

Review of *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* by Aimee Byrd

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Book: Aimee Byrd, *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: How the Church needs to rediscover her purpose* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020)

Introduction

Men and women are different from each other, so how are they to relate to each other and to the world? Traditionally, societies have adopted some form of patriarchy whereby men rule the world while women tend to the home. Modern society has however promoted equality between the sexes, and this equality is to be manifested in women being involved in every sector of society.

Christianity does promote equality between men and women, and sees women as daughters of God who can equally approach God as their Father. Women are most definitely not inferior to men. However, the Bible does not just stop there. It recognizes that men and women are not the same. Since God is the God of creation, all differences between the sexes come from the God who love them both, yet make them different. Therefore, without rejecting the humanity and dignity of women, women are made differently and this difference will be manifested in society.

But in what way are men and women different? Egalitarians within Evangelicalism maintain that the only difference that is good is the physical differences between men and women. Everything else is demonized as the subjugation of women and the denial of equality. Complementarians on the other hand maintain that men and women are to behave differently in the home and in society, in line with their created natures. They see the Bible as affirming certain roles for men and certain roles for women. While there are no fixed rules concerning men and women, the principles derived from the creation roles for men and women are to be applied in the Christian's life as he navigates the complexities of life in this world.

In order to defend and promote the biblical view of the sexes, the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) was formed. As a parachurch organization, there is a huge diversity among its ranks on many doctrines and issues, all within the fold of Evangelicalism. Thus, certain friction is sure to arise within its ranks. But no one can prepare for the storms that arrived in 2016.

2016 marked the year of the ESS (Eternal submission of the Son) controversy. For various reasons, ESS is somehow linked to CBMW. Certain people within the Reformed camp who were chafing at what they had decided were foreign to the Bible broke away from complementarianism altogether, including Rachel Green Miller and Aimee Byrd. Miller had written a book earlier entitled *Beyond Authority and Submission*, and Byrd now entitled hers *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. The not-so-subtle dig at CBMW notwithstanding, what the title intends to convey is that Byrd sees the teaching of biblical manhood and womanhood as a false teaching which she has once held and is now “recovering” from it.

In this light, Byrd’s book acts as an attack against the teaching of biblical manhood and womanhood, and the recovery of what she believes to be the better approach to the topic of not just gender roles but also church relations. The use of the word “recovery” links her to the *ressourcement* movement in parts of Evangelicalism, with all the connotation that it has. Part 1 of her book is about “recovering the way we read Scripture,” with an attack on the idea that men and women are functionally reading different Bibles and have different paths for discipleship. Part 2 of her book is about “recovering our mission,” where she asserts that the goal of the Christian life is not about biblical manhood and womanhood but about Christian discipleship, and then she attacks the perceived intrusion of parachurch organizations into the life of the church with a focus on CBMW. Part 3 is about “recovering the responsibility of every believer,” where she argues for women being necessary allies and co-laborers in the Gospel, and she ends with the examples of people like Phoebe and Junia, supposedly women in the New Testament who were involved in ministry.

Byrd’s book has some good points. She is right to point out that women are integral to the life of the church and are to be properly discipled. She is also right to decry the horrible quality of material for Christian women. Over and against a strict patriarchal system, women should be treated as those who need to learn Scripture and sound doctrine, and have their concerns treated seriously too.

That said, it must be added that treating women seriously does not mean that women are always right. In this light, I am reviewing Byrd’s book seriously, and there will be **no holding back** for this reviewer (After all, she does want equality, right?). Since Byrd sees fit to enter the theological arena, what she says is fair game, and I will treat her writings no different from that of a man’s.

Hermeneutics

In reading her book, what is most troubling is Byrd’s hermeneutics. Byrd’s hermeneutics is shot full with subjectivism, even when she is right. The most troubling aspect of Byrd’s

interpretation is her embrace of gynocentric interpretation and possibly reader-response interpretation, which are both foreign to Scripture and its proper interpretation.

Gynocentric interpretation

Byrd's embrace of gynocentric interpretation is obvious in her promotion of the "female voice" in Scripture (p. 34). Byrd asserts that there is a female voice in Ruth and in the Song of Songs (p. 44), and "there is women's literature in Scripture!" (p. 51). This "female voice" is an addition to the "male voice" in Scripture, and "isn't a criticism" of it (p. 54). The "female voice" is a "corrective voice" (p. 56) that helps us to see what Scripture actually teaches in its fullness.

