

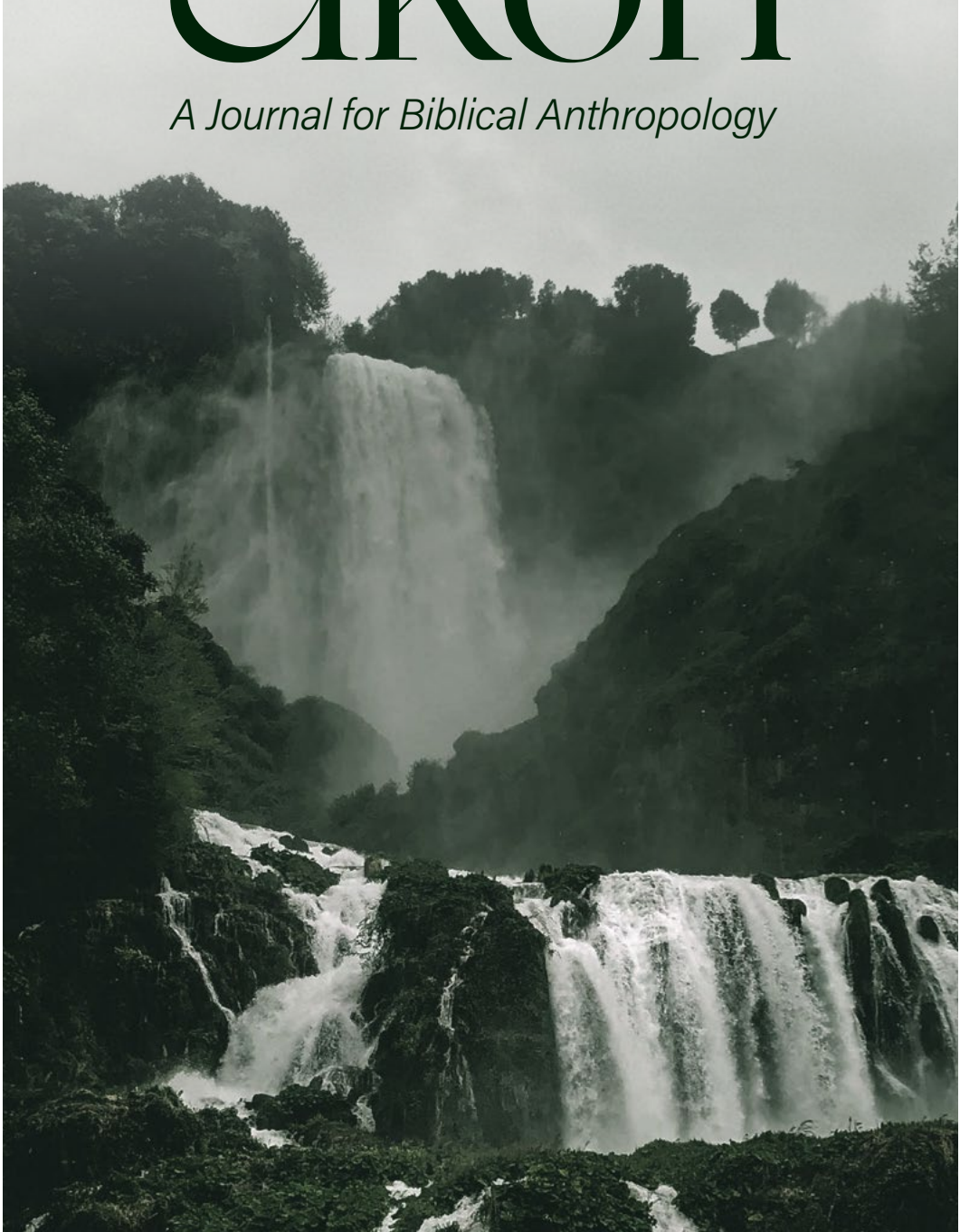
**DOES
COMPLEMENTARIANISM
DEPEND ON ERAS?**
Stephen J. Wellum

