

A REPORT ON
**2007 Conference of the Society
Christianity or Secularism: Whose Soul Care? Which Psychology?**

By Lia Vassiliades, Lydia Kim, M.Div., and Unhye Kwon, M.Div.

Christian psychology is a distinct perspective on psychology, and there are several aspects that make it unique in its thoughts and practice. Though these aspects were not always explicitly mentioned in all the sessions at the conference, they shone through as a common foundation and bond for those who attended. The following is a necessarily selective overview of the conference in order to present our impressions regarding the uniqueness of Christian psychology.

First and most important, Scripture is the normative and formative foundation for what Christian psychologists think and do. God's view of reality, as presented in the Bible, is the ultimate perspective. Every theory, method, or understanding that is considered important with regard to psychology and soul care is held under the microscope of God's illuminating Word. Christian psychologists are intentional about following the truths of God to the best of their ability. This principle plays itself out in the other aspects of a uniquely Christian psychology.

Second, Christian psychologists have a unique worldview. As C. Stephen Evans mentioned in his lecture, people may object to Christian psychology because it is supposedly not scientific (i.e., not neutral and value free). However, all theories concerning human beings, including those of secular psychology, are value laden. Christian psychologists work explicitly according to Christian values. The Christian psychology community needs Christian philosophers like Evans to help us understand the implications of the Christian worldview for psychology and counseling.

Christian psychology is also unique in its models of soul care. With the Bible as the ultimate norm and a Christian tradition of 2,000 years of reflection and practice, there is an enormously rich potential to build theories that relate to every aspect of soul care. Ellen Charry, for example, in her keynote address, showed how the great theologian, Augustine, expounded on the truths of Scripture regarding the love of God and love of others, and she helped us understand its relevance for soul care today. David E. Jenkins took the concept of the Imago Dei and created a model that has implications for

the theory, research and practice of Christian psychology. Numerous other talks could be mentioned here.

Fourth, as Larry Crabb suggested in his keynote address, Christian psychology is not just an intellectual enterprise, but it is also transformative. Perhaps most important is the transformation of the person who practices Christian soul care. As Kathrin Halder suggested, from IGNIS, the Institute for Christian Psychology in Kitzingen, Germany, Christian psychology is an expression of an attitude, of virtues, and of a state of heart. The Christian soul care practitioner ought to be a humble servant who follows in the footsteps of Christ. This was well-developed by Diane Langberg. The goal for those receiving soul care is likewise ultimately to grow in the fear and love of the Lord and to live a virtuous life that glorifies God. That is where we find true satisfaction, since that is what God created us to be.

Fifth, obviously the goal of each of the aspects mentioned above is that they be put into practice. People who seek Christian soul care ought to experience a distinctly Christian process that is uniquely designed for them based on how God's Word specifically speaks to their situation. The methods and strategies will be very diverse, since God's Word and the Christian tradition built upon God's Word contain a great variety of principles and practices. Carmina Rangel, for example, focused on how Scripture can transform one's mind, feelings, and actions. Neil Anderson emphasized how the presence of Christ and our union with God bring transformation.

Six, Mark Yarhouse and P.J. Watson both showed the importance of psychological research for Christian psychology. Doing research provides a unique challenge to navigate differences in moral and evaluative frameworks. The positive results of research are manifold, for example, research can refine and inform Christian soul care practice; it can show the validity and necessity of a distinctly Christian psychology; and it provides opportunities to be a light in this world by communicating the results of the research to others in secular psychology. In addition, and in an even broader sense, the Christian soul care community has the task

to be both Christianly authentic and publicly responsible. James Skillen discussed the potential of principled pluralism, his model for Christian engagement in the public square, so that Christian psychologists are not marginalized but can be actively involved in the field of psychology *as Christians*.

