CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE LIBERATION OF EVE

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Liberal Studies

By

Jennifer Emily Sims, B.A.

Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
April 1, 2016
CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE LIBERATION OF EVE

Jennifer Emily Sims, B.A.

MALS Mentor: Theresa Sanders, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Christian Patriarchy is a set of beliefs held by many conservative Christians that outlines gender roles based on a literal interpretation of scripture. These gender roles, also referred to as biblical manhood and biblical womanhood, dictate the hierarchy of authority where Christ is the head of the household, the husband is the head of the wife. Children are primed at a very young age to demonstrate the tenets of biblical manhood and biblical womanhood, but for young girls, their paths are strictly laid out for them to marry, birth many Godly children, and serve their husbands. The fundamentalist reading of Genesis 2-3 is used to justify female submission via Eve’s creation and subsequent role in the Fall of Humanity. This evangelical interpretation uses Genesis 2-3 as the foundational text to first justify women as subordinate based on creation order, and secondly justify women’s submission on Eve’s role in the Fall of Humanity. By using biblical interpretations to subordinate the woman’s position vis-à-vis her husband, women in these conservative Christian homes are locked into this role with little chance to follow a different path, and are often dependent on a dominant male figure for survival.

This thesis shall first give a background of Christian Patriarchy as well as the Quiverfull movement. Next I explore the world of young girls who escaped the movement, and their individual stories of Patriarchy. Lastly, I will assert that women can be religious and equal
based on an alternative reading of the central biblical texts, Genesis 2-3. Biblical text referenced herein will be from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) as well as the King James Version (KJV).
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this special opportunity to thank a few of the people without whom this project would never have been possible.

First to my mentor, Dr. Theresa Sanders, who has patiently guided me into shaping this thesis chapter by chapter. Thank you for believing in my topic, and believing that I could do it justice, especially when I doubted my own ideas and direction.

Second to my parents, Richard and Sheena Sims, who supported my studies, both by their generous financial backing, as well as for their encouragement, babysitting, and quiet writing areas. I love you both so much, and I am so grateful for all you have done.

Next I would like to thank my dear friend, Sarah Eileen Bezanson. Thank you for your unmatched enthusiasm for my project, for your feedback, and for keeping me motivated. You are a true friend, and an even better academic cheerleader.

Last but not least, I want to thank my loving husband, Robert John Adkins, for enduring the late nights, and late night feedings, while I went to classes, read or wrote. Thank you for believing in me, for cheering me on with every milestone, and for the look of pride in your eyes. I love you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE DAUGHTERS OF EVE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE SUBMISSION OF EVE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3: CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE ESCAPED DAUGHTERS OF EVE</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4: CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE LIBERATED DAUGHTERS OF EVE</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY:</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The Holy Bible consists of history, literature, poetry, laws, oral tradition and lore - all of this beautifully woven together serves as an anthology of an ancient people. For conservative Christians, this anthology serves as a guide to living a Godly life, and interpreted as the timeless and inerrant word of God. Christian Fundamentalism emerged in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries in North America consisting of conservative Protestant denominations that “yearned deeply to identify and reaffirm the true and original meaning of Christianity.”¹ In Conservative Christian interpretations, the Bible is read as timeless and inerrant, and its teachings and wisdom digested literally. Christian Fundamentalism views ancient scripture through a patriarchal lens, interpreting the text to provide biblical justification for placing men in roles of authority and wives and daughters in dependent submissive positions.

In conservative evangelical interpretation, the stories of Creation and the Fall of Humanity, (GEN 2-3), are instrumental in forming the basis for biblical gender roles. As this interpretation holds that the first wife, Eve, is created as a “helpmeet” for her husband, wives in these very conservative circles are trained at a very young age to fulfill this Godly expectation. Further, conservative readings blame Eve for the Fall of Humanity, and as a result recognize men as having authority over women. This authoritative structure of male headship and female submission is at the heart of biblical manhood and biblical womanhood. This adherence to very conservative biblical interpretations of male female relations is Christian Patriarchy.

In this paper I will demonstrate that the scripture can be read through both a literal and a feminist lens simultaneously. First I will give some background into Christian Patriarchy, Biblical Manhood and Biblical Womanhood as well as the Quiverfull movement, a contemporary fundamentalist Christian group dedicated to rearing large families of Godly children, to illustrate the inner workings of the hierarchy of authority. Next, I will focus in on the woman’s position specifically within Patriarchy in the context of male headship and female submission. I will then give a view into personal stories of some young women who grew up in these conservative Christian homes, and their decision to abandon Biblical Womanhood. Lastly, I will challenge the notion that a literal interpretation of Creation and the Fall of Humanity requires accepting female submission. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be using the terminology of fundamental and evangelical interchangeably, referring to a conservative Protestant theology that is structured and founded by a transparent reading of the Bible. By examining the scripture that has pushed conservative Christian women into submission, I would like to offer all the daughters of Eve an alternate interpretation-one that allows them to have both faith and freedom.
CHAPTER 1
CHRISTIAN PATRIARCHY AND THE DAUGHTERS OF EVE

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her price is far above rubies¹
Prov. 31:10 (KJV)

Though the Bible depicts the value of a wife as being more than that of precious jewels, in a vast number of conservative evangelical Protestant churches across the United States, this value comes at a great price. The virtuous wife must also submit to her husband, dress conservatively to his satisfaction, bear and rear large broods of children, at least six but often more, homeschool all the children, keep the home tidy and clean, and be intimately available to her husband at his whim. She must comply with all the above responsibilities, as well as adhere to strict limitations. She must not work outside the home, she must not attempt to thwart her husband’s authority, she must not attempt to have authority over any man, she must not complain about her lot in life, she must not use any form of birth control. She must submit to her husband in all things. She must leave all final decisions to her husband and not argue. All of the above is to be accepted and executed graciously. Only then can she truly be a virtuous wife. Members of the Patriarchy movement find a model for such a wife in the New Testament, specifically in 1 Peter: 3-6:

Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and by wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing; rather, let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit,

¹ Prov. 31:10, (KJV).
which is very precious in God’s sight. It was in this way long ago that the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by accepting the authority of their husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord.²

Biblical patriarchy, in its simplest terms, refers to the gender roles and the hierarchy of authority prescribed in a very literal reading of the Bible. Much like Sara was to call Abraham “Lord” in the excerpt of 1 Peter above, so too is a wife to look to her husband as her earthly Lord. The hierarchy of the biblical family is where the children submit to their parents, the wife submits to her husband, and the husband submits to Christ – the head of the household.

Kathryn Joyce, a New York City based journalist and author of Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement further describes the woman’s role whereby “These dedicated wives “[bow] down to the headship of their husbands, by laying aside their own ambitions to further the cause of the Lord and his representatives here on Earth...”³ The submissive wife in this construct has dedicated her life to the literal interpretations of biblical womanhood, and in the process gives up her own identity and accepts an identity as an extension of someone else, (e.g. Mark’s wife, Tommy’s mother).

Though this strict authoritarian structure has in the past been more common among fundamentalist churches, there has been a resurgence in the lifestyle even in more mainstream conservative churches, as a return to the biblical family.⁴ “Fundamentalists look at mainstream evangelical churches as having lost their Christian ‘saltiness’” when women are given more

---

² 1 Peter:3-6, (NRSV).


⁴ Ibid., ix.
liberties and are not adhering to the standards they see as critical to biblical womanhood. It would lead one to conclude that for the patriarch of a conservative Christian family, the church and the church community place a great deal of value on his ability to reign in control of both his wife and his family, and further the degree to which he is able to keep order and control. The more he controls, the more she is controlled, and the larger the family -- the bigger the bragging rights.

In the construct of this biblical marriage, the husband has his own set of responsibilities. Husbands are to lead, rule over, and provide for their families. To lead and rule over his family means that it is the husband who bears the responsibility of the final word on any disagreement or decision within his household. He is to be in good standing with the church -- without any indiscretions or actions by him or anyone in his household that could construed as contrary to the church’s accepted norms. His wife is to submit to him, and submit to his final decision in all things. In fact, those within the Patriarchy movement spin this subordinate role as a blessing for a woman to not have to carry the burden of making important and big decisions, and they say they are fortunate to not have that responsibility. The submissive wife must constantly remind herself of her husband’s headship and responsibility especially when he errs in favor of his authority rather than the calm counsel of his wife. She must train herself to remember her role as the “[s]ubmissive [wife] following the leadership of [her] patriarch [husband], working at home to educate their children and support [her] husband through his

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}} \text{Ibid., xi.} \]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}} \text{Ibid., 53.} \]
work, rest, and ministry, and ‘dying to the self’ – a Christ like self-abnegation and acceptance of God’s plan for [her] role... as helpmeet to [her] husband.”

The responsibilities for each of the biblical gender roles are far from equal. The husband is never questioned in the home, and in fact his wife is instructed by the fundamentalist community to follow him as her Earthly Lord, regardless of her own opinions as to whether he is in the wrong. She must accept his decisions and their consequences even if she both knows better and can execute them better herself. This is especially handy for a more simple minded man, knowing there will be no conflict, as he has the last word, as a woman is naturally less likely to question the motives of a smart, diligent leader. She is instructed to be meek, and submissive to his every whim. It is easy to see how these roles are completely unequal in heft. When scanning through the expectations of biblical womanhood and biblical manhood, the expectations are disproportionately weighted on the wife.

Though she is expected to be the second in command, she is still responsible for so much more than fifty percent. She is keeper of the home, the children, the garden, the education, the church activities, the meals, the cleaning, and all with a smile and usually pregnant or nursing. This includes his physical needs. Whatever the husband’s desire, it is his wife’s duty to meet it, and this includes intimacy. “A submissive wife understands that she owes her husband enough sex to satiate his appetite so that he is not tempted by another woman. In this way, a woman withholding sex from her husband is not only defrauding him of

\[7\text{Ibid., 11.}\]
that which is rightfully his but inducing him to sin."\(^8\) The blame for any wrongdoing on the part of the husband is then automatically shifted to the wife. If she does not keep up her obligations, then, in essence, she is pushing him to not keep up with his own.

It is when she is unable to meet the very high expectations that trouble boils over, not only in the household, but in the church as well. The fundamentalist evangelical church views a man’s position in the home as an important marker to his ability to lead in the church. If he is unable to keep order in his home, (e.g. his wife and children in line per the biblical hierarchy), then he is not fit to hold a position of authority in the church. When the church questions the husband’s leadership, or the biblical manhood/womanhood of the couple, and finds it not up to the church’s standards, this will often lead to shunning of the couple and/or the family. More often than not, however, the majority of the humiliation lies on the wife.

Per Joyce’s research, “Approximately 15 percent of evangelical churches practice church discipline, frequently involving the public disclosure of congregants’ confessions that were given under the assumption of privacy... [they are often] shunned [publically] for misdeeds ranging from drunkenness, adultery, refusal to honor church elders, gossiping and sowing disharmony ... [but the women] have a much longer list.”\(^9\) Women in the church are outcast easily for not keeping with any of the responsibilities laid out for them as a biblical wife. This focus on woman-shaming can extend even to victim-blaming in situations of conjugal violence. Responsibility is shifted onto the victim for ‘asking for it’ and away from her culpable assailant. Husband beat you? You must have provoked him with your nagging tone and not respected his

\(^8\) Ibid., 54.

\(^9\) Ibid., 211-212.
authority. Husband cheated on you? You must not have made yourself available or attractive to him. No woman is immune to this shaming and the most respected in the church community, even the pastor’s wife, can be affected.

Joyce describes a Seattle megachurch Pastor Ted Haggard who was unfaithful to his much respected wife Gayle. A fellow pastor was quoted:

It is not uncommon to meet pastors’ wives who really let themselves go; they sometimes feel that because their husband is a pastor, he is therefore trapped into fidelity, which gives them cause for laziness. A wife who lets herself go and is not sexually available to her husband in the ways that the Song of Songs is so frank about is not responsible for her husband’s sin, but she may not be helping him either.10

What this really means, is though the wife has her long list of duties, including being available to her husband to fulfill his needs, she must also ensure she is flawless, even if she has borne half a dozen children and is exhausted from her endless tasks prescribed to her by her faith. Further, by saying that a pastor would be “trapped into fidelity” just by virtue of his position in the church contradicts the marriage vows themselves, and to be words spoken by a fellow pastor proves exceptionally problematic. Both husband and wife vow their eternal fidelity to one another when they decide to become a union via marriage. In this example, his fidelity is contingent on whether he feels his wife is to his liking – this loophole, of course, is absent in the wedding vows. Since she was altered, in this case by weight, then he did not desire her, and therefore who can blame him for looking elsewhere? Had the shoe been on the other foot, however, she would have been labeled a “Jezebel” and pushed out of the community. I shudder to imagine what would happen had she been in a disfiguring accident or disabled. It is

10 Ibid., xxi, emphasis mine.
hypocrisy at its finest, and is widespread throughout the conservative Christian evangelical communities.

It is a true testament to the adage of “stand by your man” when he has wronged you and you are determined to cling on to your wifely vows and view indiscretion as a test from God. Realistically, what choice does any wronged wife have in this community? She is dependent on her husband, has no marketable skills, as she has dedicated herself to housewifery, and since she went directly from her father’s house to her husband’s house, she is also without higher education. Once she is in the thick of the patriarchy movement, she is essentially there to stay. Though it is not impossible to break free from the church and the bonds of the patriarchy movement, it is uncommon. It is the only community these women have ever known, and since they are thrust into motherhood as such a young age, the responsibility they have to their little ones is of course paramount to their own needs. In most cases, a young girl of 23 is already a mother to at least four children, and by age 40, she is chasing her young children along with her grandchildren.