In response, it must be said that part of confessing the authority and perspicuity of Scripture is to confess that the truths of Scripture are objective. There is no such thing as a "male voice" or a "female voice" as an interpretive principle. What Scripture teaches is neither due to a "male voice" or a "female voice" but due to its authorial intent. If something is taught by Scripture, it is taught not because it is male or female but because it is the meaning of the text there. In other words, if something cannot be found without an external interpretive lens of "male voice/ female voice" being imposed on the text, it is not taught in Scripture, period! It is inarguable that this idea of having a male voice and a female voice cannot be derived from Scripture. Therefore, whatever supposed "insights" derived from gynocentric interpretation must be substantiated by the use of proper exegesis done without such gynocentrism, or they are not true insights at all.

We can see Byrd's gynocentric hermeneutics in action to produce some really strange interpretations of Scripture. First of all is the weird idea that Huldah the prophetess took part in the canonization of Scripture (p. 46), as if recognition of the scroll of Deuteronomy as canon is taking part in its canonization. But if such were the case, then everyone today who affirms the Bible to be Scripture is taking part in its canonization, especially those who preserve biblical texts during times of persecution like that of the early Christians, surely a trivializing of the term "canonization."

Secondly, Byrd claims that Boaz in his dealing with Ruth "subverts the patriarchal mores that most benefit him as a man" (p. 58), an assertion without proof. Just because Boaz behaved differently from other men does not imply a subversion of patriarchy during that period of Israel, for why should showing kindness to women and being a kinsman-redeemer be considered subversive?

Next, we have the two mid-wives, who we are told "feared God and loved God's Word." (p. 75) However, that is not found in the text, which merely asserted that they "feared God," which could mean a general fear of God without committing to the God of Israel. It is questionable if they were actually Hebrews, especially the name "Puah." To then state

that they are “active traditioners, tradents of the faith” is to claim that they were in fact Israelites, something which cannot be found in the text itself.

The episode of Deborah is interesting because it is true that Deborah was a legitimate judge of Israel. Yet, when Deborah ordered Barak to war against Sisera of Canaan, Barak refused unless Deborah went with her, and the consequences of that was the honor of killing Sisera went to a woman instead of him (Judges 4: 6-9) According to Byrd’s gynocentric interpretation, Deborah’s response was not a rebuke of Barak (p. 79). But why is that not a rebuke, since it is not as if Barak had not already been given a word from God, and yet he hesitated (Moses’ hesitation was not taken kindly by God c.f. Ex. 4:14)? More importantly, using Scripture to interpret Scripture, we read in Isaiah 3:12 that woman rulers are a curse upon Israel. Using this prophetic text to interpret a narrative text, instead of interpreting narrative text with an alien hermeneutic (gynocentrism), is the biblical manner of interpretation. We also note that Hebrews 11:32 mentions the name of Barak and omits Deborah, showing us that Deborah, while not in sin personally, was a judgment upon Israel due to their falling away, as women rulers are a judgment upon their nations (Is. 3:12). Barak’s hesitation therefore is sin, and granting the honor of killing Sisera to a woman, is a rebuke.

As it can be seen in these examples, Byrd’s gynocentric hermeneutic has produced much strange and even errant interpretations of the Word of God. In the beginning of her book, Byrd wondered if things “would have turned out differently” if “Anne Hutchinson’s theological education had been invested in at the same level as men’s” (p. 34). In response, I wonder if things would have turned out differently if the men in Byrd’s life would have invested more into Byrd’s theological education, instead of giving her a platform through the *Mortification of Spin* podcast while she was yet untaught. Men like Carl Trueman and Todd Pruitt will have to answer before God one day for how they have acted in this matter.

Reader-response interpretation?

Gynocentric interpretation is merely a subset of the broader concept of reader-response hermeneutics. Reader-response makes the reader the true interpreter of what is read, and it is this subjectivity that seem to be the broader problem with Byrd. This reviewer suspects a greater fidelity to this hermeneutic due to Byrd’s unrepentant misrepresentation of her opponents. After all, if the response to a critical review alleging

misrepresentation¹ is to double-down on those charges,² then either Byrd is dishonest, or she embraces a reader-response hermeneutic wherein she gets to decide what a text really mean.