These are some of the valuable aspects and goals of Christian psychology which we gleaned from the conference. It is our opinion that the Society provides a place for people who care about any of these aspects. Together, we can sharpen and strengthen one another; and we can build bridges respecting our common goals as well as the differences. The intense discussion between Steve Zombory and Ed Welch regarding the value of biblical counseling was a beautiful testimony to this fact. The Society for Christian Psychology is a place where believers from various backgrounds and with different frameworks can learn from each other and be strengthened. It is a place where there are opportunities for accountability and discipleship; it is a place where providers of Christian soul care can be challenged, deepened and edified; and it is a global effort where people from many nations and races are drawn together into a larger view of what God is doing.

For those who resonate with the endeavors of the Society for Christian Psychology, there is much to look forward to. The 2008 Annual Conference will be held in Chicago in September, where we will be considering the issue of interpretation. We look forward to meeting with you and enjoying the fruit of those uniquely Christian concepts of psychology and soul care that God has placed on your heart.

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Luke 10:2

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SOUL & SPIRIT

Ψ SOCIETY for CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS

2007

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Counseling and Interpretation in a Postmodern World

A joint conference sponsored by The Society for Christian Psychology and The Geneva Institute of the American Association of Christian Counselors
Schaumburg, IL
September 18-20, 2008

Keynote speakers:

Leslie Vernick, LCSW, Practicing therapist, author of many books including *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship: Seeing It, Stopping It, Surviving It, Getting Over the Blues: A Woman's Guide to Fighting Depression & How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong*.

Tremper Longman, III, Robert H. Gundry Chair of Biblical Studies Old Testament, *Westmont College*, co-author with Dan Allender of many counseling books, including *Cry of the Soul, Bold Love*, and *Intimate Allies*, and author of many other books on the Old Testament.

Kevin Vanhoozer, Research Professor of Systematic Theology, *Trinity Evangelical & Divinity School*, one of the most important evangelical theologians alive, and author of *The Drama of Doctrine*, and *First Theology*.

J.K. A. Smith, Associate Professor of Philosophy, *Calvin College*, author of numerous books on postmodern philosophy and theology, including *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism, Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, and *The Hermeneutics of Charity*.

A Call for Papers

The Society for Christian Psychology and the Geneva Institute of the AACC will gather for a conference that considers the role that interpretation plays in psychology and counseling. In order to understand people well, it is necessary to interpret them: their

speech, actions, thinking, dreams, motives, and emotions. All therapy involves interpretation, for it seeks to make sense out of one's story, one's perceptions, one's core beliefs and unconscious beliefs, and one's desires, and it involves training counselees to learn how to interpret themselves. Christians are aided in the process by the Holy Spirit and guided by the light of Scripture. In addition, Christian professionals also need to read secular psychology articles and books, but we need to learn how to interpret them Christianly.

Psychologists and counselors are invited to submit a proposal that addresses one of the following four areas: 1) the interpretation of *the Bible* (and secondarily the Christian tradition) for understanding human beings and/or counseling, 2) the *Christian* interpretation of *secular articles and books* that deal with human beings/counseling, 3) the interpretation of *humans in empirical research*, and 4) the interpretation of *ourselves, our counselees, and psychological problems* (since counselors engage in interpretation every time they work with others). Proposals should be submitted to one of those four tracks.

Questions that could be addressed include: How is the counselee's self-understanding related to their understanding of others?; How is God involved in helping us to know others?; How do we interpret modern psychology texts in light of the Bible and relevant Christian literature?; How can the Bible promote a Christian interpretation of human beings?; What is the place of symbolism in human life and soul-healing?; How does the Bible contribute to the healing of the soul and how can we best use the Bible in counseling?; What strategies are most beneficial in Christian counseling and why?; In what ways does sin distort our understanding of ourselves, God, others,

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and texts?; How does a secular worldview distort the interpretation of human beings in psychology and counseling?; How does the quality of one's knowledge and love of God shape one's interpretation of self, others, the Bible, and/or research studies?; How does self-knowledge shape all the rest?; How is virtue related to interpretation?; How can we "read" the lives of people in light of God's drama of redemption?; and How does such a reading help people therapeutically? We seek to address these kinds of issues within a distinctly Christian framework.

