

## Charity, Clarity, and Hope

The Controversy and the Cause of Christ

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### **Two New Organizations: Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Christians for Biblical Equality**

The collection of essays in this book was undertaken as a project of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. The Council was formed in 1987 by concerned evangelical pastors, professors, and laypeople. Its rationale, goals, and affirmations are contained in the Danvers Statement (Appendix 2), which was finalized in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December 1987. It was first made public in November 1988 in Wheaton, Illinois, and then published as an advertisement in *Christianity Today*, January 13, 1989. One of the purposes of *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* is to provide the Danvers Statement with biblically faithful and culturally informed support and elucidation.

Emerging independently and simultaneously with the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood has been an organization called Christians for Biblical Equality. It would be fair, we believe, to describe this group as theologically conservative, evangelical feminists. Its members are the primary persons we debate in this book. *Christianity Today* reported that, in 1987, women who had withdrawn from the Evangelical Women's Caucus (in disagreement with the apparent endorsement of lesbianism) formed the new organization. "The new group," wrote David Neff, "is a national chapter of Men, Women and God, International, an organization associated with John Stott's London Institute for Contemporary Christianity" (*Christianity Today*, October 16, 1987, p. 44).<sup>1</sup>

In July 1989 Christians for Biblical Equality unveiled their position paper entitled "Men, Women and Biblical Equality," a statement of twelve "Biblical Truths" and six points of "Application." A news release reported that "the declaration was drawn up by seven evangelical biblical scholars—Gilbert Bilezikian of Wheaton College; Stanley R. Gundry of Zondervan Publishing; W. Ward Gasque, [then] of Regent College; Catherine Clark Kroeger of Hamilton College; Jo Anne Lyon of Asbury Seminary; Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, author of

*Equal to Serve*; and Roger Nicole of Gordon-Conwell Seminary.” The declaration was published as an advertisement in the April 9, 1990 issue of *Christianity Today*.

## Pursuing Charity and Clarity Together

We are sure that neither the CBMW nor CBE flatters itself by thinking that it speaks for evangelicalism, let alone for the church as a whole. We do not know whether history will attach any significance to our statements. But both groups are persuaded that something immense is at stake. It is not merely a minor intramural squabble. It has important implications for marriage, singleness, and ministry, and thus for all of life and mission. Yet we sense a kinship far closer with the founders of CBE than with those who seem to put their feminist commitments above Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

The church of Christ will survive and triumph without either the CBMW or CBE. We have no Messianic infatuations. But we do have a burden—in large measure the same burden. When John Stott expressed his support for Men, Women and God (the parent organization of CBE), he used guarded language that we would be happy to affirm. He said, “I am very glad to express my support of Men, Women and God in its aim to understand and obey God’s will for sexual roles today.” That is our goal too: “to understand and obey God’s will for sexual roles today.” He went on to say, “The authentic evangelical way is neither the conservatism which reasserts traditional positions without reflection, nor the radicalism which sacrifices all tradition to the spirit of modernity.”<sup>3</sup> Again we say a hearty Yes. The “reassertion of tradition *without reflection*” runs the grave risk of Jesus’ indictment in Mark 7:9, “You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition!” (RSV; unless otherwise noted, all citations in this chapter are from RSV). We do not regard our book as a defense of tradition.

We hope this book represents a critical sifting of tradition, a rejection of all that is not biblical, and a preserving of all that is. In profound ways we share a common passion with the members of CBE: a passion to be obedient to biblical truth about manhood and womanhood; a passion to see men and women affirm the awesome reality of equal personhood in the image of God; a passion to see marriages whole and lasting and freeing and happy for both husband and wife; the passion to resist the moral collapse of our culture in all manner of tolerated abuses and addictions and perversions; a passion to be a winsome countercultural outcropping of kingdom beauty and truth; a passion to equip all men and women for ministry according to their gifts, with none throwing life away in trivial pursuits; a passion to magnify Christ—crucified, risen and reigning—to a perishing society; and a passion to mobilize the whole church—men and women—to complete the Great Commission, penetrate all the unreached peoples of the world, and hasten the day of God.

But the heart-wrenching fact is that we have profoundly different interpretations of how God intends to fulfill this vision. We are thrilled that it is God Himself who will fulfill His plan for the church: “My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose” (Isaiah 46:10). We take heart that, in spite of all our blind spots and bungling and disobedience, God *will* triumph in the earth: “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations” (Psalm 22:27–28). Yet one of the groanings of this fallen age is

controversy, and most painful of all, controversy with brothers and sisters in Christ. We resonate with the Apostle Paul—our joy would be full if we could all be “of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).

But for all his love of harmony and unity and peace, it is remarkable how many of Paul’s letters were written to correct fellow Christians. One thinks immediately of 1 Corinthians. It begins with Paul’s thanks (1:4) and ends with his love (16:24). But between those verses he labors to set the Corinthians straight in their thinking and behavior. For example, he addresses the danger of boasting in leaders (1:10–3:23), the limits of sexual freedom (5:1–8), the extent of true separation (5:9–13), the proper handling of lawsuits (6:1–8), the goodness of sexual relations in marriage (7:1–16), the nature of Christian freedom (8:1–13), the proper demeanor for men and women in worship (11:2–16), how to behave at the Lord’s supper (11:17–34), the use of spiritual gifts (12–14), and the nature and the reality of the resurrection (15).

The assumption of the entire New Testament is that we should strive for peace by striving to come to agreement in the truth. Peace and unity in the body of Christ are exceedingly precious. Behold how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell in *unity* (Psalm 133:1)! “Seek *peace* and pursue it” (1 Peter 3:11). “Let us then pursue what makes for *peace* and for mutual upbuilding” (Romans 14:19). “The wisdom from above is first pure, then *peaceable*” (James 3:17). But it is first *pure*. Peace is not a first thing. It is derivative. It comes from hearty agreement in truth.

