

Review and Critical Analysis of Three Recent Books on Biblical Teaching on Women Receiving Attention in Stone-Campbell Movement Churches

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A long-time writer, he has authored or co-authored over 200 published articles and manuscripts on legal and religious topics, including more than 30 related to Biblical teaching on women. Some on legal topics have been cited by the Supreme Courts of Delaware, Kentucky, Mississippi, and New Mexico, Courts of Appeal of Maryland, South Carolina, and Utah, a U.S. District Court, and a U.S. Court of Appeals and in at least 11 treatises written by law professors and others and several books. They have also been cited in over 50 law journals, including the *Stanford Law Review*, *Berkeley Technology Law Journal*, *North Carolina Law Review*, *New York University Law Review*, *Cornell Law Review*, *Stanford Journal of Civil Rights & Civil Liberties*, *William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal*, and *Journal of Gender, Social Policy, and the Law*. His articles on religious topics have been the subject of sermons and Sunday School lessons, cited by bishops in making decisions for 800+ congregations, discussed by panels appearing on religious television broadcasts, used by churches, and cited in multiple articles.

I. Introduction

This paper reviews three recent books regarding Biblical teaching on women: *On Gender: What the Bible Says About Men and Women—And Why It Matters* (2019) by Renée Sproles, *Women Serving God: My Journey in Understanding Their Story in the Bible* (2020) by John Mark Hicks, and *The Bible and Gender: An Exposition of Selected Scriptures* (Illumination Publishers 2020), by the ICOC Teachers Service Team.¹ These books are receiving attention in Stone-Campbell Movement circles, primarily those of Churches of Christ and independent Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and International Churches of Christ, respectively.

The paper briefly introduces, summarizes aspects of, and notes strengths and weaknesses of each book, focusing on their discussion of women’s participation in the church. It then, as its main contribution, analyzes a primary weakness of each. The paper concludes by considering the books’ value for use in the academic classroom, minister’s study, or scholar’s bookshelf.

II. Brief Introduction, Summary, and Description of Strengths of Each Book

A. *On Gender*

On Gender is notable because it is actively promoted to Stone-Campbell Movement church members by a ministry organization with Movement ties that engages in marketing and advertising, is endorsed by two Churches of Christ ministers despite it arguing against an orthodox Churches of Christ approach, and was assisted by two professors from movement-related universities, Harding University and Amridge University. Sproles, a member of North Boulevard Church of Christ, directs its School of Christian Thought.

¹ Renée Sproles, *On Gender: What the Bible Says About Men and Women—And Why It Matters*, (Self-published, 2019); John Mark Hicks, *Women Serving God: My Journey in Understanding Their Story in the Bible* (Self-published, 2020); ICOC Teachers Service Team, *The Bible and Gender: An Exposition of Selected Scriptures* (Spring, Texas: Illumination Publishers, 2020).

On Gender argues for complementarianism and pointedly criticizes both patriarchal traditionalism (e.g., completely excluding females from speaking in the assembly, typical in Churches of Christ) and egalitarianism. Labeled on its cover a “Renew.org resource,” it also serves as advocacy for Renew’s Statement on Gender, at the front of the book.

Its opening pages identify traditionalism and theological liberalism as “deadly” and as misusing scripture. Egalitarians are introduced as denying authority of scripture and as picking and choosing from scripture like a “yummy buffet.” Sproles once declared herself an egalitarian, but after conversations with her minister and study, she decided she is not one after all and was overreacting to the restrictive practice of her church, a Church of Christ. *On Gender* summarizes “my study on gender,” she explains. Her major theme is that of complementarianism, males have “headship” and women are “strong help” for men, with women excluded from some roles, authority, and functions in the church, including senior pastor and elder, but not from all.²

Chapter 1 sets out Sproles’ interpretation of Genesis 1-3, including that God (a) uses creation order—Adam first, “God creates man ... and woman comes from man”—to “forever connect the sexes in relationship and responsibility,” (b) creates Eve as a “strong helper corresponding to or opposite of [Adam],” and (c) instructs Adam, thereby delegating authority to him, and Adam instructs Eve, giving rise to a “clear order of authority” that must be obeyed today. Adam sins because he “should have spoken up”—he was “*with Eve* and said nothing Adam let the serpent and his lies deceive her,” he “remained silent.” Eve sins by making Adam “vulnerable to sin” and handing him the fruit, bringing danger to him. Both violate “their ‘one flesh’ union.” Evidence of Adam’s “headship” includes God confronting “Adam first ..., even though Eve sinned first” and giving him more punishment. In Chapter 2, Sproles argues male

² This essay’s footnotes generally come at paragraph end, with cites for consecutive sentences often separated by semi-colon. Initial paragraphs: Sproles, *On Gender*, pp. 7-20, 94-95, 102-103, 113-115, and front and back cover.

headship (and *kephale*, a Greek term often translated “head”) comprises being an overseeing authority and leader, not a “worldly” kind, but instead a New Testament kind, a kind that “combines mercy *and* rightness with God,” which includes love, service, and sacrifice.³

In Chapter 3, Sproles argues “male headship includes women in prominent roles,” observing “God approves many kinds of female leaders” in the Old Testament, Jesus involves women, and women prayed, taught, and prophesied in the early church in the presence of men. The early church had female deacons (citing Romans 16:1-2) and Phoebe was probably not just a servant but instead a deacon “in the technical sense.” Churches not allowing women to participate in visible ways, she asserts, puts at risk “the spiritual well-being of many of them.” 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is “[i]n the context of judging prophecy,” forbidding “women asking questions that the elders would be asking because it violates the Old Testament principle of submission.” She views “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man” in 1 Timothy 2:12 as “teaching with teeth in it” such that women should not assume teaching authority over men in the gathered church. 1 Timothy 3 and 2:12 reserve “authority of overseer (elder) and rabbi (senior teacher) to males in the church.” Equating senior pastors to rabbis, she says women should not be senior pastors or elders because it “violates creation order,” but women can serve in many ways “with delegated authority, honoring the principles of headship.”⁴

Strengths of *On Gender* include its courage, readability, and relatability. It advocates against traditional Churches of Christ practice relative to females, calling it “overreaching” and “heavy-handed.”⁵ Courage is required to speak out against such practice while remaining in a

³ *On Gender*, pp. 25-35, 36 (citing Gen. 3:17; emphasis in original), 41-42. Sproles defines *kephale* / headship throughout, *see, e.g.,* *ibid.*, pp. 7, 18, 20, 45-46, 57-58, 61-62 (emphasis in original), 78, 81, 94-95, 109 n. 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-85; 86-87; 88; 91-94; 94-95 (asserting v. 12 is a hendiadys (words working together to mean one thing) rather an inclusion meaning to teach men or to assume authority over men as separate concepts).

⁵ *See, e.g.,* *ibid.*, pp. 7-9, 17-18, 86-87, 99, 102

Churches of Christ environment. Many who wish to remain employable, socially connected, or invited to speak in the Churches of Christ world will not question such practice out loud for fear of losing their livelihood and such opportunities. A high volume of scripture is cited and discussed. Much of the discussion is engaging and encouraging, offering hope to women completely prohibited from speaking in their church assembly, for example. Well-organized, it pulls readers along by intermixing scripture commentary with personal stories and observations.

B. *Women Serving God*

Women Serving God is notable in the Stone-Campbell Movement because its author is a Lipscomb University theology professor well-known within its churches and schools, is endorsed by over a dozen respected ministers, chaplains, and professors, including from Pepperdine, Abilene Christian, Johnson, and Lipscomb, and argues contrary to the traditional Churches of Christ approach. Hicks attended Freed-Hardeman University and Western Kentucky University and received a Ph.D. from Westminster Theological Seminary. He has taught for 39 years in Churches of Christ-associated schools and authored or co-authored 18 books.

Part autobiography, part textbook, *Women Serving God* describes Hicks' journey from believing scripture demands "no participation" for women in worship-assembly leadership (no leading singing, preaching, etc.) to viewing scripture as asking for "limited participation" (e.g., read scripture but not preach) and then to viewing scripture as calling for their "full participation." He also describes a theological history of the Churches of Christ, his move from a "blueprint" hermeneutic to a "theological" hermeneutic, and an analysis of relevant scripture, including of varying views and interacting with scholarship with views other than his own.⁶

⁶ *Women Serving God*, pp. 13-21. The second in a book series, Hicks describes it as "an extension" of the first (p. 13), which I reviewed last year, see Steve Gardner, "[Hope for Churches of Christ? "Searching for the Pattern: My Journey in Interpreting the Bible" by John Mark Hicks \(Book Review\)](#)," *Authentic Theology* (Sept. 24, 2019).

