the transformation of values brought about by the Reign of God. "The present order, including its conventional rules of prestige and protocol, pomp and privilege, is called into question" (Verhey, p. 15).

Richard N. Longenecker no doubt would allow "great reversal" to describe the principle of the gospel which makes relevant, in the words of his title, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Eerdmans, 1984). The cultural mandate of the gospel, "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3.28), "lays on Christians the obligation to measure every attitude and action toward others in terms of the impartiality and love God expressed in Jesus Christ, and to express such attitudes and actions as would break down barriers of prejudice and walls of inequality, without setting aside the distinctive characteristics of people" (Longenecker, p. 34).

Verhey does not present the great reversal as a component of a unified New Testament ethic. Masterfully using all the tools of New Testament historical research, yet (with Longenecker) respecting its authority and defending the integrity of its ethics against critics, he describes the ethics of the various literary layers and forms of the New Testament so thoroughly that his work should stand as *the* introduction to the ethics of the literary forms and sources of the New Testament. His task is to describe the ethics in their diversity. In this book he seeks to show exegetically that the diverse categories of his hermeneutical model are grounded in the diversity of ethical approaches within the New Testament. The impossibility of presenting from it "one massive, undifferentiated whole" seems to be an extreme which serves for him as an argument against seeking a substantial synthesis of the ethics.

Longenecker, on the other hand, is synthetic in his approach. The fact that the form and order of Galatians 3:28 is found in other passages and in association with baptism leads him to follow Hans Dieter Betz in seeing the phrase to be from a baptismal liturgy of the early church. It thus reflected a general position of the first century Christians. Longenecker shows how common this concern is in the New Testament and how it was put into practice with reference to Jew-Gentile relations, slavery, and women. If Verhey appears to reject synthesis, Longenecker seems not to include enough of the diversity in his. He has indeed chosen the most significant ethical theme of the New Testament, where status is the central social ethical concern; but his theme is not the whole of the New Testament's ethical proclamation. It is not true that the three pairs of Galatians 3:28 represent "all essential relationships of humanity" (Longenecker, p. 34). Ruler and subject, parent and child, rich and poor should not be reduced to any of the three, yet Scriptural ethics deals with them also. There also is too much ellipsis between the New Testament proclamation and the contemporary applications he posits.

The careful and balanced descriptive work done by Verhey is a necessary preliminary for a later stage in New Testament ethics in which the ethicist is more clearly involved with the New Testament material. As seen in his descriptive work, few people have the combined mastery of the disciplines Verhey has to do that further step. But as it stands now, the value for normative ethics of his careful discrimination by sources is frequently not obvious. For example, what ethical difference is there between watchfulness because God's Reign is at hand in the time of Jesus or watchfulness because the Parousia is at hand in the time of the church?

Some synthetic work is needed. The contemporary disciple and ethicist need more than the separate ethics of a score of New Testament books and literary sources. A base is provided in Longenecker's cultural mandate and also Verhey's use of coherence with the eschatological power and purpose discerned in the resurrection of Christ as authorization for the right use of Scripture. Norman Gottwald has recently written that we need to "question both the intellectually dismembered Bible and the spiritually unified Bible that scholarship and church now respectively present us" (Introduction, to *"The Bible and Liberation"*, ed. Gottwald [Orbis, 1983²], p. 4). The spiritually unified Bible reflected our proper theological presupposition that the Bible is a revelation for hearers of all ages of the will of God for human conduct. There is a unity of divine purpose behind it. Scholarship rightly protested the arbitrary superimposition of external truth to the particularity of the documents. The first lesson that all of us had in biblical methodology was respect for its diversity, but resting in diversity can subtly be assumption of merely an historian's role and participation in the embourgeoisement of New Testament scholarship in the fear of asserting universal truth.

Much of the diversity of New Testament ethics is one of diverse situations rather than of diverse principle or ethical consciousness. The behavior called for in the lists of vices and virtues, for example, is no doubt demanded of all Christians and not problematic for any of the authors (cf. Wolfgang Schrage, "Korreferat zu 'Ethischer Pluralismus im Neuen Testament,'" *Evangelische Theologie* 35 [1975], 402-407). Generality can be discovered through tracing biblical categories themselves, such as Longenecker's inclusion theme or Verhey's great reversal, or the Reign of God. But using external categories of ethics or social sciences with critical awareness of their exegetical appropriateness will help disclose further shared perspectives. Our authors already have found benefit in using such external categories as the contrast of "force" to "personal appeal", "living the story", and "cultural mandate." The description of the

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