For example, Paul tells us to set our minds on what is *true*, and honorable, and just; and the God of *peace* will be with us (Philippians 4:8–9). Peace is a wonderful by-product of heartfelt commitments to what is true and right. Hebrews speaks of the “*peaceful* fruit of *righteousness*” (12:11). Paul tells Timothy to “aim at *righteousness* . . . and *peace*” (2 Timothy 2:22 RSV). The unity we strive for in the church is a unity in knowledge and truth. We grow up into the one body “joined and knit together” as we “attain to the *unity* of the faith and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*” (Ephesians 4:13, 16). “Grace and *peace*” are multiplied to us “in the *knowledge* of God and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Peter 1:2). And paradoxically, the weaponry with which we wage war for “the gospel of *peace*” begins with the belt of *truth* (Ephesians 6:14–15) and ends with the sword of the Spirit, the *Word of God* (6:17).

The reason for this is that truth frees us from the control of Satan, the great deceiver and destroyer of unity: “You will know the *truth*, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32; cf. 2 Timothy 2:24–26). Truth serves love, the bond of perfection. Paul prays for the Philippians that their “love may abound more and more, with *knowledge and all discernment*” (Philippians 1:9). Truth sanctifies, and so yields the righteousness whose fruit is peace: “Sanctify them in the *truth*; your word is *truth*” (John 17:17; cf. 2 Peter 1:3, 5, 12).

For the sake of unity and peace, therefore, Paul labors to set the churches straight on numerous issues—including quite a few that do not in themselves involve heresy. He does not exclude controversy from his pastoral writing. And he does not limit his engagement in controversy to first-order doctrines, where heresy threatens. He is like a parent to his churches. Parents do not correct and discipline their children only for felonies. They long for their children to grow up into all the kindness and courtesy of mature adulthood. And since

the fabric of truth is seamless, Paul knows that letting minor strands go on unravelling can eventually rend the whole garment.

Thus Paul teaches that elders serve the church, on the one hand, by caring for the church without being pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3, 5), and, on the other hand, by rebuking and correcting false teaching. “He must hold firm to the sure word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9 ESV; cf. 1:13; 2:15; 1 Timothy 5:20). This is one of the main reasons we have the Scriptures: they are “profitable for teaching, for *reproof*, for *correction*, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The point is this: We do not love controversy; we love peace. We love our brothers and sisters who belong to Christians for Biblical Equality. We long for a common mind for the cause of Christ. But we are bound by our conscience and by the Word of God, for this very cause, to try to persuade the church that the vision of manhood and womanhood presented in this book is true and beautiful. It is a precious gift of God to the church and to the world.

Our aim is to carry on the debate with clarity and charity. By charity we have in mind mainly the good will that avoids caricature and seeks to state others’ views in ways they would approve. We renounce the aim to “win” by concealing or distorting the points of disagreement. By clarity we mean the use of language that expresses as fully as possible what we affirm and what we deny.

We live in a day of politicized discourse that puts no premium on clear assertions that let people know exactly where one stands. The reason is that clarity will always result in more criticism than ambiguity will, and vagueness will win more votes in a hostile atmosphere than forthrightness will. But we want nothing to do with that attitude. Jesus refused to converse with religious leaders who crafted their answers so as to conceal what they thought (Mark 11:33). Our aim (if not our achievement) is always to be like Paul when he said, “We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the *open statement of the truth* we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2).

## **The Declaration on “Men, Women and Biblical Equality” by Christians for Biblical Equality**

We believe we share these aims for clarity and charity with the members of Christians for Biblical Equality. For this very reason we are perplexed that their declaration, “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” is written in such a way as to be unclear about the very issues that divide us. All of the seven authors of this declaration disagree with the thesis of this book: that men alone are called by God to bear the primary teaching authority in the church as elders or pastors. Yet the declaration does not clearly deny this. Moreover, most of the CBE authors disagree with our vision of marriage that calls the husband (precisely because he is husband) to bear the responsibility of primary leadership in the home. Yet this, likewise, is not explicitly denied; rather, the declaration makes general affirmations that, for the most part, we too could make. Thus the declaration does not make plain the important, distinguishing contours of their position.

The Danvers Statement (Appendix 2) is, we believe, more clear and distinct while not pressing for agreement on many specific applications. We do not regard this as a perfect or infallible document. Some things, no doubt, could be said better. Much less do we regard those of us who embrace the statement as perfect embodiments of its vision of mature manhood and womanhood. The statement was not written as a creed to test Christian orthodoxy. But we do believe it is true and is, therefore, one helpful test for right thinking on this part of biblical teaching.

Our effort at clarity can be seen in our using enough precision and distinctness that, to our knowledge, the authors of the CBE statement “Men, Women and Biblical Equality” would *not* be able to ascribe to our affirmations 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 with the meaning each of these affirmations has in the context of our document. Therefore, our statement gives a clear option to the church and lets people know where we stand in distinction from others who disagree at crucial points. Our affirmations are worded to make plain what we deny as well as what we affirm about the crucial issues of headship in marriage and primary responsibility for leadership in the church.

We turn now to present the declaration of Christians for Biblical Equality along with our commentary.

## **A Commentary on “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” a Declaration of Christians for Biblical Equality**

In what follows, we will present, point-by-point, the text of “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,”<sup>4</sup> followed by our own comments on that text.

*The Bible teaches the full equality of men and women in Creation and in Redemption (Gen 1:26–28, 2:23, 5:1–2; 1 Cor 11:11–12; Gal 3:13, 28, 5:1).*

Comment: The difference in approach from the Danvers Statement is signaled at the outset. We made an effort to come to terms with the *nature* and *extent* of our equality as men and women and to be explicit about it: “Equal before God *as persons* but *distinct in their manhood and womanhood*.” This is important because men and women are *not* equal in significant ways. Gregg Johnson, in chapter 15, makes this plain from the physiological/neurological side. More importantly, in this day of increasing homosexual demands for marital rights, we need to say loudly and clearly that men are not equal with women personally or physically *as candidates for the spouses of men*. Men and women are *not* equal when they stand before *a man* as a possible marriage partner. (See chapter 2, question 41.) At that point, women have rights and privileges that men do not have, strictly on the basis of gender. We may speak, and should speak, of equal *worth*, even of the differences, but to speak of “full equality” in the context of this controversy with no clarifying explanation leaves the reader to wonder just how far the authors are willing to go. The nature and extent of our equality is at the heart of the controversy.