Women Serving God first recounts how Hicks read the Bible early on with a “blueprint” hermeneutic—sometimes called CENI—looking to the Bible (often only to Acts and the Epistles) for explicit Commands, approved (binding) Examples, and Necessary Infereces and reasoning God approves only of activity so commanded or approved. Such a hermeneutic is how the Churches of Christ historically conducted itself, per Hicks. He applied it in his youth to find women should not participate in church leadership and even co-authored a book saying so.⁷

Part 2 tells of Hicks’ growing awareness of diversity within 19th and early 20th century Churches of Christ on women’s roles and of scriptural problems with his view. He realized there is more to hermeneutics than looking for commands, examples, and inferences, including discerning the “story-formed theological point that gave rise to the text.” Part 3 outlines his increasing awareness that “no participation” conflicts with scripture and notes his corresponding move to “limited participation” in the 1990s. Part 4 expands on problems with sole reliance on a blueprint hermeneutic and on the leg of his journey leading to his “full participation” view, including more awareness of pouring out of the Spirit on women at Pentecost and of “new creation” (Galatians 6:16). Part 5 considers scripture as a whole relative to women leaders.⁸

In Part 6, Hicks realizes his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 as prohibiting women’s participation in the assembly today is erroneous. He “once thought this text was a timeless and universal prohibition that specified a particular in the blueprint for worshipping assemblies,” but now thinks “Paul is addressing a local situation with a temporary prohibition for a specific problem.” Engaging leading scholarship on various sides of the argument relative to primary

⁷ *Women Serving God*, pp. 23-26; 24-31; 33-40. CENI is my note. For a discussion regarding CENI in this context, see Steve Gardner, “[13 Church-of-Christ CENIs Authorizing Women to Speak in the Worship Assembly \(Commands, Examples, Necessary Inferences\).](#)” *Authentic Theology* (June 6, 2018).

⁸ *Women Serving God*, pp. 71; 75-105; 105-161, 115; 119-161.

interpretative questions, he asserts, “[s]earching for the blueprint forces us to minimize, decontextualize, reframe, or even ignore *the balance of the Bible*” but a theological interpretation considers the overall story of God, including how the Bible describes women partnering with men, participating in the assemblies, and leading God’s people, among other things. He says 1 Tim 2:8-15 is ambiguous, but “*the balance of the Bible speaks loudly.*” He argues the “safe” approach is not, as some assert, excluding females from participating and that “[i]f we have misapplied biblical texts and *illegitimately* silenced women, *that is far from safe.*” The narrative ends with appreciative and insightful responses from four women.⁹

Hicks’ analysis is accessible, considers leading contrary arguments, engages with sources and scholars’ views across the spectrum, and cites original-source evidence.¹⁰ He graciously engages with opposing views while addressing the substance of the disagreement rather than making *ad hominin* assertions. He provides a broad and helpful bibliography and “Further Reading” list. The book asserts a cohesive theory of the theological history of the Churches of Christ relative to female participation in the assembly using primary sources. Throughout, the prose speaks as a companion, rather than as trying to con or to sell something. The story of his increasing awareness of a problem and changing his views is warm and encouraging.

C. *The Bible and Gender*

The Bible and Gender is notable because it is authored by the ICOC Teachers Service Team, a group of 12 experienced ministers, about half of which have or are pursuing doctorates and a quarter of which are women. The book’s stated goal is not to define ICOC doctrine, but to help explain the meaning of scripture “in an attempt to create dialogue” and help Bible readers

⁹ Ibid., pp. 165-176; 204-206; 210; 213-250 (emphasis in original). See also *ibid.*, pp. 43, 165, 211 (daughter, mother). The four are Claire Davidson Frederick, Jantrice Johnson, Lauren Smelser White, and Bethany Joy Moore.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 251-266, 267-270.

interpret passages on “the role of women in the ministry of the church.” Its eight chapters address eight pericopes (or pericope pairs).¹¹ Four are briefly summarized here to illustrate.

Chapter 1 exegetes Genesis 1-3 relative to humans, discussing various Hebrew terms. It describes God giving a divine command to woman and man (be “fruitful and multiply”), noting they “complement each other by design in gender-specific roles, and it is in the distinction of gender that humanity ensures its existence,” and explaining God gave rule over the earth to both. It reasons nothing suggests *ezer* (often translated helper) in Genesis 2 implies “an inferior or subordinate status relative to the man.” Instead, Eve is a “fitting counterpart.” In Genesis 3, both Adam and Eve are given the consequence of *itsavon* (pain), she in childbirth, he in work, but Eve’s consequences, unlike the serpent and man, is not attached to a curse. The consequence of sin for Eve expressed in Genesis 3:16 can be described as hardship in being a companion in procreation and “her relationship with her husband will be unequal and difficult.”¹²

Headship describes “heavenly hierarchy,” per chapter 2, with the order of creation giving “natural hierarchy with Adam as head of Eve.” Because *kephale* meaning “head” in 1 Cor 11 (e.g., “*kephale* of a woman is the man”) is “congruent” with its references to head, hair, and authority and lexicons list “head,” the team chose to translate “*kephale* as ‘head’ ...” Chapter 2 also reasons 1 Cor 11 shows “women prayed and prophesied in the corporate worship.”¹³

Chapter 3 claims 1 Corinthians 14:33-40 (“Women should remain silent in the churches ...”) refers to silence “in the critique of the prophets” and to not acting disruptively and that women “sing, pray, and speak just as tongue speakers and prophets could sing, pray, and speak

¹¹ *The Bible and Gender*, pp. 3-5, 141-144; 4, 6-7; 3-140. Eight: Genesis 1-3, 1 Cor 11:1-16, 1 Cor 14:33-40, Gal 3:26-29, Col 3:18-19 and Eph 5:21-33, 1 Tim 2:8-15, Titus 2:3-5, and 1 Peter 3:1-7

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 8-27; 11-12; 15; 17; 21 (citing Gen. 3:16-17); 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39; 39 n. 20; 47.

when it was their turn.” It says the order Paul urges in vv. 33-40 refers to women not violating “divine headship” of 1 Cor 11:3-10. Its reflections include women “participate fully, limited only by a call to practice propriety in worship” and “order is paramount in Paul’s teaching regarding corporate worship to alleviate ... conflict especially regarding gender-specific roles.”¹⁴

Chapter 6 (by 7 of the team) says “in every place” in 1 Tim 2:8 (want men “in every place to pray ...”) could mean “every place of worship,” house churches, or everywhere, but asserts later “the context is the assembly of the church” and 2:12 refers to women not teaching “in the setting of corporate worship.” Citing women praying and prophesying in the church in 1 Corinthians, it reasons 1 Tim 2:12 seems a “more authorized and ecclesiastical type of teaching.” Paul did not intend in 2:12 to “exclude women from using their gifts and abilities in the context of the corporate church meeting” and its principles relate to decorum and demeanor, so “[n]o woman, or man for that matter, should take it upon himself or herself to usurp authority or have a domineering manner,” but he teaches “men and women have different offices in the ministry.”¹⁵

The book’s strengths include devoting a chapter each to eight of the most-discussed pericopes (or pericope pairs) on gender, often with a phrase-by-phrase commentary on relevant verses. The discussion is generally clear, accessible, and methodical. The chapter on Genesis 1-3 is particularly well done and scholarly. Chapters are highly organized, and the book covers an impressive amount of substantive ground in a relatively short 144 pages. The book was written by what it calls “community theology,” a collaborative writing process in which any committee member could voice their opinion and every member of the team agreed that the final draft was ready to be released.¹⁶ Probably as a resulting strength, the chapters contain many ideas.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 55; 56; 59.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 3, 101; 108; 110; 113; 114; 114-116; 116.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 4-5.

III. Overview of Weaknesses and an Analysis of a Selected Weakness of Each Book

A. *On Gender*

1. Weaknesses include its scriptural analysis, failure to engage sources with a different view, vagueness and ambiguity, and side-stepping a critical question

On key points regarding scripture, *On Gender* engages in eisegesis, makes conclusory assertions without citing substantial evidence, interprets out of context, ignores or downplays scripture, and misquotes scripture.¹⁷ This overriding weakness is combined with the book failing to substantially and meaningfully engage scholarship and evidence besides that which agrees with its conclusions. For example, while criticizing Churches of Christ practice as “overreaching,” “heavy-handed,” and putting the well-being of females at risk, the book does not engage with Churches of Christ scholarship (no Everett Ferguson, Wayne Jackson, David Lipscomb, *Gospel Advocate*, etc.). Nor does *On Gender* address that what its pages advocate—such as excluding females from certain church roles and God-ordained male authority relative to females—is itself criticized by many Christians as overreaching, heavy-handed, and putting the well-being of females at risk. And although the book criticizes egalitarians in bold and *ad hominem* terms, their views are not well represented, and one would not know from reading *On Gender* that evangelical egalitarian or Biblical Christian Egalitarian sources even exist.¹⁸

¹⁷ For example, see multiple points in its discussion on “headship” (e.g., *infra*, Section III.A.2), 1 Cor 14:34-35 (e.g., *On Gender*, p. 88 on judging prophecies), 1 Tim 2 (e.g., on gathered church (cf. centuries of church teaching), *authentain*, and 2:12, pp. 91-95), and 1 Tim 3 (e.g., p. 94); see also eisegesis (e.g., *infra*, III.A.2, throughout); conclusory assertions without substantial evidence (e.g., primogeniture discussion, pp. 25-26; Adam responsible for what Eve did, p. 32); out of context (e.g., *kephale*, pp. 58-63, and *infra* in III.A.2); ignoring or downplaying scripture (e.g., III.A.2 (e.g., Gen. 1:28); dismissing evidence contrary to its primogeniture eisegesis with “exceptions, however, do not make the rule” in an endnote (19); not engaging passages reflecting women teaching assembled men with its interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12; Eph 5:21 (mutual submission) not reflected in “very helpful” passages summary at chap. 2 opening, but “Husbands are the heads of their wives (Eph. 4-6),” while eventually acknowledging “[h]usbands and wives are to submit to one another,” p. 53, while privileging other texts; not engaging partnership nature of *ezer* or opening paragraphs of 1 Tim); scripture misquote (see *infra*, III.A.2).