But there are times when the situation becomes much more precarious. For some of the husbands who quote the scripture that their wives must submit to them, they take it to the point of violence. These women are terrified. Who will help them? Who will listen? She is taught that she is likely responsible for her husband’s sin. Joyce writes of advice many of these women receive from pastors, and how rather than combatting the assailant, women are counseled to be that much more biblical, as she is to follow her role:

A Bible believing woman very likely wants to be in the will of God. I needed to know what His will was for me. But if they receive the advice that His will is for her to submit,
that’s dangerous. In some cases they’ll tell her she can’t leave at all, though that’s rare. They’ll tell her, ‘If you walk away, you’ll be sinning, and if you remarry, you’ll be committing adultery. Most often they’ll tell her to leave until the pressure is off, then to go back home. But everyone with a lick of sense knows that, in a violent marriage, the heat is never really off. Everything can be fine one moment, and the next minute, you’re dead.\textsuperscript{11}

As so many of these women grew up in a culture of submission, and were taught submission and were to live submissively, they knew no differently. If they truly believed that their own actions, veering away from what they were taught, were the cause of the abuse, then to them there was no other choice than to submit better – whatever that meant. Women in the community are dissuaded from talking about their woes, as this is also laid out very explicitly in their duties – to not speak ill of their husband or their lot in life. Joyce writes about Wife Training Manuals, as if women were some kind of animal in need of domestication. In her example, a woman writes in, looking for advice and solidarity, about her husband who spends way too much time in front of the television. I think this is a very relatable topic to anyone. But the manual’s answer says it all:

\begin{quote}
A woman who writes to complain that her husband’s TV watching is exposing the family to bad influences is warned that the social circle for divorced women [because she is complaining so he will leave her] with children is painfully small and that the job they’ll be forced to take will leave the kids in the hands of a fornicating baby-sitter. Other single mothers end up with bad haircuts and cheap clothes, pooling resources for other divorced mothers and becoming lesbians; they live in fear of eviction and violence from their exes and are only courted by men to aim to molest their children. When they get breast cancer [God is punishing you further!], there will be no one around to care for them, and it’s all because they got high and mighty about the TV. “Listen to me, young mother, don’t play the fool. You don’t know how bad it can get.”\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 78.
\end{flushright}
This type of sharp tongued response to a woman merely seeking advice on a rather benign topic sheds light on how fear is used as the tool to keep a woman in submission: Fear of God, and in this example, fear of the destruction of her family. To keep her family intact, she must continue to submit, and again, not complain about her lot in life. Ever.

So why is it so crucial that women submit, and that men lead the way? The answer lies in various verses of scripture starting of course with the story of Eve. As evangelical fundamentalists interpret scripture literally, the creation story serves as the foundation of defining the biblical family as man and helpmeet.

Fundamentalist evangelicals interpret the bible as the inerrant and the infallible word of God\textsuperscript{13}, and this dispensationalism, as it is called, is an all or nothing approach to scripture. Dispensationalism at a very high level is a 2000 year old hermeneutic that goes hand in hand with evangelicalism and consists of five distinctive markers: a commitment to Evangelical doctrine, a commitment to a literal Biblical hermeneutic, recognition of the importance of the Church and Israel, an expectation of the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture and an emphasis on apocalyptic and millennial expectation.\textsuperscript{14} Distilled down to its simplest terms: The bible is literal and infallible. Follow its directives and you will be saved. Christ will return in the Rapture and you will be within His chosen ones. To a fundamentalist reader of the scripture, “[They] must choose between two unavoidable options: either the bible is affirmed as the inerrant and infallible word of God, and thus presents a comprehensive vision of true humanity

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 16.

in both unity and diversity, OR [they] must claim that the Bible is, to one extent or another, compromised and warped by a patriarchal and male-dominated bias that must be overcome in the name of humanity. For biblical traditionalists – the choice is clear.”

This evangelical literal interpretation that supports the practice and structure of patriarchy begins in Genesis 2. Genesis 2 describes the creation of flora, fauna and of humanity. In the Genesis story, Adam came first and Eve was created second, from Adam, as his helper. Patriarchy members see Adam as dominant and Eve as subordinate. This biblical creation order, where Adam was created first and given dominion over the animals before the creation of Eve, is the foundation for patriarchy. “[T]he first created human, Adam, has authority – demonstrated by God’s choosing him to name the animals and to in fact name Eve when she was taken from his side to be his servant and companion.”

Simply by his dominion, by the task of naming creation, this fundamentalist interpretation places Eve in a subordinate position. So, if from the start Eve’s role is read as a servant to her partner, then interpreting all daughters of Eve, all women, as servants falls right into place.

The creation story sets the foundation, but it is the story of the Fall that reinforces it. The fall of humanity in Genesis 3 depicts Adam and his wife, Eve, falling to temptation and ultimately disobeying the orders of God. The result of this disobedience is an expulsion from paradise, Eden, into the modern world where there is suffering and death. The fundamentalist

---

15 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 16.

16 Ibid., 49. Italics mine.
interpretation of the temptation leading to the Fall of humanity places the blame on Eve. In this view, Eve was easily convinced to sin and took Adam with her. As a result, not only should she be punished, but she should also accept the secondary role she was meant to have vis-a-vis her husband. “[T]he fundamentalist and evangelical church understood one of the lessons of the Fall to be that women ... were more easily deceived than men, and that therefore they should not be entrusted with overmuch authority.”\(^{17}\) This interpretation depends on Eve’s culpability in the Fall, and further depends on a reading that Adam was not easily deceived. So Eve/woman was created second to be a “servant” is not to be entrusted with too much authority as she is easily deceived, and therefore to safeguard everyone, it is best that the husband lead, and the wife follow. One of the tasks a woman adhering to biblical womanhood must remember is that she must resist the urge to disobey, the urge to take charge. After all, through a fundamentalist lens, look where it landed Eve, and because of her, all of humanity. So within the interpretation of woman as servant, she must remember her place at all times.

As a woman is expected to tend to the home, tend to children, and not work outside of the home, any deviation from this path would lead to an erosion of the biblical family unit. This sentiment is also shared by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBWM). This counsel is an organization founded in 1987 “with the goal of fighting feminist or egalitarian influences in the evangelical church.”\(^{18}\) The CBMW “sought to make marriages look like a return to well-ordered harmony, like an advertisement for the church... [and in doing so made it very clear that] ambivalence towards motherhood and homemaking...female church

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 50.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 13.
leadership...legitimacy for illicit sexual relationships, [anything that jeopardizes or contradicts scripture would make] theology too confusing for ‘ordinary people’ who depend on the Bible’s literalism for direction.” This is a strong statement, and I would argue rather insulting to parishioners, as it assumes them unable to decide or think for themselves and be completely dependent on a church to instruct them on all aspects of their public and private lives. But this too is an example of control. Control of conduct, control of thought, and by all means a tether on personal freedom. In some denominations of Evangelical churches women are also barred from speaking at all.

Looking from the outside in, there is an obvious element of fear from those in charge – fear of revolution, fear of feminism, and fear of secularism. The church instills rules and modes of conduct, specifically to women by not allowing them to voice their opinion, move freely, control their bodies, or exercise free will. These restrictions in turn give the husband/church/community more control. With this control, it is far less likely to have conflict or disagreements. But the biggest fight is to sustain this across the generations that will keep these strict guidelines in place. The biblically faithful against the secular world, a war if you will. To do this requires an army. To gain an army requires a large faithful family. Those children must be trained to fight the spiritual fight of their fathers. To accomplish this tall order, these families in the Patriarchy movement pray for large families, and accept every child as a blessing from God. Filling the family’s quiver with arrows for the fight. These are the Quiverfull warriors.

\[19\] Ibid., 14.
Quiverfull is a word-of-mouth movement that can be traced back to conservative Protestant critiques of contraception. The Quiverfull belief system takes its name from Psalm 127: “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.” The scripture describes that a family of sons is the pride of a father, and each of these sons is like an arrow to fill his quiver in battle. So, to accommodate this, this word of mouth movement explicitly rejects all forms of birth control. Quiverfull families happily accept all children as blessings from God, and as their “warriors” to fight the battles of contraception, women’s careers, abortion, divorce, homosexuality and child abuse...in that order. The daughters in his quiver are future mothers of God’s army. They are primed from a very young age to be wives and mothers to large families like their mothers before them. Quiverfull parents try to have upwards of six children: many have more. They homeschool their families, attend fundamentalist churches and follow biblical guidelines of male headship. It is a very “father knows best” hierarchy counterbalanced by female submissiveness. The Quiverfull believe that a woman’s womb is only open and closed by God, and God will decide the number of children that will bless a family. As a result, these families are strictly against any form of birth control, even natural rhythm methods, because birth

---


21 Psalm 127:3-5, (NRSV) italics mine.

22 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 135.

23 Ibid., 135.

24 Ibid., 134.
control in all forms goes against God and God’s wishes for procreation. Quiverfull families look to three main biblical passages to support their strict stance against contraception of all kinds: Psalm 127 praising a full quiver; the Genesis command to “be fruitful and multiply;” and the biblical story of Onan, slain by God for spilling his seed on the ground.  

For a woman to attempt to control her own body, as in the case of birth control, is considered a seizure of divine power, as her body is the Temple of the Lord, not hers. Not only is her husband controlling her, but the church is further controlling her, removing even her own self as her own, and instituting required limitations. She must submit to her husband sexually at his whim, she must accept every child that results, and there is nothing the church will let her do about it. If a woman feels she is not fit to be a mother, perhaps physically unable to do so, then she had best marry Christ. If she cannot be a fruitful mother, providing arrows for the battle, then in this community she is not fit for a husband.

For many Quiverfull mothers, the number of children they bear directly correlates with how dedicated and Godly they are. For those who are not blessed with as large families, there is a sense of failure personally a sense of pity from the patriarchy community at large. “The women ultimately shame each other...who has the most babies, or arrows.” Not only who has produced the most arrows, but this would extend to who has best schooled those arrows, and of those arrows, which have continued the tradition and reared their own large brood and primed them for war. Though they judge one another harshly, they also require

\[25\text{ Ibid., 146.}\]
\[26\text{ Ibid., 134.}\]
\[27\text{ Ibid., 163.}\]
reinforcements and encouragement to continue their fight. At one point this came in the form of periodicals, but today the internet plays a crucial role for that ever necessary wife to wife support, especially when living in an age when the secular world is all around you.

There are a number of online resources for the biblical family to find support, advice, and relevant materials. Two of these resources are websites: quiverfull.com and aboverubies.org. On both of these sites, users can find solidarity on a myriad of topics ranging from pregnancy to housekeeping to homeschooling.

Upon opening the website for Quiverfull.com, you are greeting with a picture of a beautiful baby flanked by the writing of Psalm 127:3-5 scripture, and beneath it displaying an additional five translations of the same biblical text. It welcomes you to look around their large showcase of Books and Resources as well as articles. It conveniently houses a Due Date Calculator to the upper right of the website, a little added help for the mother to be. When you click on “About Us,” Quiverfull.com showcases a dedicated Quiverfull family, all dressed in denim and white sitting on their property with large toothy smiles. This is the Bortel family, Dave and Suzanne.28 There is a lot of media on this site, as one can see clicking on the link for articles, but the articles are collected from around the web, and are posted because of their relevance to the Quiverfull agenda. It is not an explicit site touting patriarchy per se, but there are various oblique references by virtue of the authors and publications posted.

Colin and Nancy Campbell created Above Rubies magazine that is now an easily accessible website. The site, with its bright and cheery colors, has a banner across the top with

the mission “Encouraging Women in their calling as wives, mothers, and homemakers.” There is absolutely no doubt when looking at Above Rubies that this is a very dedicated site to both patriarchy as well as the biblical gender roles it espouses. Nancy writes prolifically on the site in support of the patriarchy community. Among the articles are also “encouragements” for both men and women. A recurring theme is “facing the fight.” Those in the fundamentalist circles are “fighting” for their faith and their way of life. Nancy writes about pregnancy, and having faith in God that your needs will be met once the bundle of joy has arrived. She writes in response to the exhausted mothers with her own stories of when she was in her younger years, caring for her large brood, and would have a moment of despair. She described washing dishes and seeing the scripture purposefully opened to passages that gave her strength and stamina and how that got her through the tough moments and changed her perspective. Her readers look to her for the same type of encouragement.

What is also interesting is that her husband, Colin, contributes content to the site, directing his efforts towards to the biblical heads of the household. His featured articles are themed on ‘fighting the good fight’ as Christian warriors for God, fighting the powers of darkness. Colin quotes scripture:

To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord.

---


31 Psalm 149:7-9, (KJV).
Though the context seems warrior-like, ultimately what Colin is asking the men of the community to do is to pray. That the heads of households are to keep the faith and pray.

Nancy is very outspoken when it comes to feminism and how it is a threat to the biblical way of life — the proper way of life. She was quoted as saying “[e]ncouraging women to not ever come into any submission to a man, and to do their own thing, and to have a career and put their children in day care, and to get out and be themselves … all that … sounds very wonderful, but it doesn’t work in the long run. It only brings heartache, the weakening of the family…”  

Per Nancy, “Nancy Campbell: What were [we] training for? For war! We cannot live with our head in the sand. We are in a war. Our children must be trained for battle. They must be trained to stand and fight against the enemy of their souls. They must be trained to be warriors for God.”