*The Bible teaches that God has revealed Himself in the totality of Scripture, the authoritative Word of God (Matt 5:18; John 10:35; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21). We believe that Scripture is to be interpreted wholistically [sic] and thematically. We also*

*recognize the necessity of making a distinction between inspiration and interpretation: inspiration relates to the divine impulse and control whereby the whole canonical Scripture is the Word of God; interpretation relates to the human activity whereby we seek to apprehend revealed truth in harmony with the totality of Scripture and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To be truly biblical, Christians must continually examine their faith and practice under the searchlight of Scripture.*

Comment: We rejoice in this strong affirmation of the divine inspiration of all the Bible. The aim to interpret the Bible “wholistically [sic] and thematically” and thus to apprehend revealed truth “in harmony with the totality of Scripture” is good. We would only alert the reader that the only way to find out what the totality of Scripture says is to interpret the smaller parts faithfully in their nearer context. This is called the hermeneutical circle: the parts determine the whole and the whole affects how we interpret the parts. Our concern is that any supposed “whole” or “theme” or “thrust” (like “the leveling . . . of birth-based status differences”<sup>5</sup>) should not be used to nullify the contribution of any other part of Scripture (which may teach that gender is ordained by God to be significant in some role differences).<sup>6</sup>

## Biblical Truths

### Creation

*1. The Bible teaches that both man and woman were created in God’s image, had a direct relationship with God, and shared jointly the responsibilities of bearing and rearing children and having dominion over the created order (Gen 1:26–28).*

Comment: We agree. We would only point out that just as God meant for the shared responsibility of bearing children to involve very different roles (in the process of fertilization, gestation, and nursing) so also He may mean for the shared responsibility of dominion to involve different roles. Acting “jointly” does not mean acting identically, and “sharing” responsibilities does not mean that each must bear the same ones. Yet CBE makes no affirmation of any distinctive responsibilities that men or women have in bearing or rearing children or having dominion over the earth, and their statement could be taken to mean that men and women have identical responsibilities.

*2. The Bible teaches that woman and man were created for full and equal partnership. The word “helper” (ezer), used to designate woman in Genesis 2:18, refers to God in most instances of Old Testament usage (e.g. 1 Sam 7:12; Ps 121:1–2). Consequently the word conveys no implication whatsoever of female subordination or inferiority.*

Comment: The phrase “full and equal” has the same ambiguity referred to in the first paragraph of the declaration—some will take it to mean a partnership of identical roles, and some will take it to mean a partnership of different roles with equal value.

It is true that God is called our “helper,” but the word itself says nothing about the kind of helper intended. The context must decide whether Eve is to “help” as a strong person who aids a weaker one, or as one who assists a loving leader. The context makes it very unlikely that “helper” should be read on the analogy of God’s help, because in Genesis 2:19–20 Adam is caused to seek his “helper” first among the animals. But the animals will not do, because



they are not “fit for him.” So God makes woman “from man.” Now there is a being who is “fit for him,” sharing his human nature, equal to him in Godlike personhood. She is infinitely different from an animal, and God highlights her value to man by showing how no animal can fill her role. Yet in passing through “helpful” animals to woman, God teaches us that the woman is a man’s “helper” in the sense of a loyal and suitable assistant in the life of the garden. The problem with the CBE statement is the assumption that because a word has certain connotations in some places it must have them in every place.

With regard to the word *inferiority*, two comments: (1) the Bible never suggests that the differing roles of men and women imply differing worth; (2) women and men are inferior and superior to each other in various ways, but these are not made the sign of varying value as persons.

*3. The Bible teaches that the forming of woman from man demonstrates the fundamental unity and equality of human beings (Gen 2:21–23). In Genesis 2:18, 20 the word “suitable” (kenegdo) denotes equality and adequacy.*

Comment: We agree. But that is not all the Bible teaches about the meaning of taking woman from the side of man. It also teaches—and this is no contradiction of the other—that the man is the woman’s “head” and that she should give evidence of her endorsement of his leadership (1 Corinthians 11:3, 7–10; see chapter 5). If the CBE declaration aims to interpret the Scriptures holistically, why does the declaration omit this one place in the Bible outside Genesis where Genesis 2:21–22 is specifically used to teach on this issue?

*4. The Bible teaches that man and woman were co-participants in the Fall: Adam was no less culpable than Eve (Gen 3:6; Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:21–22).*

Comment: We agree. But this neglects and obscures the way the Bible talks about the role of man and woman in the fall. The Bible shows the woman and man reversing roles so that she becomes the leading spokesman as they enter into sin (Genesis 3:1, 17). The Bible speaks of the woman being deceived and not the man, though this does not lessen his guilt (1 Timothy 2:13). The Bible portrays the man as primarily accountable for the fall: the Lord came to him first and not to the woman to call them to account (Genesis 3:9); and the New Testament pictures Adam, not Eve, as the representative head of fallen humanity (Romans 5:17–19; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22). The specific thematic thrust of Scripture, which seems to give man peculiar responsibility, is ignored in the CBE statement.

*5. The Bible teaches that the rulership of Adam over Eve resulted from the Fall and was therefore not a part of the original created order. Genesis 3:16 is a prediction of the effects of the Fall rather than a prescription of God’s ideal order.*

Comment: We agree with this point concerning Genesis 3:16. “He shall rule over you,” is not a prescription of what should be, but a description of what happens through sin where redemption is not overcoming the effects of the fall. But the silence at this point regarding the reality of Adam’s loving leadership *before* the fall gives the impression that fallen “rulership” and God-ordained headship are lumped together and ruled out. Again the biblical thrust is ignored: Paul never appeals to the curse or the fall as an explanation for man’s responsibility

to lead; he always appeals to the acts of God before the fall (1 Corinthians 11:8–9; Ephesians 5:31–32; 1 Timothy 2:13). Why is this thrust and theme neglected when it bears exactly on the point at issue in this paragraph?

### Redemption

6. *The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ came to redeem women as well as men. Through faith in Christ we all become children of God, one in Christ, and heirs to the blessings of salvation without reference to racial, social, or gender distinctives (John 1:12–13; Rom 8:14–17; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:26–28).*

Comment: We agree. But we affirm more specifically that what Jesus redeems from corruption is the beautiful order of creation in which the distinct complementary roles for man and woman were ordained by God's creative acts.