**ON THE IMPROPER USE OF
PROPER SPEECH**
Kyle D. Claunch

**DOES COMPLEMENTARIANISM
LEAD TO ABUSE?**
Jonathan Leeman

eikon

A Journal for Biblical Anthropology



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Editorial

This issue of *Eikon* is devoted almost entirely to a chapter-by-chapter review of the third edition of *Discovering Biblical Equality* (DBE). Our reviews reveal that this third edition marks a significant departure from previous iterations of the intra-evangelical debate between complementarians and egalitarians. While most of the book is refreshed and repackaged arguments for egalitarianism, some chapters have given up significant ground to LGBTQ ideology, including an embrace of personhood theory, the use of gender-neutral pronouns for God and preferred pronouns for our neighbors, suggestions of feminine names for God, the promotion of “Side-B Gay Christianity” and same-sex covenanted partnerships — or marriage-lite, as it has been called by critics — and, most alarming of all, a chapter that

entails an endorsement of transgender ideology, including so-called gender reassignment surgery.

Before the publication of DBE’s third edition, evangelical egalitarians have historically and at least nominally maintained orthodox commitments when it comes to LGBTQ ideology and biblical sexuality. But as several chapters in this new edition demonstrate, that commitment seems to be eroding. This erosion parallels the changes that have taken place through successive waves of feminism, each of which has grown more radical in the attempt to downplay and even erase the distinction between the sexes.¹ Feminism greased the skids for functional interchangeability between men and women, and society has slipped right

¹ William Manchester observed this society-upending effect in 1993, less than a decade after CBE was founded: “the erasure of the distinctions between the sexes is not only the most striking issue of our time, it may be the most profound the race has ever confronted.” William Manchester, “A World Lit Only By Change,” *U.S. News & World Report* (October 25, 1993), 6. This quote has appeared in this journal before in Colin J. Smothers, “Creation and Discrimination: Why the Male-Female Distinction Makes a Difference” *Eikon* 1.2 (Fall 2019).

into ontological interchangeability.² How are these trends revealed in this issue?

Christa McKirland's chapter, which I review in this issue (Colin), is perhaps the most radical chapter in the book, which is significant because she serves as associate editor for this edition of *DBE*. In her chapter, McKirland not only rejects gender essentialism, but she also uses the gender-neutral pronoun "Godself" in place of masculine pronouns to refer to God. She also uses masculine pronouns to refer to a biological woman and even refers to this woman as a Christian, despite this individual's embrace of a transgender identity. Most troubling, McKirland opens the door for people to undergo so-called gender reassignment surgery, provided they pursue it in submission to the Spirit in order "to become more like Christ."

Another noteworthy chapter is by Ronald Pierce, who is also an editor of this edition of *DBE*, reviewed in this issue by Jonathan Swan. In this chapter, titled "Biblical Equality and Same-Sex Marriage," Pierce endorses the orthodox position on biblical marriage, against our culture's attempt to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples. But as Swan demonstrates, along the way, he treats the matter as if it were a secondary issue about which genuine Christians may agree to disagree. Pierce refers to "Side-A Gay Christians," those who embrace homosexuality completely, as Christians, even though their position distorts the very institution God gave the world to picture the Gospel. He also commends "Side-B Gay Christianity" and their covenanted partnerships and gay identities.

While these chapters are the most alarming, each chapter in this book contains other significant errors. Stephen Wellum and Kyle Claunch helpfully engage and advance the Trinity debate from a complementarian and Nicene perspective, while correcting significant egalitarian errors in their respective chapters under review. Several other reviewers engage and refute the standard egalitarian arguments that have been repackaged for this new edition: Anne Kennedy, Peter Gentry, Andy Naselli, Peter Gurry, Buist Fanning, Ray Van Neste, Alan Branch, Sharon James, and myself (Denny Burk) address these chapters on their own merits and show how a complementarian perspective better accounts for and represents the biblical data. Importantly, these are not just reviews, they are review essays, and each reviewer advances the conversation in a helpful direction. Finally, Jonathan Leeman has provided a *tour de force* answer to the accusation that says complementarianism causes abuse. Leeman's response to this accusation is honest, careful, pastoral, and even practical.