To train for this way, the children of these large families must waste no time. Just as there are resources to help the submissive mother in her duties, there are many resources to help that same mother in her homeschooling duties. Secular schools and secular agendas just will not do: we are at war and we need a battle plan!

---

32 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 49.
33 Ibid., 158.
Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.¹

Ephesians 5:22-24(KJV)

The central and foundational argument for the patriarchy movement lies in the order of creation. In the evangelical tradition, as Adam was created first and Eve created second to be his helper, thus Eve was subordinate to Adam even before sin was introduced with the Fall of humanity. In this way, the gender roles were set in stone; no one could argue that the Cross of Christ erased the curse of Eve, as her role of “helpmeet” was God’s plan all along, and not part of a punishment. Just as Paul’s letter to Titus outlines the requirements of godliness and wifely submission, the instruction is succinctly summarized in Ephesians 5:22-24, “[pointing] to Eve’s creation as helpmeet as proof that submission was part of God’s plan [from the beginning]... [and] failure to submit to God’s appointed authority, the husband, is a failure to submit to God.”² As such, much of the burden for a husband to seek favor in the eyes of God rests on his wife, raising him up. Though the wife and her godly actions reflect well on her husband, she is not commended for her actions and commitment. It is her duty, and her inability to submit would render her an unfit wife/helpmeet in the eyes of God and the church.

¹ Ephesians 5:22-24(KJV).
² Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 50-51.
This creation order is also loosely analogous to a military rank order. In the military there are ranks, and there are those who occupy certain ranks to keep order. Their subordinates are not silent, but do not have decision making authority. As per the tenets of evangelical biblical womanhood, the wife can voice an opinion, and offer her ideas and concerns, but she does not have the authority of a final decision. This structure allows operations to run smoothly and minimizes conflict. Oftentimes, those defending the gender roles on the Christian home will use this analogy, where the husband outranks the wife. The major difference between the Patriarchal Christian home and the military in this example, however, is that in the military one may move up in the ranks, regardless of gender. In an evangelical patriarchal home, rank is primarily defined by your chromosomes, and secondly by your marital status.

A good biblical wife is expected to be very selfless, putting the needs of everyone else well before her own. As a homemaker she must ensure the home is clean, the family is fed, the children have done their chores, the schooling is properly delivered, etc. In Maxine Hancock’s 1975 bestselling Christian book *Love, Honor and Be Free*, she outlines her interpretation of female submission within the construct of biblical gender roles. While she published this work before the age of the Internet, her work reached a very wide audience, right in the midst of the feminist movement. It was a very important publication in the Christian evangelical community as an anti-feminist response. Hancock’s response is part of the early patriarchy movement – an egalitarian take on gender roles.

Hancock begins her thesis that, “The Christian woman does not look at the world center-ing on the big ‘I’. She knows that serving herself can bring only disappointment and
frustration to herself and damage to others.” Hancock is not explicitly clear on the type of damage, but I would argue she is referring to a breakdown of the family unit in the absence of the biblical roles as wives and mothers set forth by God for women. This declarative statement sets the stage that women are to hold their heads high, and forget about their own needs and wants, just as God intended for them.

She continues with what she calls “Mutual Submission”, and that it is the “inherent idea of each partner trying to make the other happy…as a principle upon which individual competencies can be recognized, regardless of which partner has the expertise.” As she explains it, mutual submission really comes down to a mutual respect for one another and each other’s strengths. She says that nowhere in scripture does it read that husbands should rule their wives, but rather that the wives should submit to their husbands. From a strictly binary standpoint, however, two parties submitting to each other equates to no submission at all. Without a dominant party, how can there be a submissive one – this picture she illustrates looks more like an egalitarian partnership than it does a submissive wife. Yet, even though Hancock’s explanation of biblical submission at the height of second wave feminism highlights a respectful relationship between man and wife where each considered each other’s strengths - the landscape is different in the evangelical view of submission today.

---

3 Maxine Hancock, Love, Honor and Be Free (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), 11.

4 Ibid., 18-19.

5 Ibid., 22.
Unlike the picture painted by Hancock in the mid-1970s, the gender roles in the Patriarchy movement focus on ensuring the wife know her place, and that she not forget who is in charge, as reference in the ubiquitous Pauline scripture, in Paul’s letter to Titus:

Likewise tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.\textsuperscript{6}

These “instructions for women” are intended to be God’s instructions, and it is for the older generations to continue to mold and guide the younger to be the godly and submissive women they are expected to be. Per the evangelical interpretation, to “love their husbands” is to anticipate their needs and desires. To “love their children” on the other hand is to care and guide them. To be “self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind” is to be frugal, manage their domain with kindness. Lastly “being submissive to their husbands, so that the work of God may not be discredited” indicates that it is imperative that the husband have the last word on decisions, that only the husband may be trusted with this task, as again per the evangelical view of Genesis, Eve could not be trusted and therefore neither may the wives. If this is broken, then the “word of God” is “discredited”. These Pauline letters reflect the same subordinate position of Eve that we see elsewhere in evangelical interpretations of scripture.

In order for women to submit to their husbands, they need to learn how to submit, just as a child needs to learn that the stove is hot or the knife is sharp. For those coming from a fundamentalist reading of gender roles, that means counseling women on the theology of

\textsuperscript{6} 2 Titus: 3-5, (NRSV).
headship and submission. This training starts at a very young age, whereby families train their daughters in the ways of wifehood and motherhood. This can also include keeping women in the private domain and away from colleges and universities—keeping her innocent and “trainable” rather than risk her proverbially eating from the apple again and opening her eyes. This is why higher education outside the home and watchful eye of the family is frowned upon. I would argue that, in reality, it is the fear of allowing her the choice to follow her own path, and the fear that her original guidance and training will not hold up when given a sea of options and viewpoints. This sea of options would include for example allowing her to choose housewifery and motherhood, or a career. The myriad of viewpoints would inevitably clash with the strict conservative teachings at home and church. As a result, many in the evangelical Patriarchy movement refer to college as “brainwashing,” but it leads one to question who is brainwashing whom.

The now defunct Vision Forum ministries guided young men and women to find their path to biblical manhood and womanhood through their extensive catalogue of biblically inspired products and guides for Christian families. Their products for children are gender-specific with a “All American Boy’s Adventure” and “Beautiful Girlhood” collections. These collections of gender specific products strive to instruct young men and women on how to behave as godly young men and women (and certainly this behavior was not the same for both). The “Beautiful Girlhood” collection shows young girls the virtues and skills of homemaking, cooking, sewing. Young boys are instructed in camping and survival training in

---

7 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 56.

8 Though the Vision Forum Ministries, www.visionforumministries.org, closed due to scandal in 2013, the publications are still available.
their “All American Boy” collection to instill a “sense of nobility and obligation to protect and lead the women in his life.”

Using these tools, children from a very tender age grow up to understand their roles, their limitations, their separation and their expectations vis-à-vis gender and later to apply these lessons in their marriages, just as they witness with their own parents.

In fact, Vision Forum explicitly dictates that followers not send their children to secular schools, as children are susceptible to being swayed from the “Christian” way. Per their “Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy” published on their website:

> Education is not a neutral enterprise. Christian parents must provide their children with a thoroughly Christian education, one that teaches the Bible and a biblical view of God and the world. Christians should not send their children to public schools since education is not a God-ordained function of civil government and since these schools are sub-Christian at best and anti-Christian at worst.

If a Christian woman, therefore, who has grown up in the Patriarchy movement, who was homeschooled, and perfectly groomed to be a wife and mother goes to the University and eats from the proverbial apple, she will then no longer be the godly woman she was trained to be. This is the evangelical fear of the secular; the fear of erasing the controlled, perfect, “Pleasantville” type of environment that the Patriarchy movement needs in order to survive and grow. If a woman still insists on going to University, options are now available where she may leave the nest, but without being exposed to secular ideas that cold challenge earlier teachings about her godly role. At the Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, young

---


ladies may enroll in a Bachelor of Arts Program with a concentration in Homemaking, where the
environment and the curriculum is Christian. The description of the Program reads:

This concentration prepares women to model the characteristics of a Godly woman as
outlined in Scripture. This is done through instructing in homemaking skills, and
developing insights into home and family, while continuing to equip women to
understand and engage the culture of today. This concentration challenges women
both intellectually and practically, equipping them to impact women and families for
Christ.\textsuperscript{11}

In this way, a young lady may have the opportunity to have schooling outside her mother’s
classroom, that is not secular, and that will advance her and further prepare her on the road to
wifehood and motherhood. The curriculum includes classes like Meal Preparation with Lab,
By including the principles of biblical womanhood in the curriculum, the young lady shall also be
well versed in her biblical role as a man’s helpmeet. This includes her duty to submit to her
husband. Scripture contains verses specifying that a wife must submit, but how a wife must
submit is not so explicit. There are varying interpretations and practices, but all of them require
work on her part to do execute it in a way that is effective in her home, and in her life.

The evangelical interpretation of a godly woman is that of a submissive woman, and by
serving her husband she is in turn serving God.\textsuperscript{12} Though the literal interpretation stipulates
that women must submit to their husbands by virtue of their creation order, the gap in the logic
is that they are not born submissive. Daughters and wives are to be trained to properly fill their
roles as helpmeets. For most Christians, the will of humanity is damaged by the Fall and

\textsuperscript{11}The College at Southwestern, 2015, “Academics- Homemaking Concentration,” accessed December 13,
2015, \url{http://college.swbts.edu/academics/degrees/bachelor-of-arts-in-humanities/homemaking-concentration/}.

\textsuperscript{12} Joyce, \textit{Quiverfull: Inside}, 54.
without the grace of God and acceptance of Jesus we are ill-equipped to do good. Evangelical Christians look to the pre-fall creation order to justify male headship, and cement it by claiming that the Cross did not erase the biblical gender roles because this was the divine design before the Fall. I would argue God created man and woman perfectly, and both pre and post Fall man and woman both are rebellious, as they were in the garden when they both decided to eat of the forbidden fruit. As it is part of woman to rebel or to seek her own way, then compelling her submission would therefore be going against God’s divine perfection in the creation of woman. Eve fell to temptation with the free will God gave her. Adam did the same when he chose to disobey as well. God designed them both to think and act for themselves. Yet from an evangelical perspective, her role as helpmeet was defined before the introduction of sin, and she held the culpability for the Fall where she veered away from her originally intended role as helpmeet. As Adam was created from the dust, and Eve was created both from Adam and for Adam, this creation order remains the evangelical foundation for male headship and female submission. Just as the children are socialized and trained, often wives need to ‘be reminded’ of their role and boundaries.

In an excerpt from *Every Woman’s Grace Bible Study* women are instructed on how to properly submit to their husbands. They are warned: “...when a wife is not submissive, not following but resisting, pouting, nagging, crying, wanting her way, whining, and often the husband does give in, there will be disharmony and discordance in the home and his leadership will be undermined.”¹³ This rhetoric is intended as a warning to the wives to remember their place, but the manner in which the Bible study leader communicated it uses pejorative

---

examples usually associated to the natural behavior of children (crying, whining, pouting, etc.). While women are not explicitly compared to children, the use of the same language when speaking to undesirable behaviors from women and children implies that women are prone to respond with the same immaturity as children in their struggles to fulfill their duties as submissive wives. Ultimately, the same behavior a wife should consider to be unacceptable for her children (subordinates) is precisely the behavior she must avoid when addressing her husband (superior). Just as her children must be “trained”, so too must she.

By accepting the myth as a biblical dictation of roles, women are then forced to be cautious and self-conscious of their appearance and comportment in public, and their ability to have any type of public role. Even those women with a talent for affairs outside the home, are trained to deny their talents outside of biblical womanhood, with the exception of a church fundraiser, or church event. This facilitates life for the husband. Having a submissive wife allows him an easier time dictating the workings of their home. As women are taught to submit, even when in full disagreement with their husbands’ decisions, it is easier for the husband to exert his authority. Both parties must adhere to fulfilling their roles in order for this construct to function – husbands must be effective leaders, and wives must effectively follow and support. In cases where a wife does not trust in the leadership of her husband, all she can do is offer a suggestion and then live with the decision he makes. She is a biblical wife. She shall continue to submit to her husband as it is God’s plan for her. She shall suppress her natural will to intervene and voice her opinions, as she was trained to do. The wife who deeply wishes to be godly, but struggles to follow the leadership of her husband must find it within her to carry on, and more often than not, she is not alone.
In an attempt to combat the natural will of a woman to fire back and be sharp-tongued, communities are formed via the internet, where woman can find both solidarity for adhering to their role of helpmeet, as well as training materials for their children to ensure they fulfill their roles as wives, mothers, and teachers to their fullest potential. There is a fascinating array of articles, chat rooms, and blogs available day and night online. These also offer a range of perspectives from the young and single to the newly married and pregnant to the older and more experienced wife and mother. There are also very conservative perspectives and moderately conservative perspectives, all of which espousing the evangelical themes of male headship and wifely submission. Most notably, as there is the shroud of anonymity, those seeking guidance need not worry about church discipline or any type of public shaming when looking at blogs or writing to a website. If walking into your church and sitting in a pastor’s office hoping to get advice is off-putting, then there is help from the comfort of your own home.