¹⁸ See, e.g., *On Gender*, pp. 9-12, 99-103; Benjamin R. Knoll & Cammie Jo Bolin, *She Preached the Word*, New York: Oxford U. Press (2018), pp. 119-235 (women having only male congregational leaders growing up had, as an effect, (1) lower self-esteem (associated with more depression, anxiety), (2) less education, (3) higher unemployment, and (4) more authoritarian and judgmental view of God, on average, than men and than women who

Sources and assertions in the book are nearly uniformly from the same school of thought, that associated with the Southern Baptist Convention, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, The Gospel Coalition, and The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, a school of thought to which the Renew Statement on Gender conforms.¹⁹ In this vein, *On Gender* reads not so much as a study, but instead as a narrative of talking-points and advocacy for the theology and practice urged by that Statement, largely with one-sided, conclusory arguments selected or derived from sources reflecting that school of thought at key points. Thus, a second major weakness is the book's monolithic, tunnel-vision nature.

Another is the book's vagueness and ambiguity. Specific on some things women *cannot* do (e.g., Lead Pastor, senior teacher, elder), it is mostly vague and ambiguous regarding what women *can* do (e.g., sole teacher of a class of men and women? preach? Non-Lead Pastor? lead singing? communion remarks?). The Renew Statement it endorses says "New Testament norms" must be upheld today, but "New Testament norms" is loaded and ambiguous and Churches of Christ generally consider such norms to completely prohibit females from speaking in the assembly.²⁰ A crucial fourth one is *On Gender* side-steps if, why, and how New Testament norms and male headship are or are not required in the workplace, education, government, society, or other areas beyond church and home under its and the Renew Statement's theology.²¹

had influential female congregational leaders growing up). For other criticism and egalitarian scholarship, see, e.g., margmowczko.com; cbeinternational.org; *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, Pierce et al., eds. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2010); Linda L. Belleville, "Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Rev. Ed.), Stanley N. Gundry, ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan (2005); *Women Serving God*, pp. 267, 270; articles under "Women" at my site, e.g., Steve Gardner, "[20 Passages Asking Women to Speak, Teach, Lead, and Have Authority Over Men. In the Assembly and Elsewhere.](#)" *Authentic Theology* (Sept. 3, 2018). Complementarianism is sometimes called "hierarchicalism" or "authoritarianism." *On Gender* fails to note on what points egalitarians and traditionalists would agree with its discussion, likely much.

¹⁹ See, e.g., *On Gender*, pp. 105-112, 117-118; 7. The book is labeled a "Renew.org resource."

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7. Asserting "Lead Pastor" as a New Testament norm as the Statement does is striking given its absence from the New Testament. It is used by many independent Christian Churches and Southern Baptists.

²¹ See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 7, 95-97; cf. ch. 1 ("life": vague), 2-3 ("marriage," "Christian Community": application, rules).

2. *On Gender's* primary weakness is its scriptural analysis

This section illustrates the book's primary weakness—scriptural analysis of key points—by briefly describing four examples of problems in *On Gender's* scriptural analysis of one of its main themes, that males have headship and authority relative to females due to their sex.

In a first example of scriptural-analysis problems, as a major premise in arguing for its version of male headship, *On Gender* claims Adam instructs Eve about not eating from the tree after God instructs Adam. This instructional chain is evidence of Adam's authority and headship relative to Eve, it says.²²

The Bible, however, does not say Adam instructs Eve about not eating from the tree. God, Adam, or both might have told Eve directly—the Bible does not say explicitly—but a main premise of *On Gender's* headship theology is Adam instructs her, and *On Gender* does not mention any other possibility. The Bible implies God instructs Eve directly, as, for example, (a) Eve quotes God, but not Adam, speaking affirmatively and directly, telling the snake “God did say, ‘You must not ...’” (Genesis 3:3), not “Adam did say that God did say, ‘You must not ...,’” (b) Eve's quote of God is different from God's words to Adam and the Bible does not suggest a misquote, (c) the Bible does not report Adam instructing Eve at all, (d) Genesis 1:27-29 reports God instructing both Eve and Adam, and (e) verse 29 reports God instructs both about eating fruit from trees (*On Gender* quotes vv. 27-28, leaving out v. 29).²³

Another example is *On Gender* arguing a sign of Adam's “headship” over Eve is God confronting Adam first “even though Eve sinned first.”²⁴ The Bible does not explicitly say who

²² See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 25, 31-33. This is an example of eisegesis, ignoring/downplaying other scripture, not engaging contra views, conclusory, etc. Such chain-of-command arguments urge hierarchy within complementarianism.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 31-33. These are examples. When discussing Gen. 1, *On Gender* quotes vv. 27-28 but not v. 29. See *ibid.*, pp. 22-23. Also note the snake asks Eve what God said in Gen. 3:2.

²⁴ See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 42.

sins first, but strongly suggests Adam, explaining “sin entered the world” through him in Romans 5:12. Indeed, another Renew publication states “the first human sin, committed by Adam”²⁵ Similarly, *On Gender* itself contradictorily indicates Adam sins first, that he sins by being with Eve and failing to speak up when he could have preserved her—instead of “preserving” Eve, *On Gender* says, “Adam let the serpent and his lies deceive her”²⁶

As a third example, *On Gender* then claims Adam’s headship is shown by Adam’s consequences upon sinning—reasoning that God confronting Adam first and meting out more punishment when speaking to him indicates God had delegated authority to Adam beforehand. When God delegates authority, per the book, the recipient “gains privileges” and “special rights.” Thus, *On Gender* argues, greater consequences from God for Adam relative to Eve shows God had given Adam “privileges” and “special rights,” which shows God gave Adam “headship.”²⁷

The Bible, though, does not say Adam’s consequences are due to any of that—not such delegated authority, “headship,” “privileges,” or “special rights” relative to Eve. The Bible says Adam’s consequences are due to his sinning by listening to the voice of his wife and eating of the tree about which God commanded him, while he was not deceived, sinning with eyes wide open. (Gen 3:17; 1 Tim 2:14) The only “voice” of his wife for Adam to hear in scripture is when Eve spoke to the snake. (Genesis 2-3) And the Bible says “sin entered the world” and “death reigned” through Adam. (Rom 5:12, 17) In contrast, Eve was deceived into transgression by *the craftiest animal God ever made*—Satan—and there is no mention of sin entering the world or death reigning or anything like that through Eve. (Gen 3:1, 4; 1 Tim 2:14; Rev 12:9; John 8:44).

²⁵ Michael Strickland, “[Q: Original Sin or Ancestral Sin?](#),” Renew.org (June 2020) (e.g., “first human sin, committed by Adam”; “first culprit in our plight: our forefather, Adam, sinned”), accessed Aug. 23, 2020.

²⁶ *On Gender*, pp. 36, 41-42.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 32, 42.

Who would you expect to be confronted first and receive greater consequences? ---

(a) Eve: attacked by the craftiest beast God ever made, Satan; quoted God’s word in responding; became deceived into transgression by the craftiest beast ever; or

(b) Adam: sins by listening and eating with eyes wide-open, not deceived; the person through whom sin entered the world and through whom death reigned.

That God confronts Adam first and gives more consequences as compared with Eve is not surprising considering the relative culpability the Bible sets out. It does not explicitly say why. But Adam listening and eating, sinning while undeceived (as compared to Eve, sinning while deceived by the craftiest beast ever), and sin entering the world and death reigning through Adam is what the Bible highlights. (Gen 3:17; 1 Tim 2:14; Romans 5:12, 17) And it is obviously eisegesis—and privileging males and subordinating females—to claim Adam’s consequences instead is due to Adam having “special rights” and having “gain[ed] privileges” relative to Eve.

A fourth example involves *On Gender* misquoting scripture and using it in analyzing a key concept. The Bible says, “... the *kephale* of every man is Christ, and *kephale* of the woman is man, and *kephale* of Christ is God.” (1 Cor 11:3) *Kephale* or “head” could have a meaning in the sense of (a) source, origin, beginning, or representative of a whole (non-hierarchical) (as in head of a river or head of a line of kids at school), (b) overseeing authority and leader (as in head of a company), (c) physical head (head on your body), or something else. *On Gender* argues *kephale* and “headship” for gender comprise a kind of authority and leader, rather than source.²⁸

On Gender’s primary argument for *kephale* comprising authority and leadership includes Christ is called “the head (*kephale*) cornerstone.” It repeats this multiple times with variations.²⁹

²⁸ See footnote 3 and accompanying text. The meaning of *kephale* can vary.

²⁹ *On Gender*, pp. 58-63. It describes some desirable qualities of men or husbands in the Bible and of Christ’s example, and attempts to shoehorn those into a kind and theme of authority for the meaning of *kephale* or head, *see, e.g.*, *ibid.*, pp. 59-63, 65-69 (“authority of his headship combines mercy *and* rightness with God”), rather than seeing the qualities as ones of loving others, Christ’s love, following his example, and submitting to others, none of which requires or encourages authority over others, much less authority based on sex or other immutable characteristic.

On Gender misquotes the leading verse on which it relies for this claim, 1 Peter 2:7, though, quoting it as “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very *head* of the cornerstone.”³⁰ I found no recognized translation or credentialed scholar translating 1 Peter 2:7 as *On Gender* quotes it, to include “head of the cornerstone.”

The verse says instead “*kephalen gonias*,” meaning, word-for-word, “head of corner or angle,” normally translated as that or as “cornerstone” (not “head of cornerstone” or “head cornerstone”).³¹ In other words, “head of corner” means “cornerstone” (or similar term).