Here then are the misrepresentations:

Misrepresentation #1: John Piper

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. (Ex. 23:1)

Byrd first misrepresents John Piper, and especially his podcast on whether women should be police officers.³ First, Byrd asserts, based upon Piper's writings about the heart of mature manhood and womanhood, that the "definitions appear to say that all men lead all women" (p. 22). Byrd then asserts that, according to Piper, "if the mailman comes to the door and a woman answers, he needs to be thinking about how his leadership is affirmed as a man in their interaction" (p. 22). Here is the transcript from the relevant part of Piper's podcast:⁴

[~01:46 - 02:20]

Piper: [manhood is] ... a sense of responsibility to lead, provide for, and protect women, in ways appropriate to a man's differing relationships. The postman wouldn't relate to the lady at the door the way a husband will, but, he will be a man, umm... at the heart of mature womanhood is a freeing disposition to affirm, receive nurture and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to a woman's differing relationships.

The question is this: Just where in this section of the podcast, whereby the postman is mentioned, is Byrd's statement that a woman needs to think about affirming the leadership of the postman when he "comes to the door"? The answer should be obvious. Piper is clearly saying that the postman relates to the lady at the door **differently** from how her husband relates to her. Alongside her wild claim that Piper asserts that all men

¹ Andrew David Naselli, "Does anyone need to recover from biblical manhood and womanhood? A review article of Aimee Byrd's *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*," *Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, accessed Sept 27, 2020, <https://cbmw.org/2020/05/04/does-anyone-need-to-recover-from-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood-a-review-article-of-aimee-byrds-recovering-from-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood/?fbclid=IwAR0y46Qgvc0qWe3ax-ETs5ErAtNTxpfMZ7qBLzcHW2J8nuN9KigAMcnPF9g>

² Aimee Byrd, "Response to Andy Naselli," *Reformation 21* (blog), May 4, 2020, accessed Sept 27, 2020, <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/response-to-andy-naselli>

³ John Piper, "Should Women Be Police Officers?," *Ask Pastor John*, Desiring God, August 13, 2015, accessed Sept 27, 2020, <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/should-women-be-police-officers>

⁴ *Ibid.*

lead all women, which Piper did not, this misrepresentation of what Piper did say in the podcast is so obvious that questions can really be asked about her honesty.

In response to Naselli's review of her book, Byrd doubles down on the first assertion by stating that Piper's writings do teach that "women have no agency other than submission to what the men around them are saying."⁵ This reading however is just plain ridiculous. First, Piper's statements were about the natural disposition of manhood and womanhood as defined by the Creator God, not acts or agency. Second, a submissive disposition does not imply acts of submission in everything. Third, a submissive disposition does not imply submission to everyone. One wonders just how bad is Byrd's capability at comprehension, that she cannot even understand what Piper is plainly saying.

Misrepresentation #2: Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

For a book that claims to be a rejection of biblical manhood and womanhood, and a "recovery" from it, Byrd surprisingly misrepresents biblical manhood and womanhood throughout her entire book.

We have already seen Byrd's misrepresentation that biblical manhood and womanhood (hereafter BMW) teaches that "all men lead all women" (p. 22), which is a demonstrably false claim. This claim is repeated in stronger terms as stating that "all women submit to all men" (p. 105), again a demonstrably false claim. On page 25, she misrepresents BMW as teaching that women should "function as masculinity affirmers" (c.f. p. 109). On page 83, she misrepresents BMW as teaching women to be "passive." BMW also does not teach that femininity is defined by "how I look for and nurture male leadership in my neighbors, coworkers, or mail carriers" (p 105), or that "women need to be so [sic] manipulate their words to be careful not to damage the male psyche if they have something they could teach men" (p. 107), neither does it teach that "men and women have separate aims with a common adjective—biblical manhood and womanhood" (p. 109). Now, does that mean that there is no one who identifies as a complementarian who teaches any one of these things? No, it does not. But a doctrine is to be judged by what it **actually** teaches, not by misrepresentations of what it teaches or fringe elements that claim the name while teaching it falsely.

Compounding the misrepresentation of the main subject matter of her book is her continual misrepresentation of a more controversial doctrine: the Eternal Submission of the Son (ESS).

⁵ Byrd, "Response"

Misrepresentation #3: ESS

The doctrine of the Eternal Submission of the Son (ESS) is an extra-Nicene doctrine, which is to say that it is not taught in the Nicene, or even the Chalcedonian creed, but it is not against those historic creeds. This is because ESS is primarily a doctrine about the acts and workings of God in eternity, the function of the divine persons, and not the divine essence.