The cultural winds and the spirit of the age are relentless. But we will not relent as long as we have breath. We will continue to cast anchor with Christ, no longer "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Eph 4:14). His Word is good, and it is enough. May this first issue in the fifth volume of *Eikon* demonstrate such. ✕

Colin J. Smothers
Eikon Executive Editor
Denny Burk
Eikon Editor-in-Chief

² See Colin J. Smothers, "Is the Slippery Slope Actually Slippery? Egalitarianism and the Open-and-Affirming Position" *9Marks Journal* (December 2019).

Yet Another Attempt to Justify What God Forbids:

A Response to Cynthia Lang Westfall, "Male and Female, One in Christ"

Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." On the basis of that sentence, evangelical feminists (i.e., egalitarians) commonly argue against "hierarchy" in the church and home.¹ That is, women may be pastors, and a wife and husband share equal authority without hierarchy — a wife should submit to her husband only in the same way that a husband should submit to his wife. For many evangelical feminists, Galatians 3:28 is a clear and transcultural text that we should start with and then interpret more obscure passages (like 1 Cor 11:2–16 and 1 Tim 2:9–15) in light of it.



¹ The opening lines on the Christians for Biblical Equality web page titled "CBE's Mission and Values" quote Galatians 3:28: https://www.cbeinternational.org/primary_page/cbes-mission/ (accessed on 28 January 2023).

This article responds to yet another evangelical feminist argument based on Galatians 3:28 — Cynthia Westfall's new chapter that replaces Gordon D. Fee's chapter on Galatians 3:26–29 in the two previous editions of *Discovering Biblical Equality*.² I proceed by answering three questions: (I) How does Cynthia Westfall's chapter fit in the conversation about Galatians 3:28? (II) How does Cynthia Westfall's new chapter compare to Gordon Fee's old chapter? (III) Is Cynthia Westfall's argument correct?

I. HOW DOES CYNTHIA WESTFALL'S CHAPTER FIT IN THE CONVERSATION ABOUT GALATIANS 3:28?

In the debate between evangelical feminists and complementarians, the literature on Galatians 3:28 in the past half-century is too vast to detail here. I'll highlight just five resources that help us see how Westfall's new chapter fits into the conversation.

1. Paul Jewett's 1975 book *Man as Male and Female* ignited the modern debate.³ John Piper, who was a student of Jewett's at Fuller Theological Seminary, describes Jewett's book as "groundbreaking" and qualifies, "At least it was groundbreaking among

the discussions in evangelical circles. That book, I think, was the beginning of the real debate."⁴ Jewett titles his brief discussion of Galatians 3:28 as "The Magna Carta of Humanity." After Jewett asserts that Paul argues incorrectly in 1 Timothy 2:9–15, Jewett extrapolates that Galatians 3:28 has "social implications" for males and females and that the church must fully implement Paul's "vision concerning the equality of the sexes in Christ."⁵

2. S. Lewis Johnson's 1991 article on Galatians 3:28 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* responds to evangelical feminist arguments.⁶ Johnson argues that in the literary context, "Paul is not speaking of relationships in the family and church, but of standing before God in righteousness by faith."⁷

3. Richard Hove's 1999 book on Galatians 3:28 is 160 pages of responsible exegesis that responds to evangelical feminist arguments.⁸ Hove meticulously explains that "you are all one" does not lexically, syntactically, or contextually overturn what Scripture teaches elsewhere about God's design for men and women in the home and church. "You are all one" means that diverse people have some-

² Cynthia Long Westfall, "Male and Female, One in Christ: Galatians 3:26–29," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural, and Practical Perspectives*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Cynthia Long Westfall, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 159–84.

³ Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

⁴ John Piper, "Manhood, Womanhood, and God Part 1," *Desiring God*, 20 September 1993, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/manhood-womanhood-and-god-part-1>.

⁵ Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 142–47. See D. A. Carson's courteous and penetrating review of Jewett in *Northwest Journal of Theology* 6 (1977): 28–37, available at https://s3.amazonaws.com/tgc-documents/carson/1977_review_Jewett.pdf.