Proposals can be for a presentation, presentation with respondent, or panel discussion. Slots will be one-hour long. Include presentation title, a 250-word abstract, a 40-word summary, three to

four learning objectives, and a CV for each presenter. Proposals can be submitted until March 15, 2008 to Eric Jones, Associate Professor of Psychology, Montreat College, in an attachment by e-mail to ejones@montreat.edu. Proposals that are accepted will need to lead to final presentations written in proper APA style, suitable for peer review for possible publication in *Edification*, the Society's new journal.

If you have any questions about the project of a Christian psychology, please check out the Society's Web page: www.Christianpsych.org. We desire presentations that seek to advance the project of a specifically Christian version of psychology and counseling.

THE SOCIETY FOR CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY NEEDS A NEWSLETTER EDITOR!

The SCP is looking for someone to take over as the editor of the new Soul & Spirit newsletter. In order to be considered the applicant needs to have a doctorate in counseling or a related field, a solid understanding of and commitment to a Christian psychology paradigm, and also significant writing experience. Masters-level counselors who are highly skilled in writing may apply. In contrast to *Edification*, the SCP Journal, the newsletter is only a few pages, and the goal is to publish counseling-related articles that are shorter in length (800-3000 words per article, compared with 400-8000 words per article) and more accessible. There is a modest stipend for the position. Please send in your vita and a sample article that has been published in a magazine or journal to Eric Jones, Montreat College, ejones@montreat.edu.

Also, the newsletter looks great. But would you please put under the new heading "Soul & Spirit" --which is wonderful-- "The Newsletter of the Society for Christian Psychology" (without the quotes, and instead of just the Society for Christian Psychology).

Also, in the ad that you have which requests submissions of articles, please re-word to reflect the following:

"Shorter, counseling-related articles (800-3000 words) and longer, more scholarly articles (3000-6000). Book reviews are also needed for the *Edification* Journal.

Check out our website at
www.ChristianPsych.org
where you can keep up with our blog

when the most mature members really see themselves as the chief of sinners and deeply believe that the only one who is good is God (Mark 10:18).

Local churches in the New Covenant have a responsibility to assist in the elimination of the abuse of women and children and the neglect of children as much and as soon as possible. God-centered, safe mentoring programs with practical training and lots of patience would be a good place to start. But only the Holy Spirit can change churches into communities that have both high standards and love and acceptance of less-than-perfect believers. From the Old and New Testaments we have good reason to believe that such local churches would please our elder Brother and our Father very much.

Eric Johnson is director of SCP and associate professor of pastoral theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Endnotes

- See www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm04/chapterthree.htm#types; www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cm-vee/cishl01/; endabuse.org/resources/facts/DomesticViolence.pdf; and www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/html/femnational_e.html.
- Other episodes include Genesis 20; Judges 11:29-40 and 21:19-24.

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- Wells, T., & Zaspel, F.G. (2002). *New Covenant Theology*. New Covenant Media: Frederick, MD.

PLEASE CONSIDER
SUBMITTING COUNSELING
ARTICLES FOR *Soul & Spirit*
AND SCHOLARLY ARTICLES
FOR OUR JOURNAL *Edification*

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SOCIETY FOR CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY

The Society exists to promote the development of a distinctly Christian psychology (including theory, research, and practice) that is based on a Christian vision of human nature.

Amplification of the Mission Statement

A Christian vision of human nature is shaped primarily by the Christian Scriptures, as well as Christianity's intellectual and ecclesial traditions. However, a Christian psychology will also be critically informed by other relevant

sources of psychological truth, particularly its own reflection, research, and practice, but also the psychological work of other traditions (e.g., secular psychology), philosophy, human experience, and the other human sciences. While God's understanding of human nature is the goal of a Christian psychology, given human finitude and the existence of distinct Christian traditions, the Society welcomes those working from any perspective within the historic Christian Church.

Implementation of the Mission Statement

The Society will seek to advance the development of a Christian psychology by creating opportunities for dialogue and fellowship through its newsletter, website, and conferences, and by encouraging reflection, research, publishing, soul-care, education, and training that are intentionally committed to the realization of a distinctly Christian psychology.