Whatever one's view of ESS is, one thing that is important is that one should not make a strawman of the position. It might make for good theatrics, but it serves no purpose beyond creating needless strife and entity. The goal of discussing doctrine should be clarity even if a consensus is not met.

Right away, we see that Byrd constantly misrepresents ESS. On page 101, she asserts that ESS teaches that "the Son, the second person of the Trinity, is subordinate to the Father, not only in the economy of salvation but also in his essence," and that ESS uses "ontological subordinate language" (p. 170). ESS thus "contradicts the orthodox understanding of the Trinity" (p. 102), and is "not in line with Nicene Trinitarian doctrine" (p. 173). All of these assertions are, to put it bluntly, **lies**. ESS does not teach ontological subordination, and thus Nicene and Chalcedon do not address it. Naselli in his review mentioned that Byrd has misinterpreted ESS, but she refuses to listen. Again, either she is a dishonest woman, or she embraces a reader-response hermeneutic. I leave it up to the readers to judge for themselves.

Alongside such misrepresentations of ESS is Byrd's incessant attacks on CBMW for not disavowing ESS (p. 21 footnote 18; p. 121). Byrd seems incapable of understanding how parachurch organizations and broad Evangelicalism work, as if anything published by CBMW, even by its presidents both present and past, represents the official position of CBMW. **That is just not how Evangelicalism function.** That can BE a critique of Evangelicalism, but a critique of Evangelicalism is not the same as demanding Evangelicalism be treated as a church denomination. The former is acceptable; the latter ludicrous.

Before concluding on the issue of hermeneutics, let's look at a related issue: that of assigning false blame for a very real problem.

False charge: On marketing spiritual material to women

Byrd correctly points out a very real problem in much of women's ministry, whereby it is "often a separate faction of the church that is drowning in theologically anemic books marketed specifically to them" (p. 115), where "so-called trusted Christian resources" (p. 131) market horrible theological material for women. I do agree that this is a travesty in

conservative Christian circles especially in the United States. We do need to treasure women and teach them the Word of God in its fullness. But who is to blame for such terrible mistreatment of women? According to Byrd, the culprit is BMW. Focusing on two devotional Bibles, the *ESV Men's Devotional Bible* and the *ESV Women's Devotional Bible*, she points out the divergences between the two and used the absence of female voices to blame BMW as an example of teaching the Bible differently for the sexes (pp. 40-41), and so connecting the dots from BMW to the marketing of spiritual anemic material to Christian women.

While some who claim to hold to BMW may be culpable for such malpractice, it is a false charge to blame BMW for treating women like babies who do not need to learn the proper and deep things of God and His Word. After all, does BMW teaches that “one should treat women as simpletons who do not have to understand deeply the things of God”? It does not. Assign blame where blame is due! Blame the Christian marketing industry who have a vested interest in making women into a niche market for the purchase of spiritual trash. The much-maligned podcast by John Piper was a response to a woman caller,⁶ showing us that answering questions from women is treated as something perfectly fine and normal.

While slightly different from misrepresenting others, one wonder why Byrd thinks it is acceptable to make an accusation of a very real sin but against someone who is innocent. Upon what basis does Byrd refuse to address the real culprit and instead tar BMW with what it does not stand for neither does it promote?

In concluding this major section on hermeneutics, it is proper to say that, regardless of the case for or against Byrd's position on manhood and womanhood, Byrd has an unbiblical hermeneutic in holding to gynocentric interpretation and a possible reader-response hermeneutic. (The alternative to reader-response is to state that she is dishonest.) This makes her attack on “biblicist interpretive methods” (p. 159) rather disingenuous, since her alternative to “biblicism” is not the Reformed method of Redemptive Historical Scripture interpreting Scripture, but of subjectivism based upon gender. While biblicism is an issue with Evangelicalism, the proper alternative to biblicism is not subjectivism but objectivist canonical interpretation. There is no need for something that sounds like it came out of Gnosticism with its looking for meaning behind the obvious (“peeling the wallpaper”) through some new interpretive tool (gynocentrism), but a recommitment to the historic Christian and Reformed hermeneutic of reading Scripture without the use of alien principles

Inventive eisegesis of difficult texts

⁶ Piper, “Should Women Be Police Officers?”

Absent the issue of hermeneutics and misrepresentation, there is scarcely much left of the book. Nobody denies the importance of women in the Bible like Rahab, Huldah, Ruth and Deborah among others. But all of their lives and services to God do not contradict anything BMW teaches, with only Deborah being a possible challenge which is however a non-issue once we realize that the most biblical understanding is that Deborah being judge is judgment upon Israel.