### Community

7. *The Bible teaches that at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came on the men and women alike. Without distinction, the Holy Spirit indwells women and men, and sovereignly distributes gifts without preference as to gender (Acts 2:1–21; 1 Cor 12:7, 11, 14:31).*

Comment: Men and women are indwelt and filled with the Holy Spirit and gifted to minister. But the texts do not say that the Holy Spirit takes no regard for gender. He is free to do so, if He wills. It would not limit His freedom in the least if, for example, He gave more women the gift of mercy (Romans 12:8). He apportions gifts to each "as he wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 2:4). We need to make this plain because some may take this paragraph to mean that "pastor-teacher" (Ephesians 4:11 RSV) is a gift, and then say that the Holy Spirit is bound to be gender-blind in giving it. However, we agree that all the gifts (not offices) mentioned in the New Testament are given to men and women, though we do not know if the Spirit in His freedom sometimes takes gender into account when He gives them. (See chapter 2, question 34.)

8. *The Bible teaches that both women and men are called to develop their spiritual gifts and to use them as stewards of the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10–11). Both men and women are divinely gifted and empowered to minister to the whole Body of Christ, under His authority (Acts 1:14, 18:6, 21:9; Rom 16:1–7, 12–13, 15; Phil 4:2–3; Col 4:15; see also Mark 15:40–41, 16:1–7; Luke 8:1–3; John 20:17–18; compare also Old Testament examples: Judges 4:4–14, 5:7; 2 Chron 34:22–28; Prov 31:30–31; Micah 6:4).*

Comment: We agree, unless "empowered to minister to the whole Body of Christ" is a way of saying that a woman with the gift of teaching should exercise it toward the male half of the body of Christ the same way she does toward the female half. It is not easy to see what this paragraph might otherwise mean by ministering to the "whole Body of Christ." It would serve clarity better if CBE said plainly what is probably intended: God gifts women to teach men as well as to teach women in the body of Christ.

9. *The Bible teaches that, in the New Testament economy, women as well as men exercise the prophetic, priestly and royal functions (Acts 2:17–18, 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5;*



*1 Peter 2:9–10; Rev 1:6, 5:10). Therefore, the few isolated texts that appear to restrict the full redemptive freedom of women must not be interpreted simplistically and in contradiction to the rest of Scripture, but their interpretation must take into account their relation to the broader teaching of Scripture and their total context (1 Cor 11:2–16, 14:33–36; 1 Tim 2:9–15).*

Comment: Here the hermeneutical principle mentioned in the second paragraph of the declaration shows its power to silence Scripture. A broad and general statement about the priestly, royal, and prophetic function of women is used to determine what other texts “must not” mean.

Instead, what we recommend is that these so-called “isolated texts” be allowed to help *define* the nature of the prophetic, priestly, and royal role of men and women. But that possibility is obscured by caricaturing all alternatives to the CBE method. The problem here is that the language excludes the very possibility of our position by implying that any alternative to the CBE’s method involves “simplistic” interpretation that “contradicts the rest of Scripture” and ignores the “total context” of passages to which we appeal. This is the fallacy of the excluded middle: one attempts to strengthen one’s position by exposing the shortcomings of a weak alternative while giving the impression that there are no other alternatives but the weak one when in fact there are.<sup>7</sup>

But the alternative they reject is emphatically *not* the only alternative to their method. We offer interpretations of each of the texts in question that are *not* simplistic, do *not* ignore the biblical context, and do *not* contradict the rest of Scripture. What is taken to be “the broader teaching of Scripture,” namely, God’s gender-indifference in assigning roles, proves on close examination to be a series of unwarranted inferences from many indecisive passages. This “broader teaching” then is used to govern the so-called isolated texts that were designed in the first place to help shape that “broader teaching” and guard us from the unwarranted inferences. This is not an approach to Scripture that secures the full authority of all that it has to say.

Moreover it is unclear and misleading to speak of limiting a woman’s “redemptive freedom” when the issue is whether she can “teach and have authority over men” (1 Timothy 2:12 RSV). “Limiting full redemptive freedom” is something none of us wants to do, because it sounds like we would be saying woman is not fully redeemed. That may be what the authors think we really are saying. But the problem is that many of their readers do not think that limiting the pastorate to men means women are less redeemed. So the authors have avoided the clear statement of what is at issue (women pastors or elders) and used a term that wins more support (“redemptive freedom”), but probably at the cost of true understanding.

*10. The Bible defines the function of leadership as the empowerment of others for service rather than as the exercise of power over them (Matt 20:25–28, 23:8; Mark 10:42–45; John 13:13–17; Gal 5:13; 1 Peter 5:2–3).*

Comment: Again there is the fallacy of the excluded middle. What seems to be overlooked in the either/or of this paragraph is that leadership may exercise power not simply “over”—which may imply proud, self-aggrandizing domination—but “under” or “in front of” (that is,

in the service of). What's missing is the fully biblical notion of exercising servant-power to empower. This is what Jesus did as a leader (Luke 9:1); it is what Paul did as an apostle (1 Corinthians 4:19–21; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; Philemon 8–10); it is what church leaders “who govern well” are supposed to do for those they lead (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17 with 3:5); and it is what a husband is called to do for his wife as her head (Ephesians 5:25–26).

### Family

11. *The Bible teaches that husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life and that they are bound together in a relationship of mutual submission and responsibility (1 Cor 7:3–5; Eph 5:21; 1 Peter 3:1–7; Gen 21:12). The husband's function as “head” (kephalē) is to be understood as self-giving love and service within this relationship of mutual submission (Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7).*

Comment: This statement lacks the clarity needed in the church at this time. It does not say whether the husband's “self-giving love and service” cancels out his role as a leader or simply describes the form his unique leadership should take. The result of this ambiguity is that people endorse this statement who have profoundly different views on one of the crucial issues at stake—the role relationship of husband and wife. How will it serve the cause of truth if CBE wins assent on this paragraph by omitting the assertion that really distinguishes their vision from ours? Omitted is the assertion, for example, that “mutual submission rules out hierarchical differences.”<sup>8</sup> We gladly and urgently call husbands to “self-giving love and service.” But we are persuaded that this does not cancel out the difference between *his* role and his wife's—it rather defines the kind of initiative and responsibility that most wives are glad for their husbands to take. (For more reflection on the phrase “mutual submission,” see chapter 2, questions 5 and 10.)