What *On Gender* quotes and emphasizes as proving its point is instead absent from the verse—no “head of the cornerstone,” “Head cornerstone,” “*kephale* cornerstone,” there or in the other verse it quotes in this regard, Matthew 21:42.³² The book’s use of misquoted scripture is when considering a key disputed point (authority vs. source) relative to its main theme, headship.

These four examples are just some of the analytical problems found in just one of *On Gender*’s arguments relative to scripture (headship). As mentioned at the outset, material weaknesses are found at multiple key points of the book’s arguments on scripture.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 59 (emphasis in original). A Google search of “1 Peter 2:7 ‘head of the cornerstone’” yields 5 results, none applicable and multiple translations can be seen at [BibleHub](https://www.biblehub.com), none as *On Gender*.

³¹ See, e.g., [biblehub.com/text/1_peter/2-7.htm](https://www.biblehub.com/text/1_peter/2-7.htm). *Kephalen*, accusative, receives the preposition *eis* (into). *Gonias*, genitive, modifies *kephalen*. Out of about 60 translations at [Bible Gateway](https://www.biblegateway.com), for example, a small few say “chief cornerstone” (Amplified Bible, J.B. Phillips NT, New King James Version, Revised Geneva Translation (RGT), Tree of Life Version, and World English Bible) in 2:27, one uses “head cornerstone” there (New Testament for Everyone), and a few use “chief cornerstone” in the other verse cited, Matt 21:42 (NASB plus same ones except RGT), but their use of these phrases appears to be a remnant from early translations of Psalm 118:22, echoed in these verses, and they, too, have *kephalen* do double duty. Of course, semantic range of chief includes non-authority meanings, including in the sense of first, beginning, origin, representative, etc., such as chief place in line, chief concern, chief of the residents are in their homes, first and chiefest, and the like. See, e.g., “Chief,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press 2020). The vast majority of modern (and not so modern) translations translate it “cornerstone” or “head of the corner.” None translated it as *On Gender* quotes, “head of the cornerstone.”

³² Ibid., pp. 59-60. It quotes 2:7 later from the NRSV, asserting “Peter elaborates on Christ as the head cornerstone ...” (60), but the NRSV does not say “head cornerstone” or “head of the cornerstone” there either. A cornerstone is often vital as it begins and defines an angle, corner, or row, *i.e.*, as a source, origin, beginning, or first representative of a corner, angle, line, or row. It is not an overseeing authority over others, not directing others itself, but serving as a foundational component—origin or beginning—of a row, column, building, or other construction set by one with authority or serving them. Source or beginning sense of *kephalen gonias* is also seen by Paul using ἀκρογωνιαίος (*akrogóniaios*) in Eph 2:20 to refer to cornerstone, combining ἄκρος (extreme) and γωνία (corner, angle).

B. *Women Serving God*

1. Weaknesses include hermeneutical focus and historical analysis

Weaknesses in *Women Serving God* include implying that changing one's hermeneutic is needed to reach a conclusion of "full participation." While such a change is part of Hicks' journey, what can be viewed as a straightforward misinterpretation problem within, and even violating, a blueprint hermeneutic or most any hermeneutic (e.g., misinterpreting 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:12 by reading out of context) is cast instead as a larger problem.

His engagement with scripture and history does not meaningfully address centuries-long, historical interpretation and practice of exclusion of women and its underlying premises.³³ In this vein, his focus on a narrow *species* of *one product* of the theology of women (the species being what happens in the assembly), instead of on the *genus* of that product (women barred from public speaking, teaching, and leading everywhere) and on the overarching theology of women at the time itself (sin-causing, blameworthy, deceived and deceptive, untrustworthy, confined, etc.),³⁴ risks misapprehending or not realizing the theology ultimately at the foundation

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 168-172 with, e.g., Kevin Giles, "A Critique of the 'Novel' Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book, Women in the Church. Part I," *Evangelical Q.* 72:2 (2000), 151-167, and Kevin Giles, "A Critique of the 'Novel' Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book, Women in the Church. Part II," *Evangelical Q.* 72:3 (2000), 195-215 (describing historical interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 and related scripture). Another example is Hicks' engagement with the meaning of "in every place" in 1 Tim 2:8.

³⁴ This overarching theology of women includes, for example, interpreting scripture to say women should not teach or have authority over men anywhere in public—in church, in government, in the military, in public, in a public forum—because: (1) Women are inferior to men because (a) she was created second (Eve after Adam), reflecting inferiority and (b) women do not fully bear the image of God, and (2) women (via Eve) are to be blamed for evil and death in the world and women are more susceptible to sin, deception, and error than men, and thus their place, their sphere, is solely in the home, in private settings, and with the children and not in public places of teaching or authority. See, e.g., Kevin Giles, "A Critique of the 'Novel' Contemporary Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 Given in the Book, Women in the Church. Part I," *Evangelical Q.* 72:2 (2000), pp. 160-163. See also Marg Mowczko, "[Misogynistic Quotations from Church Fathers and Reformers.](#)" (Jan. 24, 2013); Steve Gardner, "[David Lipscomb, Church of Christ Foundational Leader: 'All the Teaching of the Bible is Against Women Speaking in Public' \(It Gets Worse\).](#)" *Authentic Theology* (April 12, 2018) (e.g., "It is wrong for a woman to become a leader or public teacher of men in any place or on any occasion."; "[A]ll public teaching and speaking on any subject at any place puts woman out of place, out of her God-given work."; Women's "unfitness to lead and teach arises from her strong emotional nature causing her to be easily deceived and to be ready to run after anything or body that might strike her fancy against reason and facts."); Steve Gardner, "[Alexander Campbell, Church-of-Christ Denomination Progenitor: Women's Domain 'Rightfully Only House Wide.'](#)" *Authentic Theology* (March 23, 2018) (similar).

of excluding females from participation in the assembly, then and today, whether “no participation” or “limited participation.” Moreover, the history he describes does not closely consider the split between the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ. Other weaknesses include mostly using “gifting” language—which can imply a merit question to readers—in his scriptural analysis rather than the language of “calling,” as women responding to his book do.³⁵

2. Primary weakness is overstating the evidence in its historical analysis

One weakness stood out. Hicks’ description of “the history” of the Churches of Christ relative to women participating in the assembly in the 19th and 20th centuries expresses a much greater magnitude of diversity of practice in the Churches of Christ then and a much greater level of certainty about that magnitude than the evidence he cites allows. Hicks claims significant “limited participation” in the assembly by women in the Churches of Christ in that time period—that “many congregations” of the Churches of Christ practiced “limited participation” then, with women encouraged to lead prayer, read scripture, exhort, and lead singing in the public assembly and with women leading prayer and exhorting the assembled church being “not uncommon,” and that women’s participation in the church was a “hotly disputed” topic among Churches of Christ for a long time, for example—and that there was a “move” to uniformity for the first time in the 1930s or 1940s as a reaction to culture.³⁶ But an in-context analysis of evidence he cites reveals

³⁵ See, e.g., *Women Serving God*, pp. 63-74, 107-117, 119-120, 129, 159-161, 176-180, 193, 196-197, 202-205 (hermeneutic-change discussion, some application); 20, 102, 107; cf. 216, 218; 227-229; 243, 246 (gifts, gifting). Hicks also uses “calling,” but with much less emphasis and substantive use, see, e.g., 134, 207, 210, 212. Some use “gifts” inclusive of calling, but “gift” obfuscates that God calls people to do things humans might not see them as gifted to do. A man sat behind me at church, singing loudly, with feeling. He loves God. I view him as called to sing out. Was he gifted at it? In human terms, no—never on key, rarely on beat. An additional weakness is that, in some ways, Hicks erects new barriers for ending discrimination against women and girls in the assemblies—emphasizing hermeneutic change, placing “new creation” and the pouring out of the Spirit at the hinge of his journey. Many Churches of Christ elders and members probably have no firm idea of to what he is referring with “new creation” and pouring out of the Spirit would raise for them the specter of Pentecostalism (e.g., tongue speaking).

³⁶ See, e.g., *Women Serving God*, pp. 46 (“the history of women in the American Restoration Movement”; “churches of Christ had a diverse history regarding the audible participation and visible leadership of women in a worshipping

that the evidence does not justify such a claim and that his claim may be a material overstatement such that there was not such a diversity of practice in the Churches of Christ.³⁷

If it is overstated, then Hicks' expression of the history could obfuscate the make-up, provenance, and import of the theology that underlies "no participation" and "limited participation" in the Churches of Christ at that time and today. Hicks argues that uniformity of the Churches of Christ as to "no participation" is a relatively recent development (1930s or 1940s), heavily influenced by culture to "move" to no participation.³⁸ If, instead, the history is

assembly"); 47 ("controversy among churches of Christ that had been roaring for at least fifty years"; "From roughly 1888 to 1938, churches of Christ debated whether women could not only preach and exhort in the assembly They debated They debated"; "more hotly disputed from 1888 to 1938 than at any other time in the history of churches of Christ until recent decades"); 48 ("not uncommon"); 50 ("many"; "the move"). The history Hicks describes as to the assembly is essentially that "many congregations" of the Churches of Christ practiced "limited participation" in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with women encouraged to lead prayer, read scripture, exhort, and lead singing in the public assembly and with women leading prayer and exhorting the assembled church being "not uncommon," for example, and that women's participation in the church was a "hotly disputed" topic among Churches of Christ from about 1888 until the late 1930s, but Churches of Christ were alarmed by cultural developments in the late 1800s and early 1900s (e.g., women wanting to work outside the home, seeking the right to vote, and giving public speeches on alcohol sales and use), and these cultural developments (in addition to relevant discussions in the *Gospel Advocate*, a failure of the blueprint hermeneutic to find authorization for female participation in the assembly, a desire to be "safe," and a desire to be "loyal" Churches of Christ (rather than like northern churches)) caused "the move" of the Churches of Christ from such diversity of practice to uniformity of "no participation" for the first time in the late 1930s or early 1940s. This uniformity held and largely continues today. See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 19, 45-63, in particular pp. 19, 46, 47-50; 50-56, 62-63. In conjunction with discussing such cultural movements, Hicks explains certain Churches of Christ leaders believed women are to be "excluded from leadership in society as well as the home and church" based on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and other scripture, but that the *Gospel Advocate* and churches eventually accepted public roles for women in society. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