⁶ S. Lewis Johnson Jr., "Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1991), 154–64, 490–92.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸ Richard W. Hove, *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and the Gender Dispute* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999). Cf. "Rick Hove's important book—Equality in Christ—out of print but available online," 11 May 2006, <https://cbmw.org/2006/05/11/rick-hoves-important-book-equality-in-christ-out-of-print-but-available-online/>. Hove's book updates his MA thesis, which he completed under D. A. Carson's supervision and which Carson (and Wayne Grudem) encouraged Crossway to publish. For a 39-page version of Hove's argument, see Richard W. Hove, "Does Galatians 3:28 Negate Gender-Specific Roles?," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem, Foundations for the Family Series (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 105–43, available as a PDF at <https://cbmw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Grudem-Wayne-Biblical-foundations-for-manhood-and-womanhood.pdf>.

thing in common — not that their roles are identical or interchangeable (see Mt 19:6; Mark 10:8; John 10:30; 17:11, 21–23; Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 3:8; 10:17).

4. Gordon Fee’s 2005 article is part of the egalitarian book that responds to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.⁹ (I summarize it in the first paragraph of the next section below.)¹⁰

5. Cynthia Westfall’s 2016 book *Paul and Gender* repeats and updates evangelical feminist arguments.¹¹ For a summary and critique, see the reviews by Tom Schreiner and Casey Hough.¹² Westfall expands part of her argument in her new chapter.

II. HOW DOES CYNTHIA WESTFALL’S NEW CHAPTER COMPARE TO FEE’S OLD CHAPTER?

Fee’s old chapter argues that many Christians wrongly read Paul’s letter to the Galatians “through the eyes of Martin Luther”; such a reading is wrong because “the driving issue in Galatians is not first of all soteriology but ecclesiology: who constitute the people of God in the new creation brought about by the ‘scandal of the cross’ (Gal 6:11–16)?”¹³ Specifically, in Galatians 3:28, “Paul’s explanatory ‘for’ does not elaborate that all are *equally justified* in God’s sight through faith in Christ Jesus but rather that *all constitute one people* (form one body) by

their equal standing in Christ.”¹⁴ Fee concludes,

It seems arguable, therefore, that even though our text does not explicitly mention roles and structures, its new creation theological setting calls these into question in a most profound way. There is no biblical culture (in the sociological sense) that belongs to all human societies. And to give continuing *significance* to a male authority viewpoint for men and women, whether at home or in the church, is to reject the new creation in favor of the norms of a fallen world.¹⁵

Westfall’s new chapter agrees with Fee. She repeatedly refers to the traditional view of Galatians 3:28 as wrongly emphasizing an “abstract” or “spiritual” or “individualized” status such as justification (159–60, 165n19, 167, 171n34, 180, 181n53).

Westfall’s chapter differs from Fee’s in two notable ways:

The *first contrast* is that Westfall expresses her conclusions with more certainty than Fee (but without improved arguments). Note that Fee’s conclusion above begins, “It seems arguable, therefore.” That sense of a tentative conclusion — a dialed-down dogmatism — is not present in Westfall’s new chapter. For example, Westfall italiciz-

⁹ Gordon D. Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26–29,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 172–85.

¹⁰ For a summary and critique, see Robert L. Saucy, “Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26–29” (Ch 10) by Gordon D. Fee,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 10.1 (2005): 29–37.

¹¹ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, “Paul and Gender: A Review Article,” *Themelios* 43 (2018): 178–92; Casey Hough, “Review of Cynthia Westfall’s *Paul and Gender*,” *Eikon: A Journal for Biblical Anthropology* 1.1 (2019): 44–47.

¹³ Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation,” 173–74.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 176 (italics original).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 185 (italics original).

es this entire sentence: “*We may confidently conclude that the ways and contexts in which ‘there is no male and female inside him’ will correspond to the ways and contexts that Paul is talking about in Galatians in which ‘there is no Jew or Greek inside him’*” (168, italics original, cf. 175). She concludes the chapter, “In Galatians 3:28, Paul sets an agenda for sweeping changes in racial, social, and gender relationships in the church when this verse is read in the context of what had to change as a result of there being no Jew or Greek because of justification, baptism, and location in Christ” (182).

The *second contrast* is that Westfall uses more rhetorically emotive language than Fee. Here are six examples:

1. To differ from Westfall’s evangelical feminism is to sinfully *discriminate* (and Westfall groups such sexism with racism and classism):

So the question of the scope of “there is no male and female” in the church depends on the scope of Paul’s declaration that “there is no Jew or Gentile,” which is the dominant argument of Galatians. It means that in Christian circles we do not make distinctions or *discriminate* on the basis of race, socioeconomic categories, or gender” (161, italics added; see also 175, 177n46, 178).