“Christ is a well of life; but who knows how deep it is to the bottom? This soul of ours has love, and cannot but love some fair one. And oh, what a fair One, what an only One, what an excellent, lovely, ravishing One is Jesus! Put the beauty of ten thousand worlds of paradises, like the garden of Eden in one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness, in one: oh what a fair and excellent thing that would be! And yet it would be less to that fair and dearest Well-beloved, Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths.”

Samuel Rutherford, Scottish presbyterian pastor, letter to Lady Kilconquhar, 1637

Abuse in Light of the Old and New Testaments

by Eric L. Johnson

his teaching about the first being last and the last first (Matthew 19:30-20:16), and his first post-resurrection manifestation—the beginning of the New Creation—to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-18). Then, consider Paul's teachings that God has chosen the weak things of this world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:26-29), and that males and females are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Women in the New Covenant have obtained a new place of honor in redemptive history. Paul's teaching regarding male headship (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23ff) and women keeping silent (1 Corinthians 14:34-36; 1 Timothy 2:9-15) does not undermine this emphasis, but contextualizes it, preventing a culture-alienating, gender revolution in that day by regulating New Covenant gender roles according to current social norms (regarding hair length, 1 Corinthians 11:13-16), as well as transcultural redemptive-historical norms (creation and the Fall, 1 Timothy 2:13,14), Trinitarian norms (relation between Father and Son, 1 Corinthians 11:3), and the metaphorical imperative of husbands and wives resembling Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:23ff). Male leadership under the New Covenant has nothing to do with patriarchy—it is demonstrated, after all, by husbands laying down their lives for their wives! Nothing could be so opposite to a male-centered orientation and could so clearly undermine wife abuse. So why is no mention made of violence against women in the New Testament? Perhaps because within a New Covenant, Christ-centered context such behavior is unthinkable.

Opposing Abuse of Any Kind

This article is an application of a theological understanding known as “New Covenant Theology” (see Wells & Zaspel, 2002), an approach that recognizes the unity of the covenants and the authority of their testaments, while emphasizing the superiority of the New Covenant and its Testament. It is hoped that its recognition of the progressive nature of God's revelation as found in Scripture will shed helpful light on a whole host of issues.

The Gospel of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, discussed with superior clarity in the New Testament, changes everything for believers, including family relationships. The realization that the religious authorities who ruled God's people killed God's Son when he came to them (Matthew 21:33-44) calls into question every legitimate authority structure and shows them to be corrupt in this age and capable of being used abominably. As a result, Christians have profound reasons to be vigorously opposed to abuse of any kind, beyond the

common sense repulsion that all people feel. We need churches that teach about godly marriages and families, that offer training and mentoring of newlyweds and young parents, and that set high standards for the quality of married and family life among their members.

However, before we get too arrogant, the very same Gospel of Christ also teaches Christians not to scorn sinners or treat them with contempt, for only those without sin can stone others (or drown them in the sea). Parents or husbands who abuse are sinners in *that* way; but we are all sinners in some way. The Gospel of Christ also sets free New Covenant assemblies to love all sinners, without in any way reducing the awfulness of their specific sin. The Bible's entire condemnation of sin and promotion of holiness, combined with the radical self-awareness that the Gospel fosters—leading Paul, for example, to call himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15-16)—drives all of us publicans to resist sin in ourselves and others, without the haughty judgmentalism that is all too common among moralistic followers of Christ. This is so important to remember, because, depending on how we present Christian marriage and family standards, we can end up chasing away those who struggle with the abuse they grew up with or with their own abuse of others. The message of the Gospel and its blending of motives for godliness and love—the same motives that caused a holy God to seek and die for sinners—should ideally make local churches places where honesty and transparency are also highly valued and places where leading members can be real about their own moral struggles. As Larry Crabb has taught us, churches should be the safest places on Earth, places that can help all kinds of people feel safe enough to be honest about their sins and limitations and seek help from other, more mature Christians who love them enough to lay down their lives for them.