³⁷ This weakness does not impact Hicks' ultimate conclusion about scripture, but it is a major weakness in light of a potential misapprehension of that which underlies today's practice of the Churches of Christ. Bill Grasham makes a more modest claim in ["The Role of Women in the American Restoration Movement"](#) (undated; possibly 1999) ("[t]here has never been a completely uniform view of the role of women in the work and worship of the church in the Restoration Movement" (note view rather than practice and including the whole of the Movement)). In some sense, it depends on how literally and strictly one views "uniform." One can claim lack of uniformity easily if one takes a literal view of it. And it is much easier to identify persuasive evidence of non-uniform "views" than of practice. Hicks does not appear to use "uniform" literally and strictly, e.g., not with a tiny percentage deviating making something non-uniform. Hicks' description may be the history of the Churches of Christ or it may not. It appears far overstated relative to diversity. A point of this criticism is that the evidence Hicks offers does not prove that it is the history and there is good reason to believe that it overstates the evidence as to diversity, for example.

³⁸ *Women Serving God*, pp. 51-52, 62. I fear that Hicks' assessment on uniformity may miss, too, that the absence of discussion in the relevant periodicals regarding a topic does not necessarily mean a lack of discussion and debate within the group. See, e.g., Robert C. Douglas, *The Exercise of Informal Power Within the Church of Christ: Black Civil Rights, Muted Justice, and Denominational Politics* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 2008) (describing a deliberate effort not to address controversial issues). Note also the absence of dissenting views in many periodicals today and in recent decades.

the Churches of Christ is a group that inherited and followed a form of the prevailing patriarchal teaching and practice in the Roman Catholic Church and then in Protestant churches for centuries before the 19th and, in conformity therewith, uniformly taught and practiced an overall prohibition on women from publicly speaking to, teaching, having authority over, or leading men *anywhere at all* in the 19th and early 20th century, *based on and as a product of the awful overarching theology of women noted above* (e.g., sin-causing, blameworthy, deceived and deceptive, untrustworthy, confined, etc.), with “no participation” in the assembly being just one species of that overall prohibition and with reactions to cultural developments Hicks cites helping to maintain “no participation,” and the group began to liberalize this overall prohibition beginning in the 1930s and 1940s to accommodate women working outside the home and then in the 1990s to accommodate “limited participation” in some places, *then*, (a) ultimately, both “no participation” and “limited participation” today in the Churches of Christ are part of a narrowed-but-continuous theological stream, both fed from its polluted upstream of the prevailing, overarching theology of women of the 19th century and before (sin-causing, blameworthy, etc.), and (b) this contaminated, continuous stream flows through not only the Churches of Christ “no participation” and “limited participation” assembly of today, but through the home and, in at least some branches, through education, the workplace, government, and society. Miscasting the stream of theological history here can obscure traditions and teachings that taint our water, risks us thinking that going down a different branch of the same stream can solve the problem, and impedes cleaning up the water to make it healthy, unifying, and edifying for the church and pleasing to our creator.

To illustrate by example this analytical weakness in Hicks' historical claims, I show below that the magnitude of diversity Hicks claims for the 19th century—*e.g.*, “many” practicing limited participation, “not uncommon”—is not proven by the evidence he cites: four articles published from 1860 to 1886 containing arguments that scripture allows limited participation by women (*e.g.*, to lead prayer); the activities of Charlotte Fanning, the wife of Churches of Christ luminary Tolbert Fanning; and a statement by David Lipscomb.³⁹ First, a published *argument* does not, by itself, prove that what is argued for is actually taking place *in practice*. The “Further Reading” at the conclusion of *Women Serving God* has a roughly equal number arguing for full participation in the Churches of Christ as arguing against. This, of course, does not reflect what is taking place in practice, as less than 1% of Churches of Christ congregations today are “full participation” congregations.⁴⁰ Only two of these six evidentiary instances Hicks cites explicitly refer to actual practice (Faurot and Fanning), and they are ambiguous or not credible on the point. The others are only arguments for a practice, not testimony that the argued-for practice actually took place. Second, pointing to just *a few* published arguments or possible instances of practice over a period of *decades* when there were thousands and thousands of columns of articles published does not suggest the level of diversity Hicks claims.

Third, and the main point here, inferences Hicks expresses from the evidence he cites appear far overstated when the evidence is viewed in context (*e.g.*, with the full quote, what the person said later, what other people said, or historical context). There are strong indications that half do not refer to women speaking or leading (in the sense of leading we think of today) in the assembly in the first place (Franklin, Fanning, Lipscomb), but instead refer to women in small

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. Hicks later provides a second, related statement by Lipscomb in the 1870s. See footnote 57 *infra*.

⁴⁰ See Wiley Clarkson, wherethespiritleads.org/gender_inclusive_churches.htm.

groups, singing out well while seated in the congregation, or participating outside the assembly. Others appear either not to mean what Hicks implies or make a statement that is not credible (Faurot) or simply offer arguments for limited participation with no evidence of actual implementation (Krutsinger, Lard). The evidence Hicks quotes to support his claim for a significant level of diversity of practice in the assembly among Churches of Christ—“not uncommon,” “many,” “move,” etc.—is ambiguous at best when viewed in context.

Hicks cites as proof that it was not uncommon for women to participate in prayer and exhortation an 1866 letter to the *Millennial Harbinger* from Mr. R. Faurot, who argues for women taking part in “social prayer and exhortation.” Hicks quotes Faurot as saying he only knew of “two congregations outside of Bethany, that did not allow women to all acts of religious worship” (Hicks adds “especially exhortation”).⁴¹ The quote, as presented, implies Faurot means it was unusual for Churches of Christ congregations to prohibit women from *any* act of worship in 1866. If that is what Faurot means, does such a statement seem credible? It seems more likely that he means instead that he knows of only two churches outside Bethany that completely prohibit women from all acts of worship, *including from exhortation and song*, for example (Faurot cites Luke 1:46, Mary’s Song), *i.e.*, only two churches impose *complete silence* on

⁴¹ *Women Serving God*, p. 48 (citing R. Faurot [“Shall Women Pray or Exhort in Public” \[Letter to the Editor\]](#), *Millennial Harbinger*, 5th Series (Aug. 1864), pp. 370-371; R. Faurot, [“Shall Women Pray or Exhort in Public?” \[Letter to the Editor\]](#), *Millennial Harbinger*, 5th Series (Sept. 1864), pp. 415-418). The “two congregations” note and reference to Luke 1:46 is at p. 417. Faurot cites his experience in the “bosom of the reformation” Western Reserve, Ohio (northeastern Ohio), and farther west. *Ibid.* Was he referring to Churches of Christ? Restoration Movement churches? All churches? Is he Randall Faurot, referenced by C.C. Smith in “Among the Negroes of the South,” in John Brown, [Churches of Christ: A Historical, Biographical, and Pictorial History of Churches of Christ](#), Louisville, Kentucky: John P. Morton & Co. (1904), p. 169. Faurot ends the sentence that Hicks quotes with “... for when I speak of exhortation, it is in the sense of giving utterance to *religious* emotions, like Mary’s, (Luke 1.46).” Faurot, *supra*, p. 417. The description sounds different than how letter-writer R. Faurot describes himself. It is more likely the R. Faurot mentioned at [p. 594 of that same book](#) in describing Cyrus Alton of Nebraska as “a pioneer preacher of the Restoration; born near St. Joe Station, Ind. Jan. 4, 1841; commenced preaching with R. Faurot ...” or the one mentioned [at p. 252](#) there as starting a school “at St. Louis.” Or it could be the one mentioned in Henry Fusselman, [\[Letter to the Editor\]](#), *The Christian Record*, James M. Mathes, ed., Vol, III, Bloomington, Indiana (Sept. 27, 1845), p. 153 (“young brother from Michigan attended our meeting by name R Faurot whom we have engaged as our evangelist ...”). Some of these may refer to the same person.

women. At minimum, it is ambiguous. Does such a statement in a letter to the editor allow for a confident assertion that it was “not uncommon” for women to participate in or lead prayer and exhort mixed assemblies in 1866 or that “many” did?