2. To differ from Westfall’s evangelical feminism is to mistreat another group because of their *identity*: “Those who have authority or influence in the church should never restrict anyone with a priori rules that *discriminate against another group because of their identity*, however low in the eyes of the world or one’s tradition” (178, italics added).

3. To differ from Westfall’s evangelical feminism is to support male *dominance* with





the same rationale as arguments for *slavery* and *racism*:

Johnson qualifies Paul's statement so as to argue against it, because he assumes that differences in identity in the creation of male and female mandate discrete roles and hierarchy in all contexts. This understanding of Scripture is traditional because it characterized the Western Christian worldview during the European colonial period, which presupposed *discrete roles, hierarchy, and enslavement* on the basis of differences of identity in race, cultures, and social status, based on similar theology, narratives, and arguments. Paul teaches that difference does not correspond to dominance in the church (181, italics added).

The theology and rhetoric of gender roles may be the last stand of the Christian colonial worldview and *reflect the mentality of racism and the exclusion laws against minorities* such as the Jim Crow laws, the new Jim Crow laws, and the exclusion laws against

minorities such as Chinese immigrants in the past (181–82n56, italics added).

4. To differ from Westfall's evangelical feminism is to unbiblically subjugate women, and God calls his people to resist such patriarchy:

Teaching that *unilaterally subjugates women and restricts their function* in the church because of gender roles is based on human commands and teaching that override or marginalize the lordship of Christ, the will of the Holy Spirit, and clear commands in Scripture. So, we are called to biblical resistance I tell women, "Go ahead and do what you are called to do. ... Be committed to doing what God created you to do" (183, italics added).

5. To differ from Westfall's evangelical feminism is to support one of many "systemic injustices" (183).

6. To differ from Westfall's evangelical feminism is to *oppress* people. She concludes the chapter with this sentence:

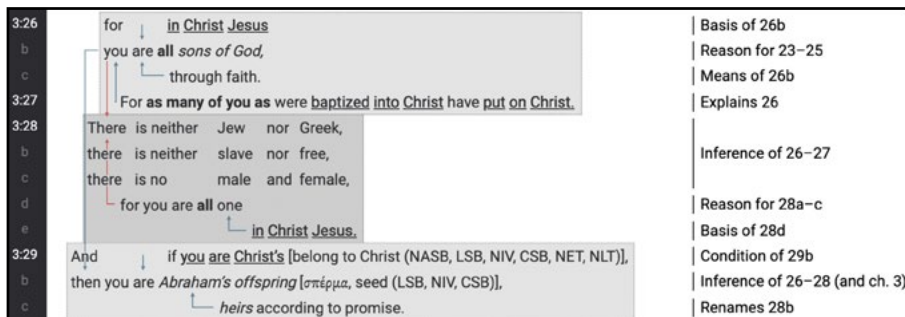
When we pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we must consider how what Paul said to the Galatians in the first century now speaks to extending our kingdom relationships in the church to our mission on earth in balanced gender relationships, *resisting discrimination and ending oppression* (184, italics added).

III. IS CYNTHIA WESTFALL’S ARGUMENT CORRECT?

More than twenty years ago, Tom Schreiner began a book review article with an observation that has stuck with me. Here’s the gist of what Schreiner observed: evangelical feminist arguments keep morphing with a new exegetical argument or a new argument from the alleged historical-cultural context; in contrast, complementarian arguments may seem rather boring because the basic argument has not changed.¹⁶

I resonate with Schreiner’s observation as I consider Cynthia Westfall’s new chapter. The heart of her argument is simply not what Paul intended to communicate in Galatians 3:28. Her argument wrongly assumes that male headship is a result of the fall and not part of God’s original good creation.¹⁷ But the main weakness of her argument is that she misreads the immediate literary context. She then concludes that Galatians 3:28 has necessary *social implications* that contradict other passages in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor 11:2–16; Eph 5:22–30; Col 3:18–19; 1 Tim 2:9–15; 1 Pet 3:1–7).