The Patriarchy movement is not a bricks and mortar type of movement, with a specific church or congregation, and it depends on the word of mouth advertising of its followers. Large families are often seen together in public to generate that question and answer exchange that is so welcomed by its community. Though the picture of patriarchy is often one that is suggested of a bygone era, (Prairie dresses and dolls for the girls, camping sets for boys, aprons for mom), it is heavily dependent on modern tools like the internet to reach and grow its huge community and to market its products. What seems like a movement based in the past actually exists and flourished in large part with the technology and outreach of the future.
“Quiverfull members [within the Patriarchy movement] (and particularly women) actively engage with modern culture to spread their value system and provide one another with support, largely through the internet.”¹⁴ According to some, not only does the internet provide a tool for creating a larger and broader community, but it also enables those in the movement to bring core concepts like female submission, male headship, and subservience to God into the more contemporary arena.¹⁵ Just as every industry on the planet must evolve to stay current and meaningful, so too must religious movements. What better way to stay current than to take hold of the power of technology. There are a myriad of women who “argue tirelessly for their right to submit and surrender their bodies and lives to their husbands and God, insisting that this is a matter of choice, choosing to live the biblical way.”¹⁶

One couple who has taken the internet by the reigns is Steve and Teri Maxwell. Their website, www.titus2.com is named after the scripture of the same name and is dedicated to encouraging women in their duties of biblical womanhood. The Titus 2 ministries website offers support, encouragement, and products targeted to helping the Christian home and homemaking. Steve and Teri showcase happy photos of themselves and their growing family, now including grandchildren. Their cyber-persona touts the beauty of Patriarchy via their articles and photographs, and gives guidance and solidarity in the struggles of biblical womanhood.


¹⁵Ibid., 51.

Often ministries using Titus 2 scripture as a foundation span “biblical womanhood teachings... [offering feel-good] marriage tips to didactic fundamentalist study groups that actively, and tangibly, punish its wayward women for falling out of line.” Teri Maxwell’s writing showcases her views on female submission offering a very keen insight not only on the practice of bowing to one’s husband, but also the psychology behind it. Unlike Maxine Hancock’s early writing espousing the glory of the biblical gender roles with a more egalitarian version of wifely submission, these blogs offer a much more extreme reading of scripture and a stricter application of modern wifely submission. To accomplish this interpretation of submission, Teri Maxwell offers perspective and tactics for the wife at odds with her own conscience. Per Teri Maxwell, if one learns to frame a negative situation in a positive light, then that situation is no longer negative. In other words, with a concerted effort to train oneself to believe a situation “isn’t so bad”, or even better that it was “meant to be” by God, then the worry and doubt are transferred onto the shoulders of the divine – no longer weighing on the individual conscience.

Throughout the website Teri offers a very positive spin in answering posted letters from subscribers. As the website is intended to encourage, Teri does so consistently, but at the same time very keenly embeds suggestions on actions the woman should take or harkens back to the notion that these (and all) conflicts can be solved through women submitting more fully to their husbands and to God. In some cases, she will re-interpret and spin the issue back to be something the woman did wrong and should work to change. By consistently referring to the scripture of 2 Titus, and what the Pauline scripture outlined for a godly woman, Teri can bring

---

17 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 61.
all the issues/questions she receives from writers back to wifely duty. She can control her own wifely duty. She cannot control the actions of her husband, only her reactions to them.

On the Titus 2 website, www.titus2.com, Teri posted a letter/email she received from a woman who needed guidance to better understand whether a reaction she had to her husband, was biblically sound, or whether she had acted foolishly. The writer starts her inquiry with a disclaimer “I wholeheartedly agree that our husbands have the final say in all matters and they have the right to consult us or not.” Right from the start, the young lady writing in acknowledges that her husband not only makes the decisions, but that she agrees her own input is not necessary As she explained, her husband announced a decision made without her knowledge to the entire family at the same time, and both she and the children reacted strongly. She wrote, “It feels insulting to me that he would tell them and me at the same time.” The writer was clearly struggling with her reaction in the context of her role as biblical wife, a struggle with which Teri Maxwell responded with solidarity. Maxwell, in her response, offered her support in the form of both techniques for submission as well as the self-talk required of the biblical wife to adhere to them.

Teri begins her response showcasing her solidarity: “I write this Mom’s Corner because the area of submission is still a regular battle for me with my flesh.” She later frames how discussions or conflict make the job of submission that much harder: “It is easy to submit when we agree. It is hardly submission at all, is it? The crisis comes when we disagree...my reactions


19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.
show my pride, not my meek and quiet spirit. They are a reflection of my continued selfishness and need to control to get my own way.”

She is using this technique to show she, as a daughter of Eve, is not submissive in nature either and shares with all women the struggle to overcome this nature.

Teri’s coup de grâce, however, comes in the following line: “I see [her] wanting to blame her husband for her sin – trying to make it his fault rather than hers ... I would encourage us to accept our responsibility for our failures and not put the blame elsewhere.” Teri is telling this woman what she often tells herself – that her own emotions are her enemy and she must remember to tame them, she must remember that her husband knows best, and she must never show the discontent as this woman has. The solidarity over the struggles facing a biblical wife suddenly became a finger wag to a submissive party for not having submitted enough. The response continues with a list of scripture, to either inspire or condemn, depending on how one chooses to read it. Most importantly, the quotation from 2 Titus:

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

This ubiquitous piece of Pauline scripture may explicitly outline the expectations of what constitutes a good biblical wife, but it by no means gives instructions on how to execute the behavior. There is no universal interpretation to “Submit to your husband”. The Titus 2 ministry chose a translation that uses “[obey] their own husbands” which would fall in line with

21Ibid.

22 Ibid., my emphasis

23 Titus 2:4-5, (KJV).
the advice she offers this writer. Teri in essence can manipulate the situation, instructing a submissive wife to adjust the lens of the situation she views as unfair to her as a wife and partner, and to reinvent it as a learning opportunity for herself to do better next time. This manipulation in fact becomes a coping mechanism, as she strives to be “that much more” in her role as a biblical wife, which she knows to be a journey. The biblical couple, however, have responsibilities too. What Teri did not do in this response is acknowledge where this young lady’s husband fell short in his duties. She reacted the way she did out of disappointment and surprise – the latter stinging more. All too often these blogs, as we see with Teri, are very focused on the wife putting everyone else first. Though it sounds counter-intuitive, many women seek power through submission. As women in these circles firmly believe submitting to their husband equates to serving Christ, they are therefore committed to learn and perfect themselves in their role. Thankfully, there are many in the same situation, wanting to learn how to be that perfect godly wife. One of the most well-known resources for women in Patriarchy is Nancy Campbell.

On the site www.aboverubies.org, Nancy Campbell posts daily encouragements on biblical womanhood, some that she authors as well as some authored by others who share her views. On the topic of submission, she shared an article about the early days in her marriage. She wanted to start out on the right foot as a biblical wife, and naturally submission was a nebulous area, as it had no exact definition. She writes:

"Wives, submit yourselves unto our own husbands." Colossians 3:18
I was newly married and now, for the first time, this verse applied to me. The only question was; what did it really mean to submit? I asked my husband, Paul, and he told me not to worry about it, that I was doing just fine. I concluded that submission to my
husband was essentially something I would have to work out in my own heart between God and me.\textsuperscript{24}

She shares with the world that as dedicated as she was to her role as helpmeet, she really did not have a barometer for how she was doing in the area of submission. Every other expectation was measurable. One can measure whether one is rearing a large godly family, whether they are homeschooled, whether dinner is prepared, whether the house is clean, whether the family is clothed and shoed, whether the children are properly educated in the home, and whether the husband’s intimate needs are met. Whether the wife properly submits herself unto her husband is not so clear. She offers the following advice to women who when they do not agree with their husbands on a matter: 1. Tell him only once, 2. Be quiet, 3. Pray about it, 4. Watch God work.\textsuperscript{25}

Nancy wants all women to have faith that their husbands will make the right decision, even if it seems wrong at first. The wife need only voice her thoughts once, as the husband receives the message and will consider it in his final decision. This is the embodiment of the “let go and let God” motto used by many to emphasize that there is no need to hold on to the anxiety, that by submitting to your husband, you are serving God.

In another encouragement from August 2011, Nancy posted an original poem titled “I Want a Man, Not a Mouse!” In four short stanzas she sings the praises of being a submissive wife to a strong man. She exclaims that “it was [her] choice to be his wife! … [that she would] be a fool to boss [her] spouse…[and] to love the role God planned for [her]/With joy, makes


\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
In this short piece she drives home the point that living the submissive life God has put out for her is both joyous and fulfilling. It ends on the note that the submission makes her free (a recurring theme). She is not free to divorce, she is not free to work, but she touts her freedom to all who need the encouragement and solidarity. Perhaps the freedom she feels is with the knowledge that she is free to live without the “burden” of the decision-making and heavy-lifting of supporting her family. She does not make it clear in her encouragement what exactly brings her freedom, but in her own interpretation, she feels freedom in submission and shares it again for all who need perspective.

Another post penned by Nancy entitled “What is a Marriage” takes a more scriptural route, describing how the union of man and wife into one flesh is God’s plan. There is a reference to submission in the fourth stanza stating: “What does it take?/Sacrificial love./Yieldedness [sic] and submission. /No longer ‘me’ but ‘you’.” She very explicitly changed the focus from herself to her husband (me to you) rather than shifting the focus from herself to her union (me to us) to flow with the scripture of “one body one flesh.” It is the voice of the submissive wife again rejoicing in her role of husband first. Though she wants to express her marital love and her joy in submitting to her husband, there is a very troubling undertone of having lost herself completely to him. In shifting from herself to her husband exclusively, she speaks to a different level of submission entirely – one in which her identity is defined solely through him.

---


Lastly, a post on aboverubies.org by another writer entitled “What Do You Think?” asks the reader directly (targeting a female reader) if she thinks or feels that her work in the home as wife and mother is insignificant. Work in the home is endless, unpaid and usually unappreciated, so it is a question that resonates with the large population of homemakers within the patriarchy movement. This author extols that the contributions are “uncountable” and have a huge impact to the family. Specifically, she cites how God loves all that she does including “[submission] to His will is of the highest value...He loves how you teach your children His ways. He loves how you meet your husband’s needs....”28 She wants to convey to women who feel lost and trapped in the rut of homemaking understand that their work is appreciated and rewarded by God, not necessarily by those around her. These types of encouragements on the internet multiply daily. There is a need for them -- as there are many women struggling with the tall order of what it means to run a biblical home as a proper wife. Often when there are expectations, there are few accolades. For these women, having some encouragement to feel they matter and are making a difference is a form of therapy. The anonymity of the internet allows even the shyest of wives to seek support from others who struggle with the same issues – from down the street to all over the world. While the anonymity of the internet can provide far reaching and largely private experiences, face-to-face experiences in large venues where women spread the word of biblical womanhood to one another are perhaps even more powerful. This is the story of Priscilla Shirer.

Priscilla Shirer is an evangelical Bible teacher in Dallas, Texas. What sets her apart is that her bible classes go far beyond the basement of the local churches, but fill huge megachurches with women seeking to learn from her. She has published books, recorded videos, and books dozens of speaking engagements a year, “guiding thousands of women through the study of Scripture... in which she stresses that in a biblical home and church, the man is the head and the woman must submit.” Unlike the ladies who offer encouragement and bible study on their websites, Ms. Shirer is out in front of those who need to feel the solidarity of a woman: a woman who is clearly strong and convincing in her message, but who is also preaching biblical tenets of submission to her husband. She says “the messages that I wanted to deliver catered to the feminine heart.” As she speaks there are volunteer “encouragers,” women dressed in special vests available to any of the ladies in attendance who need to cry or pray with someone. This is hardly your typical bible study. The atmosphere is nurturing and safe for women, where they are free to emote as they wish without judgment. All too often, with all the demands made on women in their quest to be biblical, all messages distill down to all they are doing wrong, and how they have to change. In this setting, they are free to simply listen to a message focused on collective community, often from the perspective of Shirer’s personal experiences, rather than one crafted specifically to instruct them personally.

Shirer does not seem like your typical evangelical as she leads this flock, but she too insists she is leading within her limitations. At home while she shares the caregiving duties with

30 Ibid., 54.
her very supportive husband, but she stresses this should not to fool anyone, as she knows he is still the head of the home. She says “If I will follow him as he’s following the Lord, then the responsibility for navigating our family well falls on him, not me … gratefully, I’m married to a husband that [sic] values my opinion and values my ideas.”

Most notably, however, she is not preaching to an audience of men. As it is not permitted in evangelical churches for women to teach men, and since her bible study is women-focused, she is able to work in this capacity without compromising her church’s beliefs. As far as her public speaking career, “in reality, conservative evangelicals turn a blind eye to ‘submitted wives’ who split household duties with their husbands and hire babysitters, as long as they recite the slogans of biblical womanhood.”

The slogan for Shirer, is that Satan is ever-present, and will do everything in his power to tempt women to forget their roles, to forget their duty to submit, and ultimately to usurp their husband’s role. This is a very clear reference to Eve and the introduction of sin, and once again reinforces the evangelical interpretation of Genesis 3.