The other three articles cited in favor of limited female participation are by relatively well-known men in the Restoration Movement. The first of them, Benjamin Franklin, however, is often associated with the Disciples of Christ (viewed as splitting from the Churches of Christ over a period of the mid-19th to very-early-20th centuries).⁴² He, as Hicks reports, in 1860 suggests women may sing, pray, commune, and exhort in public worship.⁴³ Although unclear, Franklin later appears to limit this to a particular *kind* of public worship and not including the assembly, though, as, in an 1862 article Hicks does not quote, Franklin explains that the church in Corinth met sometimes in small groups “for prayers, exhortation and songs” and women prayed and prophesied there, but “[w]hen important questions were pending in the church,” women were not permitted to speak nor to “arrogate to themselves authority.” Franklin concludes, “[i]n any of our small meetings for prayers, exhortations, songs, etc., the sisters should participate in both the prayers and exhortations, but in the more extended assemblies for the public edification of the people at large ... they should be in silence.”⁴⁴

⁴² He is great nephew of the better-known Benjamin Franklin. “[W]hen that division was recorded in the 1906 Census of Religious Bodies, nearly 83 percent of the nearly 160,000 Churches of Christ members lived in the eleven states of the former Confederacy and the border states of Kentucky, West Virginia, Missouri, and Oklahoma. By contrast, only about 15 percent of the nearly one million Disciples of Christ members lived in the eleven Southern states.” Douglas A. Foster, “The Effect of the Civil War on the Stone-Campbell Movement,” *SCJ* 20 (Spring 2017), p. 6 (citing David Edwin Harrell, Jr., [“The Sectional Origins of the Churches of Christ,”](#) *The Journal of Southern History* 30 (Aug. 1964), p. 263). Harrell describes Franklin as “moderate,” probably mostly due to Franklin’s journal (*American Christian Review*) not taking a position relative to the Civil War and loyalty to the Union. *See, e.g.*, Harrell, *supra*, pp. 265, 267, 269 n. 24 (*cf.* Hicks calls him “conservative,” *Women Serving God*, p. 48).

⁴³ *Women Serving God*, p. 48 (citing Benjamin Franklin, *Queries and Quandaries*, ed. by Kyle D. Frank, (Chillicothe, Ohio: DeWard Pub. Co., 2012); Hicks does not give a pinpoint cite for Franklin, but the information is likely from p. 110, reporting a query and answer from *American Christian Review*, Vol. 3, No. 5, p. 18 (Jan. 1860)).

⁴⁴ Franklin, *Queries and Quandaries*, pp. 34-35 (also “or when church matters are under investigation and important questions at issue, they should be in silence.”). He says “We doubt that in Paul’s time, they had some of those masculine women, like our modern clerical ladies, on a mission of ‘Woman’s Rights,’ who were repulsive to all

William Henry Krutsinger, while the Indiana correspondent for the *Gospel Advocate*, argues in two of his 1887 columns that scripture allows the audible participation of women in the assembly, as Hicks reports, and forbids them only from speaking in tongues, from “things of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁵ But Hicks does not mention that Harding, Lipscomb, and the *Gospel Advocate* reject Krutsinger’s view in strong terms the next month and in articles over the next several months.⁴⁶ And if what Krutsinger advocates actually occurred with any frequency, one might expect it to appear in his regular column, but I saw no such mention, at least in 1887.⁴⁷

refined people and enlightened minds, who were a disgrace to the church of Christ. But these are the whole breadth of the heavens from those holy women, of deep and unfeigned piety, who prayed and prophesied in the first church, or those who participate in the worship in our time.” *Ibid.*; *ibid.*, pp. 58-59, 170-171 (deacons, elders). In 1867, he says “women should not teach, nor usurp authority in the church, is clear . . .” but it is not the case that “women should never participate in social worship. . . . [T]here are two extremes—the one not permitting women to open their lips in any worshipping assembly, and the other making them public preachers and teachers. This latter class generally get to be infidels, disgracing themselves.” Franklin, *supra*, p. 63 (citing *Am. Christian Rev.*, Vol. X, No. 26 (July 2, 1867), p. 213). With his earlier statements in mind, Franklin might emphasize the word “any” here, but it is unclear. *See also* *ibid.*, p. 155 (citing *Am. Christian Rev.*, Volume X, No. 42 (Oct. 15, 1867), p. 333, answering a question about a “lady preacher” by stating “If this woman is of the Lord she will hear Paul, 1 Tim 2.11-12 If she is not of the Lord, she likely will go on preaching.” (This may be evidence that women were actually preaching, at least in some types of churches.)), p. 166 (citing Vol. 16, No. 30 (July 23, 1873), p. 228 (“simply no authority, or one word about women voting in transacting business in the church, participating in ruling, . . . or anything of the kind, under any dispensation, Patriarchal, Jewish, or Christian”). As an aside, my favorite question in *Queries and Quandaries*: “What ought to be done with sisters, that with axes, sledges, and hammers, and have broke their way into a grocery, and destroyed the liquors, and some other things found therein, and burned up the barrels that had contained the liquor?” *Ibid.*, pp. 216-217 (citing *Am. Christian Rev.*, Vol. 5, No. 35, (Sept. 2, 1862), p. 2).

⁴⁵ He argued women could lead prayer, prophesy, and edify the church. *See* William Henry Krutsinger, “Items from Indiana,” *Gospel Advocate* (March 16, 1887), p. 162; “Items from Indiana,” *Gospel Advocate* (May 4, 1887), p. 284; “William Henry Krutsinger,” therestorationmovement.com/states/indiana/krutsinger.htm, accessed Aug. 16, 2020.

⁴⁶ The next month, June 1887, Associate Editor J.A. Harding has as the first line in a *Gospel Advocate* article titled “Shall the Women Teach and Lead the Prayers in Public Assemblies?”: “It seems that the Bible cannot be plain enough on any subject to prevent the teaching of erroneous doctrine upon that subject.” J.A. Harding, “Shall the Women Teach and Lead the Prayers in Public Assemblies?,” *Gospel Advocate* (June 8, 1887), p. 366. He goes on to explain that the passages prohibit women from speaking to the public assembly. A few weeks later, on the front page of the August 3 *Gospel Advocate*, he repeats his view in summary form. J.A. Harding, “Regular Reading vs. Topical Study,” *Gospel Advocate* (Aug. 3, 1887), p. 481. Then, on the front page on the day before Thanksgiving 1887, David Lipscomb endorses Harding’s views, and later that month the *Gospel Advocate* reports, as to women preaching in Nashville, that “[n]ot one of the churches of Christ, I am glad to say, was opened to these women. . . . God forbid that I shal[l] ever become so disloyal to Him as to ever think such is correct.” David Lipscomb, “Miscellaneous,” *Gospel Advocate* (November 30, 1887), p. 763; *see also* “The A.G. vs. The A.G.,” *Gospel Advocate* (Dec. 21, 1887), p. 806; “Worker Chips,” *Gospel Advocate* (April 4, 1888); M.R. Lemert, “Keep Silence, Wives,” *Gospel Advocate* (June 13, 1888), p. 5; E.G. Sewell, “The Elevation and Proper Position of Women Under the Religion of Christ,” *Gospel Advocate* (June 13, 1888), p. 8.

⁴⁷ I read his 1887 columns and saw no such mention. *See* “Items from Indiana,” *Gospel Advocate* (1887), pp. 12, 30, 55, 83, 125, 131, 157, 162 (discussing 1 Cor 14 in responding to letter that includes, “I would like to hear from you

Hicks' quote of Moses Lard as "each member in the church, whether male or female, shall pray publicly whenever called on" leaves out his next lines: "I must qualify and distinguish. I do not mean that women shall teach in public, nor even so much as publicly ask a question for information. These acts are not allowable in the churches of Christ. But I do mean that they should pray, only they are always to pray with the head veiled or covered."⁴⁸ Is there evidence it was "not uncommon" for women to lead prayer in Churches of Christ with "head veiled or covered" or "many" did? Or is this simply Lard arguing for a practice that did not catch on?

Hicks then quotes a biography of Charlotte Fanning that says she assisted her husband, "he doing the preaching, she leading the singing," when he held what Hicks terms "protracted meetings," but the biography does not refer to this as "protracted," instead to meetings held "During vacations."⁴⁹ Whether the specific reference is to protracted, public assemblies or small public or private meetings (*e.g.*, prayer-meetings in a home) is unclear,⁵⁰ as is whether "leading" refers to standing at the front directing the gathered or to singing out from among them.

upon woman's work in the church. We have no preacher yet, but meet in social meeting every Lord's day night—not well attended by the brethren."), 201, 231, 268, 284 (discussing 1 Cor 14:34-35, 1 Tim 2), 311, 382, 389, 444 ("Bro. S.H. Mitchell, of Salem, who was a former student of mine, who began preaching, but quit and went to practicing law Naughty boy to leave the pulpit and go to the bar."), 498, 520-521, 568, 588, 636, 679, 711 (responding that Jesus had no biological brothers, that Mary, his mother, had no other children), 734, 794. There are lots of reports of meetings and churches (and of deceased women), but none that I saw report women speaking or leading singing or anything of that nature in the assembly. Perhaps it is there or elsewhere and I simply missed it.

⁴⁸ *Women Serving God*, p. 48 (citing Moses Lard, "[The Care of the Churches.](#)" *Lard's Quarterly* (Jan. 1868), p.106).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; Emma Page, [The Life Work of Mrs. Charlotte Fanning](#), (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1907), p. 16.