12. *The Bible teaches that both mothers and fathers are to exercise leadership in the nurture, training, discipline and teaching of their children (Exod 20:12; Lev 19:3; Deut 6:6–9, 21:18–21, 27:16; Prov 1:8, 6:20; Eph 6:1–4; Col 3:20; 2 Tim 1:5; see also Luke 2:51).*

Comment: We agree. But again the needed clarity is missing. Nothing is said about the point at issue: Do fathers bear a distinct, primary responsibility in establishing a pattern of nurture and training and discipline in the home? We would say yes without denying anything of the partnership in parenting commended in this paragraph. Notice in Ephesians 6:1–4 how Paul moves from the shared honor of both parents to the special focus on fathers to take responsibility for their children's training: “Children, obey your parents. . . . *Fathers* . . . bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (The same move from parents to fathers is found in Colossians 3:20–21).

### Application

#### Community

1. *In the church, spiritual gifts of women and men are to be recognized, developed and used in serving and teaching ministries at all levels of involvement: as small group*

*leaders, counselors, facilitators, administrators, ushers, communion servers, and board members, and in pastoral care, teaching, preaching, and worship.*

*In so doing, the church will honor God as the source of spiritual gifts. The church will also fulfill God's mandate of stewardship without the appalling loss to God's kingdom that results when half of the church's members are excluded from positions of responsibility.*

Comment: Again there is the fallacy of the excluded middle. The last sentence implies that if women are not given access to "teaching ministries at all levels" including "preaching," then they are "excluded from positions of responsibility." This is not true. All of the hundreds of ministries women rightly undertake carry responsibility, many of them very great responsibility. The Danvers Statement (Affirmation 9) makes it plain that we want every Christian, man and woman, to be responsibly and significantly engaged in ministry. But we do not so elevate the office of elder or pastor as to imply that the thousands of other believers—men and women—who serve Christ in a thousand other ways do not have positions of responsibility.

The other problem in this paragraph is again the ambiguity concerning the precise point at issue: namely, may women rightly fill the role of pastor or elder? The paragraph focuses on the generally permissible *function* of "preaching" and "teaching" but does not say explicitly that women may teach Scripture to men or hold the office of preaching pastor or teaching elder. Thus again, because of this lack of clarity, people may endorse this statement who have significantly different views on one of the crucial issues at stake—a woman's right to fill the role of preaching pastor or teaching elder. How is truth served in this crucial debate by formulating positions that win assent through ambiguity on the issues at the very heart of the debate?

*2. In the church, public recognition is to be given to both women and men who exercise ministries of service and leadership.*

*In so doing, the church will model the unity and harmony that should characterize the community of believers. In a world fractured by discrimination and segregation, the church will dissociate itself from worldly or pagan devices designed to make women feel inferior for being female. It will help prevent their departure from the church or their rejection of the Christian faith.*

Comment: No one can disagree with the aim to renounce "worldly and pagan devices designed to make women feel inferior." But we wish there had been some clarity about who or what is being indicted here. Is our interpretation of Scripture being called a pagan device? Are we the ones who "by design" aim to make women feel "inferior"? If so it would help readers make reasoned decisions about this matter if CBE said: "The view that endorses only men in the pastoral office is a pagan device and is designed to make women feel inferior." But again the language wins support without making clear what is being supported. We do not understand the rationale for such formulations in the present context of church controversy. It seems to us that we should all want to help our readers know as clearly as

possible what is pagan and what is not, what is designed to make women feel inferior and what is not.

The desire to win the heart of contemporary women is tremendously important and praiseworthy. We share it. We too think the church should be a “city set on a hill that cannot be hid”—a beautifully attractive community of love and harmony and respect. But we caution that there will always be moral commitments in the church that are at first unattractive to the world. In one and the same context Jesus said two seemingly contradictory things: Men will “revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account;” and, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:11, 16 RSV). Which is it? Will they speak evil of us, or will they glorify God? The answer is: both—sometimes one and sometimes the other, and sometimes one followed by the other (1 Peter 2:12). The point is that we cannot shape all our life so as to win approval from the world. Some of it we can. But in other parts of it, rejection by the world may not be owing to our failure. We affirm with CBE that we must always struggle to discover the right missionary balance.

### Family

*3. In the Christian home, husband and wife are to defer to each other in seeking to fulfill each other's preferences, desires and aspirations. Neither spouse is to seek to dominate the other, but each is to act as servant of the other, in humility considering the other as better than oneself. In case of decisional deadlock, they should seek resolution through biblical methods of conflict resolution rather than by one spouse imposing a decision upon the other.*

*In so doing, husband and wife will help the Christian home stand against improper use of power and authority by spouses and will protect the home from wife and child abuse that sometimes tragically follows a hierarchical interpretation of the husband's “headship.”*

Comment: We agree that in a good marriage spouses will try to outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10). Husbands and wives will often yield their own preferences to make each other happy. That is the way love is. “Through love be servants of one another” (Galatians 5:13 RSV). This is what husbands should use their leadership to cultivate. The responsibility of leadership that God calls a husband to bear is not conceived in terms of unilateral veto power. But the CBE statement does not make clear if they believe *any* unique leadership of the husband is good or if it is compatible with this kind of mutual kindness. This is another unfortunate ambiguity on a point that lies at the heart of the debate.

Again it seems to us that CBE is seeking to strengthen its case through the fallacy of the excluded middle. For example, CBE pictures, on the one hand, two humble spouses, each seeking to consider the other better than oneself; on the other hand, it pictures two spouses where one seeks “to dominate the other” and “impose a decision upon the other.” In this way the CBE position is made to look like the only loving one, because the real middle position, the one we take, is excluded. We do not counsel any man to “dominate” his wife or to “impose” his decisions on her. We speak of a husband bearing the responsibility of servant-leadership and a wife gladly affirming that leadership. Moreover, we urge wives never to

follow a husband's lead into sin. When we say that a husband should bear the responsibility to break a decisional deadlock, we do not mean that it will be without much interaction with his wife, or that he will always break it according to his own preference. Responsibility to lead is not synonymous with getting your way.