The threat of Satan equates to the threat of the secular world. Naturally, even godly biblical wives will need to leave the shelter of their Christian homes. Though inciting questions from those outside of the Patriarchy movement are welcomed as opportunities to ultimately spread the word of who they are and what they believe, the secular world also threatens the values and structures of those adhering to biblical belief structures. Seeing women working outside the home, in positions where they lead men, dressing or acting immodestly, all of these

---

31 Ibid., 54.

32 Ibid., 55.

33 Ibid., 54.
are reminders that there are many in the world who do not share these values and beliefs. Resisting temptation at every corner is a battle. Those living an evangelical biblical life, like the Quiverfull, speak of this battle often. “With the curse came the promise. Feminism was, and will finally be, defeated when the Seed crushes the Serpent.”34 These words imply that the threat of feminism will only be banished when there are enough godly children born to the world to defeat its evil. The evil of feminism is a manifestation of Satan. Gather your quivers to fight!

Many are prepared to fight the battle of good and evil to the end, with large families of godly children dedicated to preserving the biblical way of life. For sons, this means preparing for to lead a large family, and providing for that family on one income. For daughters, it is their dedication to bearing and rearing large families, and following their future husbands in their vision and leadership. But the secular world is there, and the secular world opens the doors to a plethora of options never before allowed for a young girl reared in Patriarchy. Is this the apple of feminism? Perhaps the better question is, “is it wrong to have option?” For many young women, leaving the life of Christian Fundamentalism was the only way to see what they truly wanted in their life. They are the escaped daughters of biblical Patriarchy.

34 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 59.
CHAPTER 3

PATRIARCHY AND THE ESCAPED DAUGHTERS OF EVE

Blows that wound cleanse away evil; beatings make clean the innermost parts.¹

Proverbs 20:30 (NRSV)

Living life within the Patriarchy movement is fulfilling and personally rewarding for many women. Many have mastered the skills needed to both fulfill the requirements of their godly role, and provide guidance to other women who still struggle with the tall order of biblical womanhood. For these women there is a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment for serving their family for Christ, and fulfilling the role of helpmeet to their husbands. For those who also choose to subscribe to the Quiverfull movement, there is an additional sense of pride derived from bearing and rearing large families, almost single-handedly, to be future generations dedicated to Christ. For many other women, however, who chose or were forced into the Patriarchy movement, it is daily reminder of what is permissible and what is forbidden – what will bring them praise, and what will bring them punishment. As the hierarchy within the Patriarchy movement puts a woman under her father’s authority until she is married, and then transfers that authority to her husband, she loses her own identity and is an extension of her husband – Joseph’s wife, Joseph’s helpmeet.

Girls growing up in the Patriarchy movement learn at a very young age that they are not equal within the hierarchical structure to their brothers. Older sisters, for example, with growing responsibilities in the home to help their mothers with an ever expanding brood of

¹ PROV 20:30, (NRSV).
children, may only exert limited authority over their younger siblings. In the male dominated hierarchy of Patriarchy, even younger brothers, who are viewed as ‘men-to-be’, will “outrank” their older sisters, thus subjecting them to their authority as well. These young girls eventually blossom into young ladies, and as young teenagers, these young ladies have learned the domestic skills that are required to be both wife and mother – their only acceptable calling. These daughters must follow the domestic path that their parents have prepared them to follow, or take a much more drastic and terrifying path – leave the family and leave the movement. These are the escaped daughters of Patriarchy.

There are never two identical stories from the escaped daughters. Just as dedicated wives in the Patriarchy and Quiverfull movements take to the internet to find both solidarity and encouragement, so too do the escaped daughters. In their very descriptive and personally therapeutic blogs, the reader is introduced to a very individual and visceral experience. Not only are the author’s raw and candid words exposed, but also reactions and commentary from both fellow escaped daughters as well as those outside the movement. To highlight two of these individual experiences, the blogs, “Broken Daughters” and “The Beautiful Girlhood Doll,” demonstrate two very different childhood experiences that ultimately led the authors to their to abandon the lives prescribed to them from birth. The first example is Lisa, a “broken” daughter of Patriarchy.

Lisa begins her story with the tale of how her parents met in a secular high school. As they fell in love, her father “converted” to conservative Christianity, and adapted to the role of Patriarch. As she describes, her “dad ‘converted’ to be a true Christian and they got married [and by this time her] dad was getting more and more into the mindset that a woman’s place is
Her mother, though already a devoutly conservative Christian, also had a turning point reading Mary Pride’s “The Way Home,” which spoke to women about the glory and rewards of the Quiverfull movement. As Lisa describes, her mother wasn’t far away from the Pride mindset, but this book sent her into the fundamentalist corner. Lisa explains that her mother’s first pregnancy solidified her belief that she was on the right path and fulfilling her obligation to fill their quiver with Godly children. But while her mother pursued the idyllic picture painted by Christian Patriarchy, for Lisa, the picture was far from ideal from very early in her life. As the author describes, when she began to fuss as a baby, crying as babies do, her father was convinced by the fundamentalist church that she was possessed by “the Evil One.” She recounts a memory of when she was but a toddler, exploring her surroundings, but in the process broke a number of plates in the fine china drawer. She gives a gut-wrenching account of the resulting punishment—a beating so severe she remembered it as an adult. As her parents believed, “Sin was a child’s nature and you could only get rid of it by beating it out of your kids.” In Lisa’s case, this even applied to the most innocent of children simply attempting to explore their surroundings. These children had to be “trained-up”. The most well-known authority on discipline in the fundamentalist and Quiverfull circles was Michael Pearl.

Michael and his wife Debi, known for their “No Greater Joy” ministry, are a dynamic duo in the Christian Patriarchy circles. Michael authored the very controversial guide entitled To

---


"Train up a Child" that touts the importance of addressing the behaviors of a child early before the need for discipline arises. This guide reads much like a “How To” book on breaking in a wild horse, or house training a new pet, but is focused on a step-by-step training of children beginning shortly after birth to obey and obey the first time. His controversial methods, however, revolve around the use of an implement for frequent and consistent spankings. Michael Pearl effectively resonates with frustrated and tired parents who are interested in addressing bad behavior using what he considers to be biblically mandated uses of the “rod”.

Michael utilizes a number of biblical verses to support his methods, to insist upon his view that that God intended for parents to “switch” their children for their own betterment, for example: “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him,”⁴ and “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die, Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.”⁵ Effectively, Michael ensures that with proper and consistent use of his methods, one can achieve both well behaved as well as godly children, and for those who “advocate rodless training, [they clearly] do not believe the Bible.”⁶

The concept of “Bible-based” punishment is rooted in the notion that babies are born full of sin and must have the sin beaten out of them. As Proverbs 20:30 states, these beating will “cleanse away evil” and, as such, is both necessary and beneficial to parent and child. For the parent it will produce a well behaved child or baby, and for the child it will remove the sin

---

⁴ PROV 22:15, (KJV).
⁵ PROV 23: 13-14, (KJV).
⁶ Michael and Debi Pearl, To Train Up a Child (Pleasantville, TN: 2000), 45.
from their soul. According to the Pearls, “All children seem bent toward evil.”\(^7\) As the fundamentalist reading of the Bible is literal, passages such as Proverbs 10:13, which reads “On the lips of one who has understanding wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of one who lacks sense”\(^8\) illustrates the “training” of a child, who of course doesn’t know any better, with an object such as a rod as both lesson and punishment. The Pearls state in their manual that they do not condone abuse, and that the methods they describe are to be used as training, not discipline. They state in their manual “There are always some that act in the extreme. These individuals could use what has been said about the legitimate use of the rod to justify ongoing brutality to their children...these abusers of their children would not in the least view themselves as such. They would call themselves ‘strong disciplinarians’.”\(^9\) Regardless of whether the Pearl’s training methods seem extreme are barbaric or abusive, for those dedicated to “training up” their child, it is the godly way to parent.

Discipline and punishment are common themes among the children of Quiverfull families, particularly the forms of corporal punishment used to compel children to behave to their mother and father’s satisfaction. Having well behaved children is absolutely crucial to a mother who, on average, was having a baby every year or every year and a half. Unfortunately “Bible-based” methods of discipline are not prescriptive and clear; they subject to interpretation. The following story is that of Lisa, who grew up at the mercy of a “strong

\(^7\) Pearl, To Train Up a Child, 19.

\(^8\) PROV 10:13 (NRSV).

\(^9\) Pearl, To Train Up a Child, 44.
disciplinarian,” how she survived her abuse, and how she ultimately made the choice to escape the Patriarchy movement.

Lisa describes a childhood wrought with physical abuse, oftentimes without warning. As the eldest, she was responsible for her siblings, sometimes acting as a stand-in for their mother, but without the authority to “mother” them. As she describes, “As the oldest girl, I was the one with all the responsibilities, but never the rights...my younger brothers had a sort of authority over me.”

Her younger brothers were men-to-be. While she was under the authority of her father, in his absence that authority transferred to her eldest male sibling.

To illustrate this, she describes a day when she was a young girl, eight years old, out with her siblings in the garden. Though they were playing outside, she was required to wear skirts to adhere to very conservative modesty requirements for girls. She and her sister were enjoying cherries from their cherry tree until they could no longer reach the fruit. She decided, as the oldest and tallest, that she would climb a few branches to reach the cherries on a higher branch. Unfortunately, her skirt caught on a branch, exposing her undergarments. Naturally this was not an intentional move on her part, but her brothers were quick to both yell that she was “immodest” and promptly notify her father. Her father immediately said she would be spanked. When she asked him if her brother, who rushed to “tattle” would be punished as well, as that was also a punishable offense in her home, he responded “[No, he won’t] as he did the right thing, protecting [your] purity and his fellow Christian brothers...Even if he is a boy

---

now, he is still a man-to-be, and that means you are subject to his authority, younger brother or not." What the author does not point out, however, is that if those younger brothers truly wanted to protect her purity and modesty, they would have helped her. Doing the right thing would have been to help their sister, helping her to get down from the tree to help cover her. Instead they chose to show their dominion as men, just as their father chose to punish rather than listen and offer advice.

Lisa continues her story giving a little bit of insight into her furthered estrangement with her father. As the Christian Patriarchy movement will transfer authority over a woman from her father to her husband, her father chose to believe that his married daughters would produce heirs without any relation to him – that they do not pass any genetic information to their children but rather produced children that were only the genetic line of the husband. So, once she married, she would be part of her husband’s family. As her father did not see the girls as “useful” heirs, he insisted they learn useful housewifery skills, so they could be of use to another family. As a result, the daughters did not need a formal education; since their calling was to marry and tend their future husbands and children, there was no need for anything beyond biblical training. Convinced of this and, trying to please her father, Lisa made biblical womanhood her goal. “Maybe I was going to be a good girl after all. Turn out to be a good wife. Be humble and meek.”

Unfortunately, since Lisa was destined to be a wife and mother,

---

11 Ibid.

she didn’t see the value of an education at all. She never finished her high school diploma requirements.

She continues describing a childhood of constant fear. Her father relished his authority and ruled with an iron fist. “We were afraid...we were standing there, quietly smiling, heart beating fast with fear that something might go wrong.” All of this corporal punishment was still based on the belief and teaching of Michael Pearl, that spankings produce happy cheerful children, “Do you comfort your child with the rod? If you have not seen the rod as a comfort to your child, you have missed its purpose.” As Lisa’s father was unpredictable, using corporal punishment on his whim, it produced frightened children, desperate to please their parents, and terrified of a wrong turn. Lisa recalls a father who was out of control, and who used beatings as a way to regain authority and assert his headship over the household. Her father instilled fear as a tactic much as a dictator would in order to retain control. As she described her father, he ruled the house “with a rod in one hand and a whip in another.”

This all took its toll on her mother as well. “He loved being the boss. He loved having a submissive wife - a wife so submissive that she would never disagree with him. Never fight. He

---


14 Pearl, To Train Up a Child, 41.

told her what to do, what to wear, what to say, what to think. She was no person of her own anymore." It is such a powerful statement; such a powerful example for a young girl.

Lisa describes the very strict rules for a young girl who has hit puberty within Christian Patriarchy. To protect her purity, her movement was restricted to the home, shopping with mother, and church, effectively cloistering her. She was not to speak to men outside of the hearing range of her parents, and was expected to remain patient, trusting that both her father and God would find her the appropriate mate. Like nearly all within the Patriarchy movement, Lisa was homeschooled, with very little socialization. A father-sanctioned courtship is what awaited her. As much as she wanted to “free” herself from the grips of her father’s tyrannical behavior, the thought of a husband she didn’t even know terrified her. She knew her future was to be with a man she didn’t know, to whom she was to submit. As she says “You don’t submit to your husband because you love him, you submit to your husband because it’s your duty.” A life of servitude lay before her. She questioned her ability to submit, to choose to love someone out of duty. She started to question her commitment to the Quiverfull movement. Was she capable of homeschooling 15 children? “What would God say if I didn’t produce perfect warriors?”

___________________________

16 Ibid.


In this courtship experience, the author found a kindred spirit in her potential future husband’s sister. As she had virtually no contact with any girls her own age growing up, she tolerated the courtship thinking at the very least she would have a sister-in-law that would fill the void she felt all her life for a friend. She describes how she had absolutely no idea how to behave around a young suitor, trying to be the “perfect wife” with only her mother as an example. But this courtship was completely controlled by her father. Though she was to be married, she had little interaction with the groom-to-be. Her father was determined to control everything, down to the second she were “given away.” Reminiscent of course of the ancient practice in biblical times, it was very apparent that his daughter was property and this was a business transaction.

As she was to be married, suddenly her relationship with her mother changed. She describes being treated as an apprentice, learning the ins and outs of housewifery. In an effort to teach her proper sewing techniques, which her mother never fully mastered, Lisa was sent to the home of a woman who attended their church. This encounter would change her forever.