Nevertheless, Byrd has found her supposed main women in the Bible who are hidden in their prominence in the church, and I guess we can blame BMW for that as well. Looking at Romans 16:1 and 7, Byrd focuses on Phoebe and Junia. Concerning Phoebe, Byrd asserted that she “was a deacon of the church of Cenchreae” (p 146), who was in a “position of authority” (p. 148), and that it was a big deal in her being selected as “the deliverer” of the epistle to the Romans “to get it there to communicate (make common) and commune (share, hold in common) with these churches” (p. 215). Junia on the other hand is the hidden woman who was even an apostle, with speculation that this Junia was actually Joanna, “the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza” (pp. 225-7). These women, and others like them, have authority in the churches and are even involved in “planting churches” (p 192).

What can be said in response? First, it must be said that the direction of interpreting Scripture is for clear texts to interpret more obscure texts. We see in Byrd’s imaginative take on Phoebe and Junia a focus on more difficult texts rather than the simply texts of Scripture. This does not necessarily make her interpretation wrong, but it does mean that the burden of proof for why these texts appear to be teaching something that seems to be contradicted by major and clear biblical texts on the topic such as 1 Timothy 2:8-15, a passage incidentally that was not addressed by her.

But let us look more clearly at Scripture, and see whether it teaches what Byrd claims it teaches:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. (Rom. 16:1-2 ESV)

Συνίστημι δὲ ὑμῖν Φοίβην τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὗσαν [καὶ] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς, ἵνα αὐτὴν προσδέξησθε ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως τῶν ἁγίων καὶ παραστήτε αὐτῇ ἐν ᾧ ἂν ὑμῶν χρῆζῃ πράγματι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ προστάτις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ. (Rom 16:1-2 BGT)

Byrd claims that Phoebe was a deacon at the church at Cenchreae. The problem is that the word Greek word *diakonos* (διάκονος) can mean either “servant” or “deacon.” Thus, the word *diakonos* can be easily translated “servant,” a translation choice that the ESV

has run with. Since there is no indication from the Greek or even the immediate context whether Phoebe was a deacon or a servant of the church in Cenchreae, one cannot point to Romans 16:1-2 as definitive proof that Phoebe truly held the office of deacon.

Next, Byrd appeals to the word *prostatis* (προστάτις) as “a leadership term, which ‘almost always refers to a position of authority’” (p. 148), citing the scholar Philip Payne in this regard. The problem is that the case for that to be what Scripture teaches is missing. According to BDAG, *prostatis* (a *hapax legomenon*) denotes “a woman in a supportive role, patron, benefactor,” while Louw-Nida groups it under the category “help, care for.”⁷ Its closest verb is *proistamai* (προΐσταμαι), which denotes “to be engaged in helping or aiding.”⁸ Lexically therefore, there is no support for using that word to indicate a position of authority. Unless Byrd has a proper argument elsewhere that proves otherwise, it is safe to say that her granting authority to Phoebe is contrary to the text of Scripture.

A word must be said here about women being involved in ministry. It is clear from Scripture that women are active in the churches, being patrons of the apostles and hosting churches in their homes as in the case of Lydia. But it is one thing to be involved as a co-worker for the Gospel, and another thing to claim authority in the church itself. Byrd’s claim that these women were functioning as “church planters” (p. 192) is a leap of logic not warranted by the texts of Scripture and comes from her speculation about what might have been happening as these women hosted churches and served in the churches. I note in passing also that in many churches, the role of church planting is limited to ordained ministers of the Gospel as well, so Byrd’s idea that women in the early church do church planting seems to imply that women can be pastors as well (i.e. full-blown egalitarianism).

Lastly for Phoebe, this elevation of the role of a carrier of the epistle to the Romans is really strange. Even if it is agreed for the sake of argument that Phoebe was the main carrier of the letter, or even a carrier of the letter, that does not imply that Paul “passes the baton to Phoebe” (p. 215) as a minister of the Gospel. Even if Phoebe was the carrier, did she write the letter? No, she did not. When received, were she to read the letter to the church? Probably not, at least not according to our understanding of the church service and its prohibition on women speaking during corporate worship (c.f. 1 Cor. 14:34), which Byrd as a proponent of men-only ordination should agree. So in what way was Phoebe being “passed the baton”?