To say that wife and child abuse "sometimes . . . follows a hierarchical interpretation of the husband's headship" is no doubt true. But it also sometimes follows an egalitarian interpretation of headship. Neither of us intends to give any encouragement for abuse. But the outcome of our teachings may differ from what we intend, and this cuts both ways. We would encourage those who minimize the husband's unique role as leader to consider the possibility that this may in fact be cultivating a milieu of gender confusion that in the long run brings about more abuse.

For example, sons who grow up in homes where the father gives no clear model of caring, strong, courteous leadership distinct from the role of the mother will find it much harder to develop their natural masculine identity in positive ways and will be likely candidates for the folly of macho distortions of manhood that ruin many homes. In the years to come, will it be enough to tell husbands and wives to love each other, without helping them discover what is unique about manhood and womanhood in the dynamic of marriage? If all the emphasis is on gender neutrality and undifferentiated roles, how will sons learn the answer to the question: What does it mean to grow up to be a man and not a woman? And how will daughters learn to answer the question: What does it mean to grow up to be a woman and not a man? If these questions are regarded as anything less than utterly crucial, we think the resulting frustrations and confusions, through the loss of clear sexual identity in the generations to come, will erupt with a tidal wave of hostilities and perversions that we can now scarcely imagine.

*4. In the Christian home, spouses are to learn to share the responsibilities of leadership on the basis of gifts, expertise, and availability, with due regard for the partner most affected by the decision under consideration.*

*In so doing spouses will learn to respect their competencies and their complementarity. This will prevent one spouse from becoming the perennial loser, often forced to practice ingratiating or deceitful manipulation to protect self-esteem. By establishing their marriage on a partnership basis, the couple will protect it from joining the tide of dead or broken marriages resulting from marital inequities.*

Comment: It is astonishing to us that a biblical vision for the inner workings of marriage can be proposed without reference to the deep and wonderful differences between male and female personhood. Another way to say it would be to ask: In a strictly competency-based pattern of leadership, where is the glorious parable of Christ and the church? What has become of the most beautiful marriage chapter in all the Bible, Ephesians 5:22–33? To us it seems not only naive but also sterile to portray the wonderful interweaving of manhood and womanhood in the fabric of marriage as the mere alignment of roles along lines of gender-neutral competencies, individual expertise, and schedule constraints. Something awesome is missing here. And its absence threatens the meaning of manhood and womanhood to such a degree that the church should be deeply concerned.

There is another way to protect spouses from being perennial losers. Let the husband learn to lead as Christ leads. And let the wife learn to affirm this Christlike leadership the way the church affirms Christ's. Is Christ or the church ever a loser in this relationship? Is Christ or the church ever forced to "practice ingratiating or deceitful manipulation to protect self-esteem"? Has a husband ever been guilty in marital breakup because he accepted the unique responsibility to lead like Christ? It is a great puzzle to us why the CBE declaration portrays its competency-based, gender-neutral, egalitarian option over against the corruptions and distortions of hierarchy while totally neglecting the beautiful portrait of marriage, visible today in many homes—namely, Christ and the church.

*5. In the Christian home, couples who share a lifestyle characterized by the freedom they find in Christ will do so without experiencing feelings of guilt or resorting to hypocrisy. They are freed to emerge from an unbiblical "traditionalism" and can rejoice in their mutual accountability in Christ.*

*In so doing, they will openly express their obedience to Scripture, will model an example for other couples in quest of freedom in Christ, and will stand against patterns of domination and inequality sometimes imposed upon church and family.*

Comment: If Christ, in leading the church, does not "dominate" the church, and if God, in being the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3), does not "dominate" Christ, and if elders "who lead well" (1 Timothy 5:17) need not "dominate" the flock, then domination is not the only alternative to the CBE gender-neutral conception of roles in marriage. There is a biblical vision of warmth and respect and love that glories in the God-given, personal differences between manhood and womanhood. But in reading the CBE declaration one is left with the impression that the choice is between their view and "unbiblical 'traditionalism.'" We believe there is another choice. That is why we have written this book.

We believe that biblical equality as reflected in this document is true to Scripture.

We stand united in our conviction that the Bible, in its totality, is the liberating Word that provides the most effective way for women and men to exercise the gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit and thus to serve God.

Comment: See below for our summary assessment.

## **An Assessment of "Men, Women and Biblical Equality"**

Apart from our disagreeing with the (apparent) CBE endorsement of women as preaching pastors and teaching elders and with CBE's lack of endorsement of a man's responsibility to give primary leadership in his home, our summary concerns are these:

1. The CBE statement says nothing positive concerning the special responsibilities that a person should bear by virtue of being a man or a woman. The silence of CBE on such implications for sexual differences is typical of egalitarians. It is one of the reasons why so many young people today are confused about what it means to be a man or a woman. Readers are only told how their sexual differences *don't* count. They are not told in what sense they *do* count. We believe that the resulting confusion and frustration over male and

female identity will be increasingly responsible for the precise negative effects that CBE aims to avert.

2. We lament the absence of clarity on key points of disagreement. Only occasionally must we disagree with the actual *wording* of the declaration, even though its authors hold significantly different views from ours. This is because some affirmations are accepted by all evangelicals and others are so ambiguous as to allow clouded agreement by people with deep divergences. In other words, the CBE statement does not offer a clear contrary alternative to the Danvers Statement. The controversial positions that distinguish CBE from CBMW do not receive crisp, clear expression. This is doubly troubling from our point of view, because we regard ambiguity of this kind as the common prelude to liberalism. The loss of clarity and precision can easily create a fog in which it is much harder to discern what ideas are really coming and going.

3. We are troubled by the repeated fallacy of the excluded middle: the strengthening of one's position by exposing the shortcomings of an ugly alternative while giving the impression that there are no other alternatives when in truth there are. The CBE statement is a strangely oblique and ambiguous document. Chauvinistic abuses to our right are deplored. Controversial egalitarian convictions to our left are implicitly suggested in non-controversial language. But we do not recognize our own position as either the one suggested or the one rejected.