The following phrase diagram shows how Galatians 3:28 fits in its immediate literary context (Gal 3:26–29).¹⁸ In this phrase diagram, (1) boxes emphasize short units; (2) underlining emphasizes our connection to Christ; (3) **bold** emphasizes *all*; and (4) *italics* emphasizes the sonship language that frames this passage.



¹⁶ See the introduction to Thomas R. Schreiner, “William J. Webb’s *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*: A Review Article,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6.1 (2002): 46–65.

¹⁷ See Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 30–41, 102–30. (Grudem’s controversial tenth argument — “the parallel with the Trinity” — is not necessary to prove the point.)

¹⁸ A phrase diagram is a type of argument diagram. An *argument diagram* graphically displays the text’s logical flow of thought (1) by dividing up the text into propositions and phrases and (2) by specifying how the propositions and phrases logically relate to each other. A *phrase diagram* (1) indents clauses and phrases above or below what they modify and (2) adds labels and symbols like arrows to explain how the propositions and phrases logically relate. See Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 121–61.



Two observations support the traditional reading of Galatians 3:28:

1. The point of the three contrasts in v. 28 is that all those in Christ Jesus without exception are one in Christ. Paul rhetorically refers to all humanity in three parallel pairs:

- all humanity from the perspective of ethnicity: Jew and Greek
- all humanity from the perspective of law: slave and free
- all humanity from the perspective of sex: male and female

The evangelical feminist argument misreads and misapplies Galatians 3:28.¹⁹ Paul's point is that diverse people are "one" in the sense of having something in common but without obliterating distinctions. For example, "He who plants and he who waters are one [i.e., in purpose]" (1 Cor 3:8), and "we, though many, are one body in Christ"

(Rom 12:5). As Piper and Grudem explain,

The context of Galatians 3:28 makes abundantly clear the sense in which men and women are equal in Christ: they are equally justified by faith (v. 24), equally free from the bondage of legalism (v. 25), equally children of God (v. 26), equally clothed with Christ (v. 27), equally possessed by Christ (v. 29), and equally heirs of the promises to Abraham (v. 29). . . . He does not say, "you are all the same in Christ Jesus," but, "you are all one in Christ Jesus." He is stressing their unity in Christ, not their sameness.²⁰

2. If the evangelical feminist argument is correct, then social implications that logically follow *contradict* what Paul writes elsewhere: (1) Paul says that Jews and Gentiles are *not* the same (e.g., Rom 9–11); (2) Paul says that slaves and masters are *not* the

¹⁹ "This text [Gal. 3:26–29] hasn't seen its context since it left the hand of Paul's amanuensis. I exaggerate. But it has *rarely* seen its context in a populist American culture. Our American ears cannot help but hear some egalitarian mandate here" T. David Gordon, *Promise, Law, Faith: Covenant-Historical Reasoning in Galatians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2019), 161 (italics original).

²⁰ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 43–44 (italics original). Cf. Peter R. Schemm Jr., "Galatians 3:28—Proof-text or Context?," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8.1 (2003): 23–30.



same (e.g., Eph 6:5–9; Col 3:22–4:1); and (3) Paul says that males and females are *not* the same (e.g., Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19).²¹ In 1 Corinthians 12:13 and Colossians 3:10–11 (the two most parallel passages to Galatians 3:28 in Paul’s letters),²² Paul uses the Jew-Gentile and slave-free categories in literary contexts that *distinguish* how men and women serve God (1 Cor 11:2–16; 14:34–35; Col 3:18–19).

Another logical (but unscriptural) social implication of the evangelical feminist reading of “there is no male and female” is that homosexuality is now permissible and that it is oppressive and unjust to teach that God created marriage for only one man and one woman.²³ (Westfall does not argue for that position.)

Only very recently in church history have Christians argued that Galatians 3:28 supports evangelical feminism. Westfall’s

chapter is yet another recent attempt to re-interpret God’s words to justify what God forbids. ✕

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²¹ Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 258–59.

²² See the table in Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 253.

²³ Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry: Another Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck, 2nd ed., Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 280–81; Kevin DeYoung, *Men and Women in the Church: A Short, Biblical, Practical Introduction* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 102–3.