For the first time, Lisa was exposed to an egalitarian marriage. She saw a husband and wife who adored each other and had only one child. They were happy. They were fun. She was both fascinated and confused. “Her marriage seemed so happy to me, almost surreal...for me a wife had to be a dutiful servant, having dinner ready and being submissive and obedient,”\(^\text{19}\) and here was a husband doing the cooking and helping with the housekeeping. As

Lisa was cloistered by her father, so as to be under his control, she was unaware of any life other than the subservient one she was handed. Her courtship felt like a sentencing- a sentencing to a life of servitude without the possibility for parole.

In the Patriarchy movement, there is no greater threat than to become “worldly.” She describes her fears of leaving as “I have heard of daughters leaving many times but I actually never knew one...I didn’t want to know them anyway, they were ungodly sluts for me, rejecting the Lord and salvation, rejecting everything I so strongly believed in.” The description of these “worldly” escaped daughters is riddled with othering, an unfortunately common rhetoric in biblical Patriarchy used to describe any woman who is not “like us.” The overtly negative descriptions of these women serve to warn daughters against associating with those outside the faith as well as to remind them to heed willingly to the control of their husbands and fathers. Having known only this powerful rhetoric and a life of having her social and educational worlds controlled by her father, Lisa had never before going against his will. Now, with the happy couple right in front of her eyes, she knew her future did not have to be what her father prescribed. This is when she started questioning the fundamental beliefs of her faith for the first time. Her own right to ask such questions had never before had never before been a consideration. She had been taught that, as a daughter of Eve you are punished; you were less than Adam and were created only for him, as his helper. She wondered how could

---


51
“God...allow a soul to be born into such a miserable state...?”\textsuperscript{21} Having this ingrained in her from her earliest years the belief that she was less than a man, she had never been allowed to question what your father instructed. Her future became more and more telling. As she feared “Once I was married, there was no way out anymore. I’d have to be obedient to my husband.”\textsuperscript{22}

This is the moment that Lisa’s eyes opened to the world...her family’s biggest fear. She started to see the “wrong” in the Patriarchy movement. If she stayed she’d “never be allowed to consider whether there’s life of other planets, or if the big bang is true- never be allowed to think that humans and dinosaurs didn’t meet.”\textsuperscript{23} Her world was crashing. But she also had no education, no contingency plan. Ultimately, Lisa refused to move forward with the arranged marriage. She said no. She stood up for herself. Lisa left both the family and the movement.

But not every escaped daughter’s story begins with a tale of a terrifying childhood. In fact, there were some who had idyllic memories, and loved their biblical girlhood. One such example is the story of Libby Anne who wrote her story in “A Beautiful Girlhood Doll.” Libby Anne introduces her story with the distinction that her parents started out as “fairly ordinary evangelicals” and then goes into detail of a transformation. As Libby Anne defines it, “ordinary”


\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}
evangelicals are much more moderate, where women often work outside the home, and children are often educated in secular schools rather than homeschooled.

The transformation into Christian fundamentalism and Patriarchy happened with the introduction of “To Train up a Child” by Michael and Debi Pearl. For Libby Anne, though her mother and father employed the Pearls’ discipline techniques, it wasn’t to the point of trauma. While her mother was an enthusiastic promoter, handing out copies of the material to other families saying it was “the best book on child rearing they would ever read,”\(^{24}\) Libby Anne does not describe their discipline as abusive. She recalls being “switched for any disobedience and trained to do exactly as told”\(^{25}\) but it is a passing mention. The recollections she shared are generally of a happy childhood in a loving family.

Though she has bright memories of her childhood, she also describes the Pearl methods of child “training.” As she explained, rather than baby-proofing a house, they would “house-proof the baby.” “By placing a forbidden object within reach of the children, then enforcing your command to not touch it, every time the children pass the ‘No-No’ object, they are gaining knowledge of good and evil from the standpoint of an overcomer...Some people say, ‘Child-Proof your home.’ I say, ‘Home-proof your child’.”\(^{26}\) An implement was used for this, as outlined by the Pearls in their ubiquitous handbook. But just to be sure that the treatment isn’t completely callous, it is important to use an implement. After all, as the Pearls point out, one

---


\(^{25}\) Ibid.

\(^{26}\) Pearl, *To Train Up a Child*, 5.
must not discipline with one’s hands – “hands are for loving.” Though it was communicated quite seriously that disobedience was a rebellion against God, this family did not resort to habitual corporal punishment without clear reason.

At ten years old, her parents subscribed to Vision Forum, and soon their “home...was filled with a variety of...literature about God’s plan for the family...[and at this point her] parents moved further away from regular evangelicalism and into the world of Christian Patriarchy.” These catalogs showed the faces of the happy Godly families. They provided products, toys, and homeschooling materials to families looking to create a Godly home. The marketing material is powerful, and the readers aim to emulate not only the look of the family on its glossy pages, but also the ideals and values they prescribe.

But as Vision Forum pushed the family into Christian Patriarchy, Libby Anne witnessed what that change did to her parents. Her mother was now to be in the home and she was to submit to her husband fully. “While they had before believed that girls, like boys, were to grow up and make their own decisions...they now believed that a daughter remained under her father’s authority until marriage...[via courtship only, as] was God’s plan for Christian marriage.”

Unlike Lisa’s experience, Libby Anne strongly emphasizes that her childhood was a happy one, or at least this is how she chooses to remember it. She had an early indoctrination

\[27\] Ibid., 44.


\[29\] Ibid.
into the world biblical womanhood from Vision Forum, and this in turn created a romanticized view of her future life. She wanted the house she would keep, the living room full of Godly children, all seated nicely in a row, and the husband to serve. Libby Anne wanted the glossy picture.

Like Lisa, Libby Anne was homeschooled, however unlike the experience Lisa describes of being socially isolated, Libby Anne loved her homeschooling. Her curriculum was very biblically focused. As she recounts, “We learned that God had guided the founding fathers as they wrote the Constitution and that science properly understood shows that God created the world in six literal days six thousand years ago.” The literal time and space of evangelical biblical interpretation eschews science and scientific discovery as ungodly and the construct of Satan. Though Libby Anne possessed a voracious intellectual curiosity, it was still confined to the constructs of creationism and biblical fundamentalism. As she explains, “I frequently checked out books from our church library and read about a variety of subjects. The more I read the more convinced I was that my parents’ beliefs were right.” But of course, she only consulted books and publications that were from her church’s holding, anything else would be secular and worldly, and this would be unacceptable reading full of fallacies.

Libby Anne continues her story explaining her devotion to her faith. She summarizes her belief structure by saying she “believed wholeheartedly that demons were real, that the rapture was coming, that the world had been created in six days six thousand years ago, and

---


31 Ibid.
that anyone who had not asked Christ as their savior was destined for hell. [She now had] a deep sense of mission...a purpose and a destiny.” Libby Anne never questioned this belief structure, and it became her identify. She was a child of God, a daughter of Patriarchy, and she loved it.

Part of her mission was to become the best wife and mother she could be. As the apple of her father’s eye, Libby Anne learned all she could from her mother. One of those lessons was about purity. A woman’s purity is paramount to her value in the Patriarchy movement. As such, Libby Anne’s mother explained to her daughters when they were very little that “prostitutes were women who sell their kisses,” and maintaining very high standards of purity and modesty were the path to a Godly life and marriage. Her father even gifted her a purity ring, a symbolic gesture of her promise to remain chaste until her wedding.

Where Lisa viewed her future marriage to be a terrifying undertaking, Libby Anne dreamed of her wedding with fairytale like anticipation. She had a romanticized view of courtship, where her father would search and find a Prince Charming for her, and together they would ride off into the sunset. She explains: “I cannot remember a time when courtship was not the expectation. I embraced the idea of courtship as wholeheartedly as my parents, and used to daydream about young men asking my father’s permission to court me.” It was clear that at a young age, she focused on the adventure of a new life with a husband, and not the

__________________________

32 Ibid.


34 Ibid.
reality that would unfold where she would be working very hard, pregnant often, and submissive to her husband’s authority. Where Lisa’s story tells us the glass half empty perspective, Libby Anne focused her memories on the glass as half full.

At sixteen Libby Anne was thrilled to receive a hope chest from her father, in which to store items she would need as a newlywed. She writes how excited she was to fill it with various homemaking supplies. As she exclaimed: “I was very proud of my hope chest, and I could hardly wait to be a wife.” She was excited about her future courtship, and did not find object to the rules of Patriarchy limiting her movement. Where other escaped daughters felt the crushing loneliness of not going to school or seeing others their own age, Libby Anne notes she felt special, as if she were guarded like a celebrity.

Libby Anne had one distinct privilege that other daughters of Patriarchy did not; she would have the opportunity to go to college. As college graduates, her parents valued higher education, but both still insisted that Libby Anne’s calling was to be a helpmeet, and that she needed to learn the requisite skills to do so properly. She learned to cook and to cook for large crowds, care for her siblings and run the home herself. She writes that she loved taking the burden off of her mother, and did so with great pride. Even with the emphasis on homemaking, Libby Anne notes-“I was raised with the expectation that I would go to college after high school...my parents both had college degrees and even as they became more and more conservative...their belief in the importance of education was one thing they never

\[35\text{Ibid.}\]
questioned." This is a viewpoint not commonly held by those in the Patriarchy movement, but in Libby Anne’s case, her parents had faith that Libby Anne was firm in her beliefs and would not stray from them even when presented with different viewpoints. Further, having a higher education was also a contingency plan to ensure she would be able to support the family in the case her future husband unexpectedly died or couldn’t work. But even Libby Anne herself questioned her need for college. She writes: “I loved my life at home and I loved helping my mother. Why, I wondered, did I need to go to college when this life, here at home, was all I was meant to lead?” This statement is a testament to how strongly the traditional roles are ingrained in the young women. Where the opportunity to go to college would be a dream for so many daughters of Patriarchy, when presented with this opportunity, Libby Anne questioned whether to even bother. The university, after all, is that tree of knowledge, ripe with fruit.

Her life at home before graduating from high school was filled with chores. In large families, and in particular in Quiverfull families, the older daughters’ participation in household chores is absolutely crucial. As Libby Anne described, “My mother had a lot on her plate, teaching high school, middle school, elementary school, and preschool while constantly nursing babies, and she needed my sisters and me to help out.”

Rather than viewing the endless chores and endless babies as burdensome or oppressive, Libby Anne relished her ability to juggle it all. In fact she relished it and her ability to do is so well. College was still on the

---

36 Ibid.


38 Ibid.
horizon and still very much expected of her, but her ability to run a home so effectively and
smoothly led her to question her path. As she says, "the emphasis on the home and service
actually led me to question the idea that I should attend college." 39 She really was beginning to
sound like her friends from church, who would never dare go to college, as it would be such a
waste of time for a homemaker. But the expectation from her parents for her to attend
college was very strong. Their little girl would blossom, defend her faith and come out with her
faith and devotion to biblical womanhood intact. Or would she?

“I was my father’s golden girl, his pride and joy. It was like he had shaped me to be the
perfect daughter, to be everything he had always wanted...my dad was the potter, and I was his
happy clay.” 40 Libby Anne writes so joyfully of her relationship with her father, and how he
taught her the biblical way of looking at the world which she accepted with such love and
devotion. She ultimately decided on a secular college, not for the new perspectives to
challenge her beliefs, but rather to be a missionary for her cause, and to spread her biblical
knowledge to those who lacked it. She viewed attending a secular college as an opportunity to
“witness to others and further God’s kingdom.” 41 Libby Anne felt she had planned her future
to ensure all would fall into place. Having mastered her art of homemaking and filled her hope
chest with all the necessities for her newlywed life, she anticipated her father would arrange a

39 Ibid.


beautiful courtship, thereby allowing her to marry while providing her parents the security of knowing she had a college degree as a contingency. What she didn’t plan for, however, was the culture shock that awaited her.

Libby Anne grew up completely isolated from any diversity. Her acquaintances were homogenous in every possible sense—in faith, in education, even in appearance. Her romanticized view of a secular college waiting for her biblical knowledge led to a rude awakening for a young, naïve, and sheltered girl with intentions of ministering. She describes being instantly out of place upon her arrival and having “no idea how to relate to anyone I met, because none of them shared my exact beliefs or had an upbringing similar to mine.”42 This was her first lesson.

Christian Patriarchy is threatened by what is considered to be worldly. To think, act, or believe anything that is outside the confines of their worldview is sinful. Libby Anne thrust herself into a worldly mixing bowl. But aside from the initial shock of how out of place she felt, she also learned her second lesson, that these worldly people were not as bad as she was taught to believe. As she writes, “College quickly taught me first that those who did not believe like I did were either automatically miserable inside or bad people...This confused me but it also opened my world and showed me that dividing humanity into ‘good’ and ‘evil’ was too simplistic.”43 In other words, since she grew up without exposure to anything outside her small worldview she was taught to assign “evil” to anyone different than she.

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
Determined to bring her theology and ministry to her fellow student body, Libby Anne cut her hair, purchased a new wardrobe and went to work. She describes successfully rounding up non-Christians for political and theological discussions. She proudly presented theories and “truths” gained throughout her life. These included the “perfection of the Bible, evidence of young Earth creation, the evils of abortion, and the love of God.” Though she felt prepared to present and teach the faith that was the fabric of her identity, the reaction was not what she expected it to be. This was her third lesson.