⁵⁰ Were they the meeting type the biography describes as "a short service of family worship," where dad provides a lesson and "they gathered about the piano the mother played and all joined in singing hymns"? *Ibid.*, p. 167 (a reference to a kind of meeting, likely not to the Fannings, as they reportedly did not have children, Scobey, p. 151). Charlotte Fanning wrote of women in the church: "... women whose lives met the approbation of God. Those women of the New Testament were praying women. During the week just preceding the establishment of Christ's kingdom they continued with other disciples of the Lord in prayer and supplication. After the kingdom the church was established they held prayer meetings in their homes. In the house of Mary the mother of John Mark many were gathered together praying when Peter knocked at the door after his miraculous deliverance from prison. ... What admonitions were given them? ... They heeded those admonitions. I cannot imagine Priscilla as a woman who talked unkindly of her neighbors indulged in fits of ill temper or neglected the sick and suffering. ... A congregation of Christians met for worship in Priscilla's house at Ephesus but I cannot think that she was ever president of any society in the church or that Lydia ever presided as a dignified officer over such a body." *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

Similarly, Hicks says Ms. Fanning led singing at a Franklin church. One reference he cites says “He could preach, she could sing,” but that does not indicate she led singing in a public worship assembly, much less what kind of leading, as seen clearer relative to chapel, next.⁵¹

Hicks also claims she led singing “in chapel at Franklin College in the 1840s-1850s,”⁵² citing a source in which William Anderson states, “I thought of how she used to sing ‘Sorrows.’ I could almost see her again, sitting in the old chapel, leading that grand old song. She was not afraid to open her mouth, and she could sing.”⁵³ “Sitting” suggests she was not leading in the sense of standing in front and directing, but possibly in the sense of sitting and singing out in the congregation, as “not afraid to open her mouth” might also suggest. Compare how Anderson references Mr. Fanning: “I can almost see him now as he used to stand in the old chapel on Sunday mornings, with a song book in his hand, and say ‘We will sing “Dundee,” on page 93 ...”⁵⁴ Also, Anderson was reportedly born in 1848, 0 to 12 years old in the 1840s-1850s.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Hicks does not provide a pinpoint here, either. Page refers to a Franklin church (p. 16), on the same page that she references “she leading the singing” discussed *supra*, in relation to “meetings” held “during vacations.” Of course, these vacation meetings could have been at the church in Franklin, but the text does not say explicitly and the issues discussed herein make it ambiguous, if not doubtful, whether this refers to leading singing as we think of it today in the assembly. This might also refer to Scobey: “She seemed instinctively to know her part, and faithfully she did it. He could preach, she could sing; ...,” and after a buggy break-down caused them to stop for longer than planned, “Mr. Fanning had been preaching Mrs. Fanning had charmed them by the sweet melody of a cultivated voice. The preaching and singing were both instructive and entertaining. ... A church was established” Scobey, *supra*, pp. 151-152. At another place in Scobey, he says “In this work of examination and teaching among the women Mrs. Fanning took a leading part.” *Ibid.*, p. 152. Without pinpoints, it is challenging to know to what Hicks refers specifically, so I have taken some guesses here. Perhaps it (or more) is in Scobey or Page, and I simply missed it.

⁵² *Women Serving God*, p. 48. This is also without a pinpoint cite. For a discussion of women serving in chapel of Churches of Christ-affiliated colleges today and recent history, see Steve Gardner, “Exploring Effective Advocacy Points for Removing Barriers for Women in Churches of Christ, With a Focus on Chapels of Churches of Christ Colleges,” presented at 2019 Stone-Campbell Journal Conference (April 2019) (discussing Pepperdine chapel); Steve Gardner, [“Most Church of Christ Colleges No Longer Exclude Women from Leading in Worship Services: A List of Schools and Their Approach to Chapel.”](#) *Authentic Theology* (May 9, 2018).

⁵³ James E. Scobey, *Franklin College and its Influences* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1954), p. 370.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Hicks provides page-range cites for Scobey (but not for Page). See comment at end of footnote 51, *supra*.

⁵⁵ See <https://www.therestorationmovement.com/states/tennessee/anderson.wm.htm>. The only relevant reference I found in Scobey is mentioned above. I found chapel mentioned four times by Page (pp. 16, 53, 181), but no description of Ms. Fanning leading singing there. Page 20 describes singing in her room with girls from a school.

For a sixth instance to support his claims, Hicks edits and presents an 1873 David

Lipscomb quote as follows:

“in the worship ... [e]very member ought to be called upon to read a verse, sing a hymn, pray, give thanks—ask or answer a question of Scripture teaching, [or] report a case of need ...,” adding that public teaching in the assembly was reserved for men.⁵⁶

One might think from this that Lipscomb urges women ought to be called upon in the assembly to read scripture and pray. This edit connects calling on “[e]very member” with “in the worship” and shows only things that might be done in the public assembly.

But the full quote, instead, connects calling on “[e]very member” also with “the work of the congregation,” shows things that occur outside the public assembly (activities in the community, visiting, etc.), and only specifies males for worship, seen here with missing words in bold and notable words italicized or underlined:

“In the worship **each one is to do what under the guidance of the elders *he* is fitted to perform. *His* talents must be cultivated. A very common and hurtful error is that the bishops or elders are to do all the worship, and to attend to all the cases of necessity *in the community*. This is a mistake fatal to the life of the church. Their duty is to direct the younger in the conduct of *both the worship and the work of the congregation*. Every member ought to be called upon to read a verse, sing a hymn, pray, give thanks—ask or answer a question of Scripture teaching, report a case of need, *relieve one, visit the sick, report some one needing Scripture teaching, confess a wrong* *or* be sent to minister to the necessity of some one suffering. ...”**

Lipscomb thus may more likely mean males engage in such worship activities and “every member” ought to engage in that or the work of the congregation, such as visiting or ministering outside the assembly in the community, rather than as Hicks renders the quote.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ *Women Serving God*, p. 48 (quoting “Preachers or Teachers,” *Gospel Advocate* (Sept. 25, 1873), p. 903, 910)

⁵⁷ Lipscomb, *supra*, 910 (emphasis added), probably not meaning “every member,” individually, ought to be called on to “answer a question of Scripture teaching” in the assembly, as he viewed women barred from public teaching (same for leading prayer) or meaning every infinitive in the list applies to every member individually, but instead “every member” refers to the membership as a whole such that the infinitives apply to the collective. Either many infinitives there refer to inaudible acts (read, pray, etc.), “every member” refers to the collective, or both. Hicks later again quotes him as favoring female assembly participation, but the quote may not be about the assembly itself, instead an “investigation of God's word *with* our Lord's day meetings” (emphasis added), a “quiet meeting” with men and women “to learn and know the will of God,” see *Women Serving God*, 49 (citing “Queries,” *Gospel*

Accordingly, overall, the evidence Hicks offers in *Women Serving God* is not sufficiently weighty, unambiguous, or, in some cases, probative to prove his claims of significant diversity of practice relative to women’s participation in the assembly for the Churches of Christ in the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁵⁸ There is more work to be done and evidence to be considered before declaring the history of the Churches of Christ in this regard, particularly one in which “many” practiced limited participation or it was “not uncommon” to do so.

Advocate (Nov. 16, 1876), 1110-11), like Sunday School which Lipscomb may not consider a public assembly, see Lipscomb & Sewell, *Queries & Answers*, M.C. Kurfrees, ed., (Nashville: McQuiddy Pr. Co., 1921), 736.

⁵⁸ What seems to me to be a plausible and more likely history is as follows: The part of the Stone-Campbell Movement that was and remained the Churches of Christ through the gradual split of the movement into the Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)—with the vast majority in the south—were close to uniformly “no participation” in the 19th and early 20th centuries because such a practice was one part of the “woman’s sphere” theology advocated by Alexander Campbell, David Lipscomb, and other leaders of those churches. In this theology, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and other scripture provides that women are prohibited from teaching, speaking, or having authority over men in any public setting and that women’s sphere is the home and childrearing. This is the same theology advocated through the centuries in the Roman Catholic church and by leading Protestant theologians. (See footnotes 33-34 and accompanying text, *supra*) Some people with a different view remained in the Churches of Christ through and after the split, but their influence and number waned post-split. The effect of women working outside the home (influenced by war efforts, particularly relative to World War II), the Suffrage Movement, and other economic and cultural forces in the 20th century caused the Churches of Christ to modify its theology and practices to accommodate the concept of women having authority, speaking, and leading in the workplace and, gradually, society. My aim here is not to offer proof of this proffered history, but to propose it as more plausible. Moreover, it seems unlikely that such cultural movements caused the Churches of Christ to, at the same time, both (a) become more conservative—women’s participation in to the worship service, by moving to uniformly “no participation,” and (b) become more liberal—women’s participation in the workplace and society—when the cited cultural movements applied more direct pressure to the latter than the former. Possible, of course, as reactionary, for example, but it seems more likely that “the practice” was broader than the species of actions in the assembly and includes the genus of all female activity (in society, church, workplace, government, etc.), was uniform (not in the literal sense, but in the practical sense) for Churches of Christ from the 19th century on (inheriting religious and regional norms from before the Movement’s inception), altered in the mid-20th century due to culture to liberalize everywhere except the assembly (less so in the home), continued on a moderate pace of liberalization outside the assembly, and remained relatively static in the assembly. Also, Hicks’ history seems to give little attention to the split between the Churches of Christ and the Christian Churches in the mid-1800s through early 1900s. His history gives the Churches of Christ theology and practice relative to the worship service a more-prominent status than the overall theology of God’s spheres for women and men. Of course, history and theological change can be complicated, and Hicks’ description of “the history” may be right. This proffered history agrees with his assessment that culture and cultural changes materially impacted the theology of the Churches of Christ, but it would say that the cultural view of women, combined with the influence of Alexander Campbell, David Lipscomb, and others, simply maintained and galvanized the long-time patriarchal theology that restricted women to a particular sphere and excluded women from authority, speaking, and leadership roles relative to men in all public areas of life (in society, the workplace, government, church, etc.) and in the home, and that the cultural and economic pressure to allow women a more active role in the workplace, especially via war efforts and the growth of women in the workplace beginning in the 1940s, caused it to change its theology to limit such restrictions on authority, teaching, and leadership to the home and church. This proffer is not intended to state conclusively “the history” of the matter, but to offer a theory, one requiring proof and adjustment before making such a claim with great confidence.