Next, we will look at the even more obscure text of Romans 16:7.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. (Rom. 16:7 ESV)

⁷ BDAG, “προστάτις”; LN, “προστάτις”

⁸ LN, “προΐσταμαι”

ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουναῖν τοὺς συγγενεῖς μου καὶ συναιχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινες εἰσιν ἐπίσημοι, οἳ καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ γέγοναν ἐν Χριστῷ. (Rom 16:7 BGT)

Was Junia an apostle? First of all, in the Greek it is possible for the name to be either Junia (female) or Junias (male). But let us suppose for the sake of argument that it is indeed Junia (female). Does this mean that Junia was an apostle? Not necessarily. The Greek word *episēmos* (ἐπίσημος) is used only one other time in the New Testament, to speak of the notorious (ἐπίσημον) prisoner Barabbas (Mt. 27:16). According to BDAG, the word means “of exceptional quality, splendid, prominent, outstanding.”⁹

More important for the issue is the phrase “ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις.” First of all, the word *apostolos* (ἀπόστολος) can mean either “apostle” or “emissary,” and it is unclear in the context which one it is referring to. But even if we grant that it is “apostle” as the seemingly more obvious reading, what does it mean to be “prominent among the apostles”? We note here that this is not in the normal expected genitival clause if one is claiming that Andronicus and Junia are apostles (ἐπίσημος ἀποστολων) – “prominent of the apostles,” but in a prepositional clause as “prominent among the apostles,” which seems to distance them both from the persons of the apostles. Given that both Andronicus and Junia are mentioned only once here in the entire New Testament, the preponderance of evidence suggests that they are not apostles and were merely noteworthy to them due to their devotion and service. Obviously, Byrd’s speculation that Junia was actually Joanna is just that: speculation. And if we think of the name as a pair, just like Prisca and Aquilla are a pair, and if Junia is female, then it would suggest that Andronicus and Junia are a husband and wife pair.

To attempt to short up support for her position, Byrd shared the view of Chrysostom, who read the text as meaning that Junia was an apostle (p. 224). The problem is that Chrysostom’s interpretation is not authoritative, and thus a detailed examination of the text has shown us that his interpretation is wrong.

As it can be seen, when we go into the details of the texts in question, Byrd’s interpretations can be seen to be what they are: pure speculation and wishful thinking. Her interpretation of Greek words are contrary to the established lexicons, and her positions therefore are not biblical.

Byrd’s interpretation of these texts betray her inventive speculation into difficult texts. Unfortunately, a proper study of these texts show us that her interpretations are untenable and should be abandoned.

⁹ BDAG, “ἐπίσημος”

Practicality: Women in the Church

What does this mean for the church practically? First of all, it must be lamented that certain segments of the church do in fact ill-treat women. We must also lament the shameless selling of drivel for “women spirituality.” To the extent that churches segregate and think of women as second-class members, to that extent they should repent of their sin against women.

Secondly, we must agree that women are co-laborers in the Lord. That means that non-ministerial service in the Lord should be open to women, if they so wish to do so. Thirdly, women should be taught sound theology and doctrine, just like men. There is no reason why women should be denied learning in sound biblical theology. Fourthly, women can be legitimate partners in theological discussion, and their opinions and insights should be properly weighed, not rejected out of hand.

Nevertheless, women are not men. It is not wrong if women want to discuss different issues and topics than men. It is not wrong for women to have different emphases and different theological interests than men. It is also true that women can and do sin, and therefore their opinions and insights are to be weighed, not accepted uncritically.

All of these should function within a framework of BMW, as both men and women operate out of a desire that they honor the God who created them. Gender differences come about because of creation, and therefore to honor God is to respect these differences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Byrd does have a few legitimate grievances over some practices in the wider church, her book is soaked through with an unbiblical hermeneutic and unbiblical interpretations of the biblical texts. Her hermeneutic is subjectivist in nature, contrary to the Reformed objectivist hermeneutic. She is less than honest about her opponents, constantly misrepresenting them and doubling down on her misrepresentations when confronted about it. Her interpretations of difficult texts are contrary to what the texts actually teach, and no amount of hand-waving against “biblicism” is going to save her from that.

Byrd’s book therefore is contrary to sound theology, and undermines the Reformed Confessions. While she claims to be Reformed, her hermeneutics is not Reformed. The way she does theology is not the Reformed manner of doing theology, and this book is not recommended for anyone wanting to know about biblical manhood or womanhood, or even what the Reformed tradition’s view on women in the church is and should be.