Unbeknownst to most of the church membership, people like Terri are in the church. However, the challenge for local churches is to rally around such people, both during and long after the abuse, so they can get the help they need in the Gospel of Christ—which can heal the abused and neglected—and learn how to glorify God in unique ways because of their unique stories. But local churches also need to figure out how to hold high standards for relational living, while also becoming safe fellowships that draw people into the difficult and frightening process of admitting their sin and brokenness, confessing it to God and others, and seeking the power they need in that same Gospel of Christ, which can heal the abuser as well as the abused. But that will only happen

Terri was the first-born in a Christian family; in fact, her father was a respected Sunday school teacher in a local Baptist church. However, her parents had little patience for her childish behavior. So it seemed like they were always physically punishing her—well into her teens—and they continuously criticized her throughout her childhood for not taking care of her siblings well enough, for not doing her chores well enough, and simply for not obeying well enough. It felt like the only time they focused on Terri was when she was disappointing them. Unwittingly, they contributed to a pervasive sense later in life that God was disappointed with her, along with strong feelings of personal inadequacy and self-hatred. Hoping to escape her unpleasant family environment, Terri married someone in her youth group when she was 18. Sadly, not too far into their marriage, her husband stopped going to church, and she learned that he had a terrible anger problem, and he too would often criticize her and yell at her, and once in a while he even hit her. The fact that Terri left her abusive family for an abusive husband makes her story especially tragic.

We all know that the human condition is ravaged by sin, but few people know it as intimately as those who are abused or neglected by those who are supposed to love them. According to the best estimates, over 800,000 children are reportedly abused or neglected every year in the United States and Canada, and nearly half a million women are reportedly physically assaulted by an intimate husband, partner, or date every year.¹ But these are likely underestimates since most abuse and neglect probably go undetected by those outside the relationship. There are different types of abuse: physical (which causes bodily harm), sexual (when a child is used for sexual purposes), and emotional (which causes excessive inner pain through harsh speech and rejecting behavior). Neglect occurs when a child's caregivers do not provide adequately for the child's physical, mental, or emotional well-being.

The Abuse of Children

The Holy Spirit's inspiration of the entire Bible guarantees an underlying harmony in all its teachings. However, the two major covenants, and their respective Scriptures, have different emphases that lead to somewhat different approaches to a variety of topics, with the later covenant providing an improvement on the earlier (see the book of

Hebrews). We will be examining abuse to children and women biblically, but are going to pay attention to the slightly different frameworks the old and new covenants (and their Testaments) provide for thinking about these topics.

Relevant Teachings in the Old Testament

How should Christians think about child abuse and neglect? Unfortunately, the topic is not addressed directly in the Bible. In fact, a superficial reading of the Bible might lead Christians to suppose that children's obedience to their parents is of much greater concern to God than parents' abuse of their children. The Ten Commandments tell children to honor their parents, but there is no corollary statute directing the parents to care properly for their children. A more thorough analysis, however, reveals that God's redemptive agenda—as it unfolds throughout His progressive revelation in the entire Bible (the canon of Scripture)—leads to a transformation in how we are to view and treat children.

There are good reasons why the Old Covenant lays its emphasis on the authority of parents and the corresponding honor of children. To begin with, children were created with a need to internalize the structure and guidance of loving authority figures, like parents, in order to mature properly. In addition, God established the Old Covenant to form a distinct ethnic and cultural community with which to covenant. So a major function of the Old Covenant framework was the restraint of sin's selfishness and the teaching and promotion of social norms that are necessary to stabilize family and community life. As a result, the affirmation of parental and civil authority is especially prominent. Moreover, human authorities—especially parents—symbolize God's authority, so such an emphasis helped to prepare them for God's lordship and preeminence in their lives.

Consequently, teaching in the Old Testament focused on the parents' (particularly the father's) authoritative responsibilities as the ones who train (Deuteronomy 6:5-6, 11:19, Proverbs 1-9, 22:6), protect (Deuteronomy 22:17) and discipline children (Deuteronomy 8:5, 2 Samuel 7:14), and the discipline mentioned was sometimes physical (Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15). So strong is this emphasis that if children were disrespectful or violent toward their parents, they were to be killed by

the community (Exodus 21:15, 17; Leviticus 20:9); and if a son was rebellious, the parents themselves were to take him before the elders for stoning (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). Disobedience to parents was antithetical to the Old Covenant agenda.