Almost all the denunciations in the CBE declaration refer to relational abuses that we reject, too. Thus CBE distances itself most often from a corruption of biblical complementarity that we do not share, so that the reader is left wondering what CBE really thinks about a position like ours that rejects those same corruptions. Some examples:

- The “rulership” of man over woman is rightly rejected by CBE as part of the curse, but there is no explicit denial of our affirmation that the *loving headship* of husbands is rooted in creation before the curse.
- The “improper use of power and authority by spouses” is rightly rejected, but there is no explicit reckoning with the *proper* use of authority in a husband's loving leadership in the home, which is at the heart of CBMW's vision.
- CBE says the husband's headship is to be carried out “as self-giving love and service.” Yes, but no explicit denial is made of our affirmation that this is the *form* of a husband's leadership, not an *alternative* to it.

4. The CBE hermeneutical procedure seems to us to pit Scripture against Scripture, with the result that crucial portions of God's Word are not allowed to have their proper say. For example, they speak of “the broader teaching of Scripture” and “the totality of Scripture” and the need to interpret “wholistically [sic] and thematically.” Having defined this “totality” in terms of equality and the leveling of gender-based role distinctions, they say that the key texts that we appeal to as decisive “must not be interpreted” in a way that jeopardizes what CEB has determined to be the totality. This is very precarious and seems in fact to muzzle the most important passages on the issue at stake.

We do not claim to be above this very hermeneutical problem—determining the meaning of the parts by the whole, while at the same time defining the whole from the meaning of the parts. We all struggle here. And it is not just a problem in *biblical* hermeneutics. Nevertheless



we protest that CBE is heavy-handed in using the whole against the parts. And we appeal for the sake of 1 Timothy 2:12–14; 1 Corinthians 11:3–16; 14:34–36; Ephesians 5:22–33; Colossians 3:18–19; 1 Peter 3:1–7; Titus 2:5, etc. that these passages be given their say in shaping the “totality of Scripture” instead of being treated like outsiders with no exegetical vote—especially when these are the very texts that speak most explicitly and directly to the questions of distinct roles for men and women. This is all the more crucial today because the temptation to conform the “totality of Scripture” to contemporary egalitarian culture is just as strong today as the temptation to hold on to hierarchical tradition. This means that, contrary to the assumptions of many, the very texts of which we are being told what they “must not” mean are needed in all their special focus to protect the “totality of Scripture” from cultural distortion.

Again we want to confess explicitly that we have the same need in *our* effort of interpretation. We too are vulnerable to cultural, traditional, and personal influences that may distort our sense of what the totality of Scripture is saying. Yet we hope that in this book we have given evidence of being shaped and guided by all the Scripture, not just some of it.

## Reasons for Hope

We not only want to pursue charity and cultivate clarity, but also to live in hope—hope that this controversy will move toward resolution in many fellowships and eventually in the church as a whole; hope that in the process we will become deeper and wiser and holier people; and hope that through it all our mission to a perishing world will not be hindered but advanced. What warrants are there for this hope? We see at least three. And, as with all signs of hope, these are also spurs to pray, because prophecies of this sort can be easily squandered. What will not be received by one generation God will save for the blessing of another.

1. There is hope because we stand together on the authority of God’s Word, the Bible. As agonizing as the impasse may feel, there is reason to believe that while this common ground prevails, new light may yet break forth upon us. The Word is living and active; it will pierce through all our confusion. It is not passive, but “at work in you believers” (1 Thessalonians 2:13). It will not suffer itself indefinitely to bear our misuses. It will set us straight, or it will drive us off, or it will show us how to live in peace and fulfill our mission to the world in spite of everything. “The testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise the simple* . . . the commandment of the Lord is pure, *enlightening the eyes*” (Psalm 19:7–8). “You will know the truth, and *the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32). One can bemoan the puzzling impasse of multiple interpretations, or one can rejoice over the precious and auspicious privilege of standing together on one solid foundation. No doubt we feel both from time to time. May our footing remain firm and our common joy increase.

2. There is hope because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Not only do we believe in the Holy Spirit, but also each of us is indwelt by Him, for we confess heartily, on both sides of this issue, that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. And “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). He is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). He does not delight in disagreement among His people. He is urging and pressing us ever on toward “the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3). Therefore we may dare to hear the words of the apostle as if spoken just for us: “Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you

are otherwise minded, *God will reveal that also to you*” (Philippians 3:15 RSV). God is committed to correcting His people. He is not indifferent to darkness. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching” (James 1:5 RSV). “His anointing teaches you about everything” (1 John 2:27).

One of His indispensable contributions in the task of interpretation is teachability and humility. The “natural person” without the Spirit of God senses that the things of the Spirit are foolish. Therefore he cannot grasp them, because there is no welcoming attitude or spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13–16). Where the heart is averse, the mind will avert the truth. We have a thousand ways to justify with our brains the biases of the soul. More than we would like to think, our reason is the unwitting servant of our wishes. This condition is the special concern of the Holy Spirit. He works from within, sovereignly opening and humbling us to the truth of the Word. The “spiritual person assesses all things.” Those who possess the Spirit eventually welcome the things of God. The temple in the soul is cleansed of self and comes to feel the delight of meshing with its counterpiece in the Word of truth.

There is a specific application of this truth to the issue of manhood and womanhood. It is something we all suspect to be the case but are often fearful of articulating lest we sound presumptuous. But it is so vital in this matter that we should not avoid it. Do we not find ourselves again and again baffled that others cannot simply “feel” the rightness of what we are saying about the relationship of men and women? On the other hand, repeatedly people will say (on one side or the other): “That surely rings bells in my heart.” Or: “That feels right to me.” Or: “I really resonate with that.” In fact, some have said to those of us speaking out in this controversy, “You’re wasting your time arguing about this, because it’s a matter of inner taste. Either you sense the vision as beautiful or you don’t, and no amount of arguing is going to make something look attractive to the eyes of the heart if it doesn’t see it in an instant.”