C. *The Bible and Gender*

1. Weaknesses include conclusory assertions, scholarship engagement, and uneven scholarly quality of the chapters

Weaknesses of *The Bible and Gender* include a tendency to make conclusory assertions about key points, without accompanying evidence or reasoning. In many cases, a sentence containing a proposition material to a controversy regarding gender appears as if it were dropped in to a chapter at the last minute, with neither evidence nor reasoning accompanying the proposition.⁵⁹ Chapters 2 and 6 stand out in this regard. In many cases throughout the book, authors fail to engage meaningfully with scholarship with a different view from some of their key assertions. Other weaknesses include the uneven scholarly quality of the chapters (compare chapter 1 with chapter 2, for example), a failure to address 1 Timothy 3, and ambiguity and contradiction in many chapters. That the book was written by a collaborative writing process in which any committee member could voice their opinion and every member of the team agreed that the final draft was ready to be released probably, on balance, is a strength, but it also likely resulted in some sentences or thoughts appearing “dropped in,” contradictory, underdeveloped, or disjointed. Another weakness is that the chapters vary on adhering to stated goals of the book (“not to define” doctrine or practice, “an attempt to create dialogue,” etc.), as several offer a conclusion on disputed points, often with relatively minimal discussion or evidence.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Examples from two chapters: Chapter 2 makes several conclusory statements without offering proof or reasoning to support them, such as: “The role and order of the Trinity are similar to distinctive roles and order among humans.”; “Headship does not diminish women but rather describes the heavenly hierarchy described in” 1 Cor 11:1-16; “Adam was formed first and Eve second thus creating a natural hierarchy with Adam as head of Eve.”; “Birth order defined privilege and responsibility in the ancient world.”; “Since the Trinity has an order of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the ordering of males and females is plausible.”; and “[H]eadship describes spiritual hierarchy, benevolent authority . . .” Chapter 6 does the same, such as: “The setting is the public assembly of the church in Ephesus.”; “The same dynamic that we see in Ephesus must have existed in Corinth.”; “Clearly, those women in Timothy’s ministry were not permitted to hold ecclesiastical authority.” (this was after recognizing a “big question” is whether 2:12’s authority refers to usurping and seizing control or a more general sense, including in an ecclesiastical setting); and “Paul teaches that men and women have different offices in the ministry.”

⁶⁰ *The Bible and Gender*, pp. 4-5. See, e.g., *supra*, footnote 59.

2. Primary weakness of *The Bible and Gender* is its “headship” and *kephale* analysis

The book’s analysis of *kephale* as part of its discussion of “headship” stood out among analytical weaknesses of the book. For example, chapter 2 appears to view the choices regarding the meaning of *kephale* in 1 Cor 11:3 (e.g., “But I want you to realize ... *kephale* of the woman is man....”) to be between (a) “head” as a metaphor for authority or (b) “source.”⁶¹ It is largely undisputed, though, that *kephale* is used as a metaphor here and that “head” is an appropriate translation. The dispute is whether *kephale* or head has a meaning here in the metaphorical sense of (a) authority, as in head of a company or (b) source, origin, or representative, as is in the head of a river or the head of a line of children at school. In other words, the dispute is not whether “head” in 11:3 is an appropriate translation, but instead where in the semantic range of head and *kephale* its metaphorical meaning resides. Chapter 2 thus seems to mis-analyze the issue altogether (pitting “source” vs. “head” as the possible meaning instead of vs. “authority”).

Chapter 5 takes steps toward a more complete analysis in this regard, citing arguments for a meaning in the sense of source, but also places in opposition “source” / “origin” against “head.” In a somewhat circular argument, it describes and emphasizes Jesus as the authority over the church. Neither chapter engages substantively with scriptural descriptions and emphasis of Jesus as the source and origin of the church and all things (e.g., John 1; Ephesians 1:23; 4:15-16). This failure can be seen in Chapter 4 partially quoting scripture, rendering it out of context in a way that keeps the modern, capitalistic thought of “head” as authority front of mind. For example, in finding Ephesians 1:22 “conclusive” to viewing *kephale* as indicative of authority or leader and in quoting Ephesians 4:15 as illustrative of such, chapter 4 quotes vv. 1:22 and 4:15.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 38-40. Chapter 5 is labelled “Chapter Four” in the copy I have. Ibid., p. 79.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 90-91; 92-94; 93.

But the chapter leaves out context, including the next verses, both of which suggest that *kephale* in 1:22 and 4:15 means “head” in the sense of source or origin. Verse 1:23 explains Christ’s body is the church and Christ fills that body and everything (thus the source and origin of the church), giving insight into what *kephale* over or above all in verse 22 means, and 4:16 explains it is “From [Jesus)], the whole body ... grows and builds itself up in love,” giving insight into the source and origin (from Jesus) nature of *kephale* of 4:15 (“... we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the *kephale*”).

This failure to engage context might explain why the book sees authority in Ephesians 5:23-30 . And it might explain why it does not engage the view that Paul, in Ephesians, after (a) establishing that Christ is the source and origin (using *kephale*) of Christ’s own body, the church (e.g., 1:22-23, 4:15-16; 2:14, 4:11-13; 5:23; see also Col. 2:19; John 1) and (b) emphasizing Christ is the savior of his own body (5:23), Paul explains in parallel that, “as” or “in the same way” (a) a husband is *kephale* of his wife, as she is just like the husband’s own body and is part of his body, and they are “one flesh” (“own bodies,” “himself,” “own body,” “their body” (some translations, e.g., ESV, include “his own flesh”)) (5:23, 29-31) and (b) emphasizing husbands ought to love, nourish, and cherish his wife as his own body, as he loves himself. (5:28-33)

That is, by not engaging context, the book misses the view that Ephesians 5 does not encourage submission and love due to authority of those under consideration, but instead due to the source and origin of the bodies under consideration, of church, husbands, wives—with husband and wife encouraged to submit to and love one another because they are the source and origin of one another—with Paul emphasizing via metaphors that the husband is the source and origin of his wife— using *kephale*—and that the wife is the source and origin of the husband, as she is his body, they are one—husband and wife as “one flesh.”

V. Conclusion: Value for Use by Scholars, Ministers, and in the Classroom

I recommend *The Bible and Gender* to scholars and ministers in the International Churches of Christ, as this book will highly likely serve as a reference for anyone in the ICOC who engages meaningfully in practical discussions about the relevant scripture. The book has value beyond the ICOC, as it serves as an easy-to-read outline of some of the main issues associated with many of the passages relevant to gender discussions, much of the scriptural analysis is verse-by-verse, parts of its scriptural analysis is well done, and it prompts thought in an accessible manner. Thus, ministers outside the ICOC may find it useful as an outline and to prompt thoughts for further consideration. It is easily worth its price for its organized approach and stoking of thoughts. Many scholars and ministers will appreciate the scholarly insight of the first chapter, on Genesis 1-3. I do not recommend the book as a reliable scriptural guide by itself, though, due to the uneven nature of its scriptural analysis and the volume of unsupported assertions. But for a spur to thinking and analysis, it is of considerable value.

I recommend Hicks' book, *Women Serving God*, to scholars and ministers in Stone-Campbell Movement churches, the Churches of Christ in particular, for the reasons discussed. It is strong in its scriptural analysis, empathy, and discussion of hermeneutics, all areas helpful to the scholar and minister. The book considers scholarship and arguments from various viewpoints. Written at an above-average educational level and examining some details that might not hold the average layperson's interest, those with an abiding interest in the topic and ministers and scholars with theological education or experience will find it highly insightful and useful. Given the authors' stature in the Churches of Christ, it will likely be one of the primary references considered by Churches of Christ reviewing their practices for some time to come. The historical description in the book should be taken with the caveats expressed above.

I do not recommend *On Gender* for the scholar or minister, as its core weakness—scriptural analysis—is in the main area for which scholars and ministers need a thoroughgoing and reliable guide. That weakness and others (*e.g.*, its monolithic nature) results in it offering unreliable scriptural help on key points. Since it is marketed and advertised to church members by a ministry organization whose Statement on Gender the book advocates, some number of members of the Churches of Christ and the independent Christian Churches in particular might obtain the book. Ministers may want to acquire a copy if their members cite it.

None of the three seemed aimed at the academic-classroom audience. Parts of *Women Serving God* might be useful in such a setting if the class or a portion of it is focused on the topic and includes a missional or practical component. *Women Serving God* and *The Bible and Gender* may be useful in the church-classroom setting, though the former is too long and too dense for most church Bible classes. Permeating weaknesses in its scriptural analysis and the monolithic nature of *On Gender* render it not recommended for church-classroom use.

While I have spent the bulk of my paper discussing the primary weaknesses of these three books in order to have analytical observations to present at this conference, I want to say, as I conclude, that my criticism of these books is meant to further God's kingdom and all of our work in that regard. I make no claim that my own work is not subject to the same criticisms and more.

The authors of all three of these books should be praised, thanked, and appreciated for sharing their thoughts and insights with us and for challenging us to think about these issues. It is obvious that many hours of difficult work went into researching and writing all of them. I am better off having read each one, as each challenged me in some way, and I thank all of the authors of these three books for their work and for caring about and being dedicated to the kingdom of God and Biblical teaching on women.