At the same time, children are prized in the Old Testament (Psalm 127:4, Ezekiel 24:25), and parents are exhorted to train them in the ways of God (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Proverbs 1:8, 6:20) and have compassion on them (Psalm 103:13). Parents who provide materially for their children are extolled (e.g., Proverbs 31:10-31; including the leaving of an inheritance, Proverbs 13:22). So, though not addressing the topics directly, the teachings of the Old Testament would implicitly discourage the neglect and mistreatment of children.

Relevant Teachings in the New Testament

Though the civil codes of the Old Covenant nation were done away with, the establishment of the New Covenant framework continues to assume the moral validity of the created authority structures taught in the Old Testament (Matthew 19:4-6, Romans 7:12, 13:1-4). Therefore, it can lay greater stress on the *other* side of the issue. In light of the Old Testament emphases, Christ's interest in children is notable and something of a surprise to His disciples (Matthew 18:2-4, 19:13-14, 21:15-17, Mark 9:36-37, 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17). Moreover, he issued a stern warning to abusers: "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks should come, but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble" (Luke 17:1-2). This is one of the severest judgments Christ uttered against a particular kind of sin. His heart goes out to the most vulnerable, and he ironically used a shocking metaphor of punishment to illustrate his condemnation of those who would hurt them!

Family authority structures are basic to human life, and proper human development necessitates that they be internalized early on. However, they are not absolute; they can be corrupted; sin does, in fact, corrupt them. So in the fullness of times, Christ came teaching deeper things than He revealed in the foundational and preparatory Old Covenant documents. Those who care for children bear responsibility for causing them to stumble. In his own teaching, Christ now makes clearer than He did through Moses and the Prophets that the authority of God is higher than parental authority. In fact, following Christ entails loving God more than father and mother (Matthew

10:37)—and even hating them (Luke 14:26-27)! In light of all this, Paul's apostolic instruction about parenting is likewise significant, given its different emphasis from the Old Covenant. Children are still to honor and obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3, Colossians 3:20), but parents (particularly fathers, who are generally less nurturing than mothers) are also told not to provoke their children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4) and exasperate them (Colossians 3:21)—both results of abuse and neglect. This adjustment in emphasis in the New Covenant documents points to a more advanced understanding of the complexity of family life and of the universality of sin, so its teachings make even clearer how reprehensible is the abuse and neglect of children.

The Abuse of Women

Just as with child abuse, there is relatively little attention paid to the abuse of women in the Bible, so again, to get our answers, we have to ask questions of the biblical texts that they do not answer directly. And again, when we do, we find a deep unity in how the documents of the two Covenants approach this matter, along with a distinct shift in emphasis.

Relevant Teachings in the Old Testament

To begin with, we note that the Old Testament promotes what has been called a "patricentric" orientation (Block, 2003). In the Israelite community, the husband/father had distinct leadership responsibilities in the family that were sanctioned by God. A girl was under her father's authority until she was married, when she became subject to her husband's authority (Numbers 30:16). When a pregnant woman was harmed, it was the husband who decided what the fine would be, not the wife (Exodus 21:22). In a number of different contexts, the husband's unilateral authority over the wife was affirmed (see Numbers 5:11-31, 30:7-14). Husbands could have more than one wife (Genesis 29:27, 28, Deuteronomy 21:15), and husbands could divorce a wife if they were not pleased with her (Deuteronomy 21:13, 24:1-4), whereas wives had no such options.

On the other hand, husbands were expressly commanded not to mistreat their wives (Deuteronomy 21:14). And significantly, if a couple was caught in adulterous activity, *both* were to be killed. Moreover, while both parents could physically discipline their children, nowhere in the Old Testament was the husband permitted to correct his wife by physical force of any kind. The book of Proverbs acknowledges that some wives can be difficult

(19:13, 14; 21:19; 25:24; 27:15-16), but never advocates punishment or abuse (contrary to the Koran, see 4.34). As is well-known, the woman of Proverbs 31 runs the household, acts decisively, is resourceful and creative, and "strength and dignity are her clothing and she smiles at the future" (v. 25). So, despite their subordinate position in relation to their husbands, wives are considered fully adults and have special privileges and responsibilities not accorded children.