There is something very profound being spoken here. Jonathan Edwards, the eighteenth-century preacher and theologian, developed it better than anyone we know. In describing how the saints are led by the Holy Spirit, he argues that, just as a good eye recognizes natural beauty, and a good ear knows harmony, and a good tongue tastes sweetness—all without a train of reasoning—so there is a spiritual sense in the regenerate soul that perceives immediately the fitness and beauty of a holy action or a relationship. Edwards puts it like this:

Thus a holy person is led by the Spirit, as he is instructed and led by his holy taste and disposition of heart; whereby, in the lively exercise of grace, he easily distinguishes good and evil, and knows at once what is a suitable, amiable behavior towards God, and towards man . . . and judges what is right, as it were, spontaneously, without a particular deduction, by any other arguments than the beauty that is seen, and goodness that is tasted.<sup>9</sup>

This, Edwards explains, is why the simplest people are very often wiser and more holy than those who are very educated and scholarly. The ability to perceive what is morally good and beautiful is a function of a spiritual faculty, a discerning sense of fitness, a taste for what is lovely in the sight of God. Edwards sums up his discussion with the following sentence:

There is a *divine taste*, given and maintained by the Spirit of God, in the hearts of the saints, whereby they are . . . led and guided in discerning and distinguishing the true spiritual and holy beauty of actions; and that more easily, readily, and accurately, as they have more or less of the Spirit of God dwelling in them. And thus *the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God in their behavior in the world.*<sup>10</sup>

What this implies is that discerning the beauty and goodness of any vision of manhood and womanhood involves more than just rational exegetical argumentation. Each of us has some capacity for immediate, moral perception of what Edwards calls the amiableness or suitableness of a pattern of behavior. He says that we will distinguish what is truly beautiful more “readily and accurately” as we have more or less of God’s Spirit dwelling in us.

If Edwards is right—and we believe he is—there is reason to hope that we may come together under a vision of manhood and womanhood, notwithstanding all our exegetical disagreements. For the business of the sovereign Holy Spirit is to lead His people (Romans 8:14). And if He leads as Edwards says He does—by giving a divine taste for what is morally beautiful—then none of us dare say, “The day cannot dawn when we will not be drawn to the beauty of a different vision.” Surely none is prepared to say that the influence of the Holy Spirit that we now have is all there is to have. Which of us needs more refinement in spiritual taste? God will make that plain in His time. More important than knowing that fact is the confession that each of us needs to be changed from one degree of glory to another. And if there were a great cry from us all, would God not answer—perhaps with a vision of manhood and womanhood none has yet seen or spoken?

3. Finally, there is reason to hope because the things that unite those of us on both sides of this issue are inexpressibly magnificent and infinitely valuable. This is why our mission to the world will not be blunted but will in fact prosper and triumph by the sovereign grace of God.

We serve the same omnipotent God, and there is none like Him. “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying ‘My counsel shall stand, and I shall accomplish all my purpose’” (Isaiah 46:10). The utter uniqueness of this omnipotent God that we serve together is not merely that He is sovereign and makes all His plans to stand. It is also the breathtaking truth that He works for us with His omnipotence! “From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who *acts for those who wait for him*” (Isaiah 64:4).

Do we not share the faith that the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it—that He made everything and everyone? Every human being is God’s by right, whether they are in rebellion against Him or allegiance to Him. He is King over the nations.

Do we not share the faith that in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, Jesus Christ, whom He appointed the heir of all things and through whom He made the world? Do we not believe together that Jesus reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, upholding the universe by the Word of His power? We believe that this great and glorious Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us. He was tempted but never sinned. He taught like no one else ever taught, and loved like no one else ever loved. He said He came to

serve and to give His life a ransom for many. He suffered indescribable shame and pain, and died willingly. He identified the meaning of His own blood in advance: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

Do we not share the faith that Jesus rose from the dead never to die again, that Satan was defeated, that death was conquered, and that Jesus now reigns at the right hand of the Majesty on high until He puts all His enemies under His feet?

Do we not share the faith that anyone and everyone who turns from sin and calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved? Every believer is delivered from the kingdom of darkness, the fear of death, and the dominion of sin. Every believer receives the gift of forgiveness, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the cleansing of conscience, and the hope of everlasting joy in the presence of God.

Do we not share the faith that God has a heart and a plan for all the nations? He has other sheep that are not of this fold. And the great assurance of our lives is that *these He must bring also*. His mission cannot fail, for He is God. What His Son has purchased He *will* possess. And He has purchased people from every tribe and tongue and nation. Therefore the gospel of the kingdom *will* be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. The Son of Man will appear on the clouds with power and great glory. He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Every knee, in all the universe, will bow before Jesus Christ. He will establish His kingdom of righteousness and peace. All that is evil will be cast into outer darkness. And the glory of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

These things and many more we cherish in common. There is no such thing as Christian fellowship if the shared reveling in these things is not fellowship. This is our united front of love and witness to the world. This is an unblunted point of unified penetration. Indeed, the mission is far advanced, and is moving today at an incredible pace.

In 1900 there were fewer than 10 million Protestants in sub-Saharan Africa. By the year 2000 there will be over 400 million—a growth rate 500 percent faster than the population growth. In 1900 there were only about 50,000 Protestants in Latin America. By the year 2000 there will be over 100 million—a growth rate 20,000 percent faster than the population growth. Just over one hundred years ago there were no Christian churches in Korea. Today there are 6,000 churches in the city of Seoul alone. More Muslims have become Christians in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Iran, and East Africa in the last ten years than in the last ten centuries. Christianity is the most extensive and universal religion in history. There are churches in every country in the world.

The task remaining is great. But we are gaining steadily. The goal is to reach every people group with the gospel and plant the church among them. Several thousand groups remain to be reached. But the number is shrinking steadily, and the number of Christians available to complete the job is growing. The great new reality in missions today is the emergence of non-Western missionaries and agencies. There are over 30,000 personnel and by the end of the century that number will be over 100,000 at the present rate of advance. Not only that, but also, lands once thought to be utterly inaccessible have opened, as it were, overnight under the sovereign hand of God. And as if that were not enough, God is reversing missions

and bringing many of the unreached peoples to our own Western cities. In Toronto, Canada, live an estimated 67,000 Chinese Buddhists, 297,000 Indo-Pakistanis, 88,000 Portuguese, and 109,000 Japanese.

The point is this: there is great cause for hope today. Controversies notwithstanding—or perhaps through the very controversies themselves—Christ *will* build His church. All the families of the earth *will* be blessed. The nations may rage and the kingdoms totter, but God utters His voice and the earth melts. The victory will not come without suffering. Perhaps this is what will bind us together most sweetly in the end. May the Lord give us more light and more love as we hope in Him.