Libby Anne was prepared to address a variety of reactions to her ministrations, including gracious acceptance as well as some debate, for which she had prepared her own well thought out rebuttals based on her Christian teachings. But she was met with arguments she had never heard or considered before. So she turned to her materials to keep her platform, but to no avail. So, she did some research. As this was not her church library, Libby Anne was astounded by what she found.

She found reading the Bible literally was problematic, as what is written in scripture can conflict with archeological findings. It can also be problematic with various translations and text taken out of context. Suddenly she realized:

I had been taught to be a critical thinker, but I had never questioned the beliefs my parents taught me. And I realized that is young earth creationism, the infallibility of the Bible, and the importance of banning abortion, things which my parent believed in so very strongly, were wrong, than [sic] everything else they had taught me was also suspect. I also realized that I could not view the Bible as I had before, as literal truth, but must instead see it as somehow figurative, spiritual, and metaphorical.45

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
Libby Anne’s identity and belief structure crumbled. Everything her father taught her was now in question. The irony here is that it was her parents who pushed her to go to college, something routinely forbidden for a Godly woman, and it was that very expectation that exposed her to ideas that shattered her belief structure. This is a common issue with Christian Patriarchy, since exposure to ideas and lifestyles contrary to that which is emblazoned on the pages of Vision Forum or No Greater Joy catalogs are viewed as evil. Even in Libby Anne’s case where she was prepared to be that “warrior” for Christ, she could not fully balance her faith against other possibilities. In expanding her worldview, she became a cautionary tale for daughters of the Patriarchy movement – Behold the dangers of sending your girls to school. As to be expected, her family did not react well to the transformation.

I have never seen my parents as angry or disappointed as they were that day. I had gone from being their golden daughter to being broken, completely broken, in their eyes. With that one revelation, they learned that all of their work had been for nothing. Since their whole reason for raising me was to create a soldier for Christ, spreading their specific views around the world, my changes in belief meant that everything they had done to bring me up was wasted.46

The outcome for both of these escaped daughters was a predictable one in the culture of biblical Patriarchy; Both Lisa and Libby Anne were cut off from their families. Though Lisa does not specify where she now lives, she alludes to distance away from her family and away from her memories. Libby Anne now lives an egalitarian life with a husband and child. Her mother attempted to “fix” her with literature, but she rejected it, unable to deny her newfound

outlook on life and God. Both women remain faithful, but on their own terms, under their own authority.
But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate.\(^1\)

> GEN 3:4-6 (NRSV)

The daughters of Patriarchy are the daughters of Eve, inheriting Eve’s role as helpmeet, as well as the stain of her sin from the Garden of Eden. For many outside of the Patriarchy movement, the story of the Fall is read as myth, and as such the narrative offers an allegorical coping mechanism for the human condition, allowing one to better rationalize the existence of tragedy and suffering.\(^2\) Regardless of whether the story of creation and the story of the Fall of Humanity are read under the lens of allegorical myth or literal truth, the “culture which produced biblical texts was a patriarchal one and therefore it should not be surprising that the value system encoded in the Bible is patriarchal.”\(^3\)

Within the Patriarchy movement, the story of creation is the literal the word of God, and the creation and Fall of the first couple function to prescribe explicit gender roles and a hierarchical structure of authority. The Genesis accounts of Adam and Eve function as the

---

\(^1\) GEN 3:4-6, (NRSV) italics mine.

\(^2\) Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1973, 45.

foundational text for future biblical writers who use the male headship construct to further shackle Eve. This fundamentalist reading of creation places Eve and subsequently all her future daughters in a subordinate position to their husbands from the very point of Eve’s creation, and then solidifies her fate by blaming her for the Fall of humanity and the expulsion from paradise. A careful reading of the text, however, makes clear that Eve was not only created to be equal to her partner, but that he was equally, if not more responsible than she for the Fall of Humanity into sin. Furthermore, the text reveals that the Fall itself was expected and entirely a part of God’s divine plan.

In Biblical Patriarchy, the justifications for male headship begin with the creation order as outlined in Genesis 2. Within that patriarchal authoritative construct, the interpretation insists that man was created first, and that woman was created from man to be his helper, thereby solidifying the stance of male authority. The fundamentalist reading also takes this a step further to justify female submission based on the concept of “helper,” that woman was created not to exist equally with her mate, but rather as a subordinate. The flaw here is that God did not create man and then woman separately. The creation of gendered humanity occurred at exactly the same time.

In the text, the creation of the first human is described very succinctly, “Then the LORD God formed [the Earth creature] from the dust of the ground, and breathed into [its] nostrils the breath of life; and the [Earth creature] became a living being.” ⁴ This Earth creature is not yet male, as without its opposite, female, there is no male. As he is not yet “male”, he also not

⁴ GEN 2:7 (NRSV) with my substitutions
yet a “man.” The Earth creature here is so far sexually undifferentiated. The creature is ‘hā-ādām’ derived from the Earth, ‘hā-ādāmâ’, and is a clever play on words depicting the creature’s connection to the Earth. 5 “The LORD God took [hā-ādām] and put [it] in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”6 The Garden of Eden is idyllic, a place created by God with an abundance of food and pleasant climes. Though God instructed his first child to keep and till the land, God also explicitly commanded that that all the trees were good for food, save for one. “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”7 God gave the warning to his first born alone, the Earth creature, as it was before the creation of the complementary partner. Not only was hā-ādām responsible for the Garden, but it was hā-ādām who bore the ultimate responsibility for enforcing the admonition.

After God’s caution to the Earth creature, the text continues that God’s sole child needed a suitable partner because he should not be alone: “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that [hā-ādām] should be alone; I will make [hā-ādām] a helper as [its] partner.”8 The text does not say this partner was to serve hā-ādām, it simply says this partner/companion was to help or accompany it. “The Hebrew word, ‘ēzer... has been traditionally translated as ‘helper’ – a translation that is totally misleading because the English word helper suggests an assistant, a subordinate, indeed an inferior, while the Hebrew word ‘ēzer carries no such

6 GEN 2:15 (NRSV).
7 GEN 2:16-17 (NRSV).
8 GEN 2:18 (NRSV).
connotation."³ The Earth’s first child looked for a helper and companion in all of creation; he “gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for [hā-'ādām] there was not found a helper as his partner."¹⁰ We see in the text hā-'ādām is naming creation, but at the same time searching for what he himself lacks. This verse shows that even with the dominion over Eden bequeathed to him by God, he was alone. It is notable the text never references any need on hā-'ādām’s part for practical assistance with the tasks God assigned him such as the naming of the animals and keeping of the garden, only that God provided him a partner so he would not be alone. This demonstrates that the purpose in creating a partner was not to serve as a subordinate helper, but as a complimentary companion.

It is now the point in the text where God creates the complementary Earth creature, to accompany the first. It is important to note in the text that God is not creating a second creature, but rather is dividing the existing creature into two opposite but complementary parts. “This divine act will alter radically the nature of hā-'ādām and bring about new creatures so that female and male together become one flesh that is wholeness rather than isolation.”¹¹ “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the [person], and the [person] slept; then [the LORD God] took one of [person’s] ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the [person the LORD God] made into a woman....”¹² As

---

³ Trible, 90.
¹⁰ GEN 2:20 (NRSV).
¹¹ Trible, 94.
maleness could not exist without its counterpart of femaleness, it was only at this point that both man and woman came into existence. The Earth creature, hā-‘ādām, is now ‘iš (man), and his counterpart ‘iššâ (woman).

depending on the translation of the text, Eve is formed from either Adam’s rib or side. Whether a small piece of him (a single rib) or a large piece of him (side), the text romantically illustrates the division into two equal but opposite parts. “After God operates on this earth creature, to produce a companion, its identity becomes sexual.” 13 Per Phyllis Trible, the text does not show the man’s dominion over the woman by naming her. Per Trible, when the man exclaimed “This shall be called ‘iššâ”, it was not to establish power or dominion over her, but rather to rejoice in the creation of their mutuality. 14 As God altered the Earth creature to create “man” at the same time creating “woman” from the raw material of hā-‘ādām’s body, creation order cannot function as a justification of male headship and female submission. “The relationship of this couple is one of mutuality and equality, not one of female superiority and certainly not one of female subordination.” 15

“It is only when God builds the woman out of part of the first (hu)man that he can joyfully recognize the arrival of a partner in the garden who fully corresponds to him: ‘This is it: bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh...’ The only way for God to create an equal of the first human was to begin with a bodily part of him.” 16 Adam was given dominion by God, before

13 Trible, 99.
14 Ibid., 100.
15 Ibid., 101.
Eve’s creation, to name creation. Adam is presented Eve in the same way, and when he names her “woman”, he is naming a part of himself, not a subordinate mate. Not only does the text not say he rules over her, but states in fact that they are forever one flesh, meant to be together as two parts of a whole: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”\textsuperscript{17} God, the mother and father to the first couple, has now given wings to his children.

Christian Patriarchy’s interpretation of Genesis 3 shapes the gender roles for women and justifies male headship by shifting the blame for the Fall of humanity and the expulsion from Paradise onto the character of Eve. In this view, Eve disobeyed God first, and subsequently tempted Adam to follow. As such, the daughters of Eve are to look to male headship for guidance and permission, especially in the public sphere, as they are too easily misguided. The fundamentalist literal reading of the Fall of Humanity in Genesis 3 would indicate that Eve was both gullibly persuaded by the literal serpent, considered to be the embodiment of evil, and also culpable for the introduction of sin to humanity. She alone engages with the evil serpent, she alone makes the decision to pick the forbidden fruit and then manipulates Adam into eating it with her and all of humanity is punished as a result. However, with a careful reading of the text, the following are very clear: the serpent is not the embodiment of evil, and Adam and Eve disobeyed God at the same time.

In Christian Fundamentalism, the serpent is considered to be the devil, specifically an embodiment of Satan. In this interpretation, the serpent has a very small role - makes an

\textsuperscript{17} GEN 2:24, (NRSV).
appearance, sets the stage, and exits. But the serpent is a much more important character in this ensemble. First, “[t]he notion of Satan and the underworld he ruled...has roots in Greek, Roman and Teutonic mythologies, and Faustian pacts with the devil did not gain popularity until medieval times”¹⁸ so assuming the serpent functioned as our modern image of Satan does not work. If not an evil spirit in the modern sense, then it must be an agent to embody our own internal conflict- Satan as the external force with which we as humans contend on a daily basis. The serpent, therefore, is a symbol of this internal conflict plaguing humanity to constantly choose between right and wrong. This conflict results in the use of the logic and reason God instilled in humanity and functions as a catalyst for exercising an outward dialogue of the morality of right and wrong. The serpent is within us, and it is the result of this internal dialogue that drove the first children to choose as they did.

The serpent approaches Eve in the Garden, and asks her if she is aware of the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden’?”¹⁹ Notice the serpent doesn’t offer her anything straight away, he wants to ensure she knows this is forbidden. He knows that Eve is innocent, and does not yet understand good and evil. She innocently answers him: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’”²⁰ The serpent now becomes the symbol, not of Satan, but of human

---


¹⁹ GEN 3:1b, (NRSV).

²⁰ GEN 3:2-3, (NRSV).
rational consciousness. It is our internal representation of our human conscience, our superego, urging us to consider choices rationally and logically. The serpent is then able to confuse Eve in making his case. As the serpent says to Eve: “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”\footnote{GEN 3:4-5, (NRSV).} Eve, in turn for the first time, questions God, and questions God’s sincerity. Much like a small child looking at an object out of reach and off-limits as mom and dad said, Eve looked at the tree and pondered: was it really so dangerous that it would fact kill her, or was it just a delicious piece of fruit? Would God make something to kill them? If so, why? If not to eat then why was the fruit there? This is the dialogue we as humans have as part of our ability to rationalize. Eve tried to make sense of why the fruit would be forbidden, why God would say she would die when the serpent said she would not.

If we were to say that Eve acted alone in her rebellion, we would be mistaken. In the text, Adam stays silent, during both the conversation with the serpent (the rationalization) as well as the actual act of disobedience. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.”\footnote{GEN 3:6-7, (NRSV) my emphasis.} Nowhere does it indicate that Eve tempted Adam. She handed him the fruit (disobedience) and he took it willingly and chose to eat (disobedience). Adam and Eve possessed the same innocence, unaware of right from wrong. Eve saw the tree was good for food. Perhaps she never bothered to look at it before, since the garden was full of other
beautiful trees. But when the forbidden is pointed out, it becomes much more interesting-desirable. The serpent did not so much tempt Eve, as make Eve think about rebellion. She was never forced to do anything, and by that same token, neither was Adam. It was a choice for them both. Adam did not intervene telling Eve that she was about to go against God, as he had every opportunity to do so. In fact, as Adam was instructed directly by God that by eating of the fruit would bring about death, it is more troublesome that he simply stood by silently while his wife took a bite, as if indifferent to her upcoming death. Much of the construct of male headship within Biblical Patriarchy is based on the belief that men inherently possess better judgement than women, and therefore have authority over them and a responsibility to lead them. By that definition, if Adam truly knew better than Eve, it was incumbent upon him to intervene and steer her away from danger. As we know from the text, this did not happen.