So, while the patricentric nature of the Old Covenant community was sanctioned in Old Testament Scripture, violence against women was nowhere encouraged. On the contrary, the Old Covenant documents provide protections to the women within the community by teaching their fundamental equality with men as joint image-bearers (Genesis 1:26-27), an equality that undergirds the entire Old Testament, where the dignity and honor of women are affirmed throughout and her status as a full-fledged human being is assumed. The worst that one can say is that within a patricentric environment, sinful men could have falsely believed that physical abuse against women, including wives, was permissible.

There are, in fact, a few examples of such abuse against women in the Old Testament. We will look at two of the worst.² In Genesis 34, we read that Shechem saw Dinah, one of Jacob's daughters, and "took her and lay with her by force" (v. 2), in so doing, treating her "as a harlot" (v. 31). Though afterward, Shechem wanted Dinah for his wife (vv. 3-4), he had already "defiled Dinah" (v. 5). His deed was "disgraceful" (v. 7, lit. *senseless*), violating the social mores of the day and bringing dishonor upon Dinah as well as her family. So her brothers felt compelled to respond by killing Shechem and the men of his town, and then looting and capturing (ironically) its women and children. But strangely, after the rape, Dinah herself is hardly mentioned in the text. Later, in Judges 19 is the terrible story of the rape of a Levite's concubine—offered by the Levite to satisfy the demands of a crowd of Benjamite men for sex with the Levite!—and after a night of coerced sex and probable beating, the concubine died. The Levite is so horrifically incensed (and filled with guilt himself?), he cut up her body into enough parts to send it to the remaining 11 tribes, and they rushed to punish the tribe of Benjamin for its villainy. The story is told, at least in part, to illustrate the level of depravity to which the people of Israel had descended (v. 30). And while the Levite's relinquishing of his concubine to the crowd has to be seen as despicable today, it was in that culture much less offensive than homosexual rape. Nonetheless, surely

the surrender of the concubine also reveals the culture's excessive patricentrism.

The telling of both of these crimes demonstrates the abhorrence of violence against women at that time by the authors of the texts, as well as the peculiar and tragic position that women occupied in such a culture. Perhaps both are also recorded to illustrate the outworking of the curse directed at the woman because of human sin: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3.16). Patriarchy—the *rule* of men over women that can easily lead to violence against women—is a part of that curse. The impact of this curse was circumscribed by the Law—permitting nothing more than a patricentric system of relations ("because of the hardness of your hearts," Jesus said [Mark 10:5]), but violence against women was not allowed—and the texts of the Old Covenant record these two examples of violence against women as dreadful evidence of the depravity, particularly of *males*. The Law was God-breathed revelation (2 Timothy 3.16) and an essential and considerable improvement over pagan, unredeemed morality (including the treatment of women; see for example the other articles in Campbell, 2003), and it provided a bridge to the higher moral standards in the New Testament. But the curse against sin and for sin was only finally overturned in Christ's work of redemption—when the woman's seed was "wounded" in its crushing of the serpent's head—an overturning that was to be furthered in the body of Christ, including the gender relations of the New Covenant community.

Relevant Teachings in the New Testament

There is even less material related to the abuse of women in the New Testament. In fact, in contrast to the narratives of the Old Testament, those of the New make considerably less mention of sexual activity and family life. Part of this may just be due to fewer narratives, but it may also be function of the greater *spiritual* emphasis of the new covenant in contrast to the "this-worldly" concerns of the Old Covenant: the land, children and fertility, food, and other material blessings (see the blessings and curses listed in Deuteronomy 28).

The New Covenant community is constituted by the Spirit, not the flesh. Membership in the New Covenant is not a result of one's physical birth, but one's second birth (John 3:3-8). Christians are members of the family of God, and that trumps all other biological family relations (see Matthew 10:34-39). Christ himself dignified women with his interest and attention while ministering on Earth (e.g., Mary and Martha, Luke 10:38-42; John 11),