Adam and Eve were created with free will, as evidenced by their decision to break the commandment, but were not created with the knowledge of good and evil. They made decisions, but without having tasted the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would not have known that the serpent could be an opposing rebellious influence. It was “through [that] free will bestowed upon Adam and Eve by their Creator…baked the very potential for deviance into humanity.”23 God expected the Fall. He expected Adam and Eve to disobey. God not only expected the Fall, but engineered it. He expected and needed Adam and Eve to disobey in order for the lesson of good and evil to be learned and the divine plan to be realized. However, as a loving parent, God intended this lesson to be learned at a time appropriate to the experience and maturity of His children. As the tree itself is a symbol of

23 Dekker, 575.
adult knowledge and understanding of good and evil, God’s punishment was not for the act of rebellion itself but rather for it occurring before He deemed His children ready for the lesson. As such, having experienced the tree’s fruit too soon stripped Adam and Eve from their innocence. The fruit of the tree was intended for Adam and Eve—just not yet.

The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is not rotten on the branch. It is a beautiful and delicious treat. It fits into the construct of the “forbidden for now”, rather than “forbidden forever”. By looking at the fruit not as meal, but as an “experience” humanity was meant to have, the theory of “too much too soon” fits nicely. Much like a liquor cabinet in a home – it is forbidden territory for minors, but when the child reaches the legal age of majority, the rules change. They may now partake in an “experience” that was previously forbidden. They have acquired the knowledge necessary to handle this new “experience.” Using this same logic in the garden, the fruit was “spiked” with a knowledge that which Eve and Adam were not ready to taste. They were innocent children no more.

“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.” The consumption of this fruit transitioned them both from innocent childhood to adulthood – a sexual awakening. Adam and Eve were now self-conscious, specifically of their nakedness, and aware of their sexuality. The text continues:

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden... But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him,
“Where are you?” He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked?”

This scene functions as a loss of childlike innocence, and a transition into adulthood that was too soon. God did not want his children to grow up so quickly, to take on adult perceptions and experience suffering earlier than necessary for survival.

“They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” “They are now aware of their sexuality; their nakedness has significance to them, and therefore they cover their genitals.” The text makes it clear—they are no longer the children of the garden. God knows exactly what has happened. This narrative resonates very well with the parent/child construct, as the scene continues, “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” the angry parent confronting children who have been caught red-handed. But even so, this is what intended.

There was a reason for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to be in the middle of the garden—it was intended to be touched and eaten. The Fall of humanity was always part of the divine plan. The symbolism of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is also used in Michael and Debi Pearl’s literature for biblical child-rearing. The evangelical author states,

---

25 GEN 3:8-11, (NRSV).

26 GEN 3:8, (NRSV).


28 GEN 3:11, (NRSV).
“When God wanted to “train” his first two children not to touch, He did not place the forbidden object out of their reach. Instead, He placed the ‘tree of knowledge of good and evil’ in the midst of the garden...Since it was in the middle of the garden, they would be exposed to its temptation more often. God’s purpose was not to save the tree but to train the couple.”

Even using an evangelical childrearing manual, the point is clear: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was deliberately placed where it would be touched. The first couple did just as God expected.

The traditional reading describes Eve as tricked by the serpent (Satan), and then in turn persuades her husband, Adam, to sin with her. This reading places the blame on Eve (women), not Adam and Eve (humanity) for introducing sin and suffering to the world. With close analysis to the text in Genesis 2-3, however, it is clear that not only was Eve not solely culpable for the Fall, but also that the serpent functions as an allegory of our own reasoning. The story of the Garden of Eden is a story of two young innocent people who were presented with a choice. Their decision removed their childlike innocence and an opened door to sin and suffering- out of Eden, and onto Earth.

“The fundamentalist and evangelical church understood one of the lessons of the Fall to be that women, daughters of Eve, were more easily deceived than men, and that therefore they could not be entrusted with overmuch authority.”

In this interpretation, Eve actively tempted him causing him to lose paradise. But by closely examining the text, it is clear that it

---

29 Pearl, To Train Up a Child, 5.

30 Joyce, Quiverfull: Inside, 50.
was not Eve who tempted Adam, nor was it Eve who is to blame for the Fall. Further, as it was only after eating of the forbidden fruit that Adam and Eve were imbued with the knowledge of good and evil, it was Adam who then committed the first act of disobedience knowingly when he sought to shift all blame away from himself, including by blaming God Himself.

To begin the interrogation of the first couple, the text reveals that God spoke solely to Adam first: “But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” God speaks directly to Adam as only he was present for the admonition by God to stay away from the tree, and therefore it is he who had the ultimate responsibility in that covenant. The dialogue then continues between only Adam and his creator: He said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” Notice man does not speak of his wife, only of his own actions. He does not create a solidarity with his wife saying “we hid” or “we were afraid”, and speaks as if she weren’t there. The text states explicitly they were together, “the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” God speaks to Adam, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” God is confronting Adam directly and asking a simple question: Did you disobey or not? Adam does not answer that he disobeyed his creator, that he purposefully broke the covenant they had, the divine command

31 GEN 3:9, (NRSV).
32 GEN 3:10, (NRSV).
33 GEN 3:8b, (NSRV).
34 GEN 3:11, (NSRV).
given to him alone\textsuperscript{35} in GEN 2:17. Instead, he tries to redress his foible. The verse shows Adam falsely shifting blame not only to Eve, his partner, but also to God, their creator. He responds to God: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.”\textsuperscript{36} We know that both were present for the pitch by the serpent. We know Adam observed passively and without protest as Eve picked the fruit in spite of his firsthand knowledge of God’s instruction to him. Adam made a rational choice, just as Eve did. But we see in this verse, he is also extending the blame to God. He prefaxes his argument with “the woman whom you gave to be with me” to insinuate causality, but all it manages to show is Adam’s inability to be trusted with authority. Adam’s attempt to deflect blame sees him not only assign responsibility to Eve, but effectively assign responsibility to God for having created her in the first place.

Where Adam looked outward to blame, Eve answered honestly. The only reason Eve is addressed at all is because Adam incriminated her with his self-defense. So for the first time, God turns to address the woman directly: “Then the \textsc{lord} God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent tricked me, and I ate.’”\textsuperscript{37} She simply responds that she was convinced by the serpent and decided to eat. She never shifted the blame to the serpent, after all the serpent did not lie, and she never said she forced the fruit on her husband. She responds honestly. Though the fundamentalist reading indicates that because of this text woman are more easily deceived than men, the verses clearly show it was


\textsuperscript{36} GEN 3:12, (NRSV).

\textsuperscript{37} GEN 3:13, (NRSV).
the woman who was honest and forthright. Though both were deceived at the same time, she spoke the truth and answered the question, where he deflected all responsibility.

God placed the Tree of the Knowledge and Good and Evil intentionally in the garden, and that tree’s fruit functioned as sexual knowledge to be learned in due time. After the first couple ate of it, and were children no more, and now lived as adults in a world that requires the knowledge of good and evil. The expulsion from Paradise is the expulsion from childlike innocence. This is illustrated in the text with the punishment for breaking the covenant.

“To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”\(^\text{38}\) This is perhaps the most debated and problematic verse in the story of creation. In Christian fundamentalism, the Bible is considered timeless and inerrant, and is read literally. However, the story in Genesis 3 “must be approached in terms of the real world in which it operated...Unfortunately, this segment [of scripture] has been lifted from its literary and social context and hence has been subject to thousands of years of misinterpretation and consequently misuse...[From] late biblical times to the present day, citation of Genesis 3, in particular verse 16, has been the authoritative glue sealing the document of divinely-ordained female subordination, if not inferiority.”\(^\text{39}\) Genesis 3:16, however, is not a straightforward commandment to Eve that she suffer and submit. By breaking up the verse and seeing the relationship between each piece, the text reflects the pains of childbirth in conjunction with the

\(^{38}\) GEN 3:17, (NRSV).

toils of the land. It further reveals the allure she has for her mate and warns her to use it wisely.

It begins with “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing, in pain you shall bring forth children.” This biblical text follows a chiastic form with close repetition, and so these two pieces are interrelated. To many scholars, the “childbearing” is better read as “pregnancies,” as “the Bible does preserve a vocabulary associating the birth process with pain or suffering, but none of those words is present in this passage.” So, the preferred reading to the first half of Genesis 3:16 would be “I will greatly increase your work and your pregnancies; along with toil you shall give birth to children.” In this way, the text states that the woman will have to work and in addition sustain multiple pregnancies. It is also after the Fall is when she is named “Eve”, which means living mother. Eve functions as the mother of humanity, but in addition to her maternal destiny, she will toil and work.

The second half of the verse reads: “yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Adrien Bledstein, (Are Women Cursed in Genesis 3.16?), suggests that this verse reflects more of a warning from God to the woman, that her powerful allure could get the best of her. Bledstein translates the text to read “You are powerfully attractive to your husband, but he can rule over you.” In this way God is addressing the woman directly,

40 Ibid., 131.

41 Ibid.

42 GEN 3:16b, (NRSV).

warning that her erotic allure is powerful, but she “is cautioned, her man has the capacity-not the license nor the authority-to dominate her.”\textsuperscript{44} By focusing on the context of the original text, Bledstein effectively reframes the most patriarchal text in the Bible from a commandment into a warning. With this interpretation, Eve is not her husband’s prisoner, but she must take care to not allow herself to be ruled by him, as he desires her as she desires him. “Woman is cautioned about life outside of Eden: her attractiveness may threaten the man.”\textsuperscript{45} God offers a warning to woman in this verse that she has the authority and the power to control her destiny, however, when she chooses to allow man to rule over her, she accepts being a subordinate. She is not designed to be secondary, nor is she commanded to submit to her husband. She is simply warned of her power and to use it wisely, lest she find herself being ruled over by a man.

After addressing the woman, God addresses the man directly:

Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;\textsuperscript{46}

The fundamentalist interpretation of this piece of scripture argues that God is very directly punishing the man for having listened to the voice of the woman. This verse solidifies the argument that man’s disobedience resulted from both listening to his wife as well as allowing her to lead in the first place. As articulated by Alberto Colunga and Maximiliano Cordero from the University of Salamanca in Spain, Adam not only listened to his wife, but as the authority

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{46} GEN 3:17, (NRSV).
should have known better than to take her for her word without question.”\(^{47}\) By this rationale, Adam earned his punishment not for his role in partaking of the eating of the fruit, but for his failure to fulfill his role as an authority and lead Eve away from danger and temptation. But with careful examination of the text in context with the dialogue of the temptation, it is abundantly clear this is not the case.

The first verse directed at Adam reads: “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife”, and if interpreted alone would clearly indicate that Eve is culpable of tempting her husband to partake in disobeying God. The problem with this interpretation is that Eve never spoke to Adam to tempt him to take the fruit. During the temptation, the only character speaking was the serpent:

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.\(^{48}\)

Nowhere in the text does Eve directly address her husband and speak to him about taking the fruit. She listened to the voice of the serpent (her rational conscience), ate, and shared the piece with her husband. Both the man and the woman listened to the serpent. The woman ate first and then the man ate. Eve never addressed Adam about what they were doing, but rather he watched idly as she ate. It says very clearly in the text that he was with her during the

---

\(^{47}\) Alberto Colunga y Maximiliano García Cordero, “Biblia comentada: texto de la Nácar-Colunga, Universidad de Salamanca Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1960-1065, 84. (El hombre obedeciendo dócilmente a las insinuaciones de la mujer, cuando era Adán quien debía, \textit{como jefe}, reaccionar enérgicamente ante la perspectiva de una desobediencia a Dios” (my emphasis).

\(^{48}\) GEN 3:6, (NRSV).
serpent’s speech, and he never intervened while his wife risked “death” and he followed behind her.

Rather than indicating that Eve tempted Adam, what this verses is illustrating is how God used Adam’s words against him. When God asked Adam is he ate from the tree he was commanded not to touch, he answered “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree and I ate.” Jean Higgins, (The Myth of Eve: The Temptress), dissects the response from God and frames it to better illustrate how God is using Adam’s defense against him. It isn’t that God punishes Adam for listening to his wife, but rather setting the stage using Adam’s own words:

Well, then since [you say your excuse is your wife gave it to you, implying that] you listened to the voice of your wife [as if that, or anything else, could be more important than listening to the voice of God] and ate of the tree which I commanded you not to eat...Here is your punishment.  

In this reading, both Adam and Eve are punished for one reason only: disobedience. While Eve admitted to her disobedience, Adam’s defense of his actions saw him position himself as a victim of his wife’s actions, as well as God’s. Adam is not punished because he listened to his wife, Adam is punished because he chose to disobey. By this reading, we see that it isn’t a punishment to men or to the world for a woman to speak or to lead. The only one who led was the serpent, and if read as the rational conscience we all have, rather than a literal reptile, it is clear that Adam and Eve were simply two children allowed near the tree they were not supposed to touch...at least not yet.

49 GEN 3:12, (NRSV).

50 Higgins, 645.
By carefully reading the text of Genesis, it is clear that women are not destined by scripture to be submissive to their husbands. As the interpretation of Eve in Genesis functions as the foundation for later texts, it is clear that the first woman was in fact created at the same time as the first man, that she was never inferior to her partner but rather a beautifully equal complement, and that the Fall of humanity was designed by God, with a carefully placed temptation and the free will to succumb to it. Christian Patriarchy insists upon the creation order and the fall of humanity to justify placing women in a subordinate role. Though the biblical hierarchy is set, it is set based on a foundational assumption that Eve was culpable for the Fall, which is clearly not the case. By breaking this scripture open, we reveal a rich story of human nature, intellectual curiosity, active use of free will and sexual awakening. It is through this understanding that Eve, and all her daughters, are set free.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Blogs**


