

## **Review of “Beyond Authority and Submission” by Rachel Green Miller**

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**Book:** Rachel Green Miller, *Beyond Authority and Submission: Women and Men in Marriage, Church, and Society* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2019)

The Church in the West (which bleeds into the Global Church) is currently facing many challenges without and within the church. In the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christians in America reacted against radical feminism and re-asserted the biblical teaching of complementarianism, with its flagship organization being the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW). Its opponent within Christendom is egalitarianism, held by many who have been influenced by feminism.

For many years, the complementarian-egalitarian debate has defined the line between those who have submitted their view of women and the family to Scripture, and those who have brought in foreign ideologies in their interpretations of Scripture. Recently, however, some within the Complementarian camp have decided they do not really want to be complementarians anymore and yearn for a “third way.” Diverse circumstances have contributed to this, one of which was the ESS (Eternal Submission of the Son) controversy in 2016 whereby some associated complementarianism with a distorted and misrepresented portrayal of the teaching of ESS. One of those who did so is Rachel Green Miller, Reformed blogger and author of this book.<sup>1</sup> Due to issues such as these, a few within the Reformed camp have proclaimed they are not complementarians anymore.

It is of course one thing to object to a name, and another to object to the content. From 2016 to 2019, it can be assumed that these anti-complementarians in name were still complementarian in doctrine. That is, until the books start to come out.

In this review, I will be reviewing Rachel Miller’s book, pointing out both what is correct and what is wrong in it. I will attempt to do so in a fair and impartial manner, despite the fact that Miller has (in my opinion) been less than fair and impartial to both ESS and her critics.

I will also not be focusing on the ESS issue in the main review. As an ESS proponent, I have been disappointed by the continual violation of the Ninth Commandment concerning this issue from the so-called “TR (Truly Reformed)” camp. But this book’s focus is on

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<sup>1</sup> Rachel Green Miller, “We Need a New Name,” *A Daughter of the Reformation* (blog), July 21, 2016, accessed Dec 14 2019, <https://rachelgreenmiller.com/2016/07/21/we-need-a-new-name/>

gender issues, so I will just address the short section in Miller's book on ESS in the appendix of this review.

### **Structure of the book**

Miller's book is comprised of six parts. In part one, she discusses the themes of authority, submission, unity, interdependence, and service. In part two, she deals with the relation of women and men in history. In part three, she talks about the nature of women and men. In part four, she talks about women and men in marriage, part five about women and men in church, and part six about women and men in society. Miller aims for a certain sense of breadth in discussing gender roles, a breadth which aims to put forward what she thinks is the correct way to discuss gender roles and relations between men and women. Such a breadth would result however in a lack of depth on the issue, a lack which causes many problems later.

### **The good things in the book**

Before I look at the errant parts of the book, I must point out where Miller has it right. They are in her stated rejection of stereotypes of men and women, her reminder of the common humanity of men and women in Christ, and in upholding male ordination in the church.

### **Rejection of stereotypes of men and women**

Throughout her book, Miller is against the idea that there is only one way to be a man or to be a woman. She is against the idea that "women and men are placed on a procrustean bed—expected to conform to arbitrary and unyielding definitions of masculinity and femininity" (p. 236). That is certainly something that is laudable, since humans are very diverse and there is indeed great diversity within men and within women, perhaps even more so than between "men" and "women" generically considered. Whatever one's position on gender roles and relations, it is always a good reminder that we should not attempt to create extra-biblical stereotypes of what a "man" should be or what a "woman" should be, and then demand that Christian men and women act and behave within our accepted parameters. Such strict demarcations of what constitute a "man" and a "woman" would be harmful to actual men and women one would come in contact with in church and in society.

### **Reminder of the common humanity of men and women in Christ**

In the first part of the book, Miller calls Christians to focus beyond the themes of authority and submission, arguing that an over-fixation on these themes make us “miss the significance of other biblical themes and how they can help to expand and deepen our discussions about women and men” (p. 43). Such a reminder, repeated in various ways throughout the book, is a good reminder for Christians that we ought to remember that we address each other as brethren in Christ first and foremost, before seeing each other as men and women (p. 38). In Christ, there is no “male or female” (Gal. 3:28), and therefore gender should not be the first category we consider when we see fellow believers, for we are all, male and female, “co-laborers” in the Lord (p. 37).

### **Upholding male-only ordination in the church**

While there is much in this section that is problematic, Miller at least upholds male-only ordination for the office-bearers in the church (p. 219, 221). She connects it to Adam’s duty of guarding and keeping the Garden, but besides that one does not get a more detailed theology of ordination.

### **What is wrong with the book**

#### **Misrepresentation of history**

The first glaring error of Miller’s book is her historical revisionism and selective reading of history. In trying to tar complementarianism, she links together the ‘misogynistic’ Greco-Roman society to Victorian society to complementarianism. In her new retelling of history, complementarianism has resurrected Victorian misogyny, which was in turn a resurrection of pagan Greco-Roman views which demeaned women (pp. 47-101). Over and against this misogyny stands ancient Christianity, and the first feminist movement!

The problem with such a sweeping over-generalization and selective citation of history is that this narrative is false. As Thomas Achord points out, history is much more complex.<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Greco-Roman period, Achord wrote:<sup>3</sup>

... Miller’s simplified “connecting the dots” work is selective at best, or ignorant or deceptive at worst. She quotes a few examples of weak, dominated women within the Greek world and then a few off examples of strong, independent women in the ancient Israelite world. But a cursory reading of the Greek world shows it also boasted strong women: the Amazonian women like Camilla who was eulogized by

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Achord, “Unsimplified History,” *Ars Politica* (blog), Nov 3, 2019, accessed Dec 16, 2019, [https://arspolitica.home.blog/2019/11/03/unsimplified-history/?fbclid=IwAR1GzWhaGBP YRMW\\_SEVHS8zB4VhMwcGDpg3UnyVXNEtQbeEBIMk0SpBiM-0](https://arspolitica.home.blog/2019/11/03/unsimplified-history/?fbclid=IwAR1GzWhaGBP YRMW_SEVHS8zB4VhMwcGDpg3UnyVXNEtQbeEBIMk0SpBiM-0)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

valiant warriors and epic poets; Plato's Republic where women were elite guardians of the state; Greek goddesses who taught warriors and instituted justice; queens like Dido who built and governed cities; and the Fates (females) who controlled everything from men to the gods themselves.

Furthermore, it should be questioned why there is a big gap between the Greco-Roman period and the next period of history Miller focuses on: the Victorian era. Was there a rosy period of "gender equality" from the time of Christ to just before the Victorian era when misogyny suddenly appeared and reduced women to inferior beings? Or perhaps the times in between are omitted because they do not fit the narrative Miller wants to spin? Take for example the Reformation period, which Miller as a Presbyterian layperson should be interested in. John Knox, Scottish Reformer and Founder of Presbyterianism, in rejecting the entire premise of having a woman as a monarch, wrote his infamous pamphlet "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women,"<sup>4</sup> which surely does not sound very "pro-woman," does it? Or what about John Calvin, who wrote this in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:12:<sup>5</sup>

...in the case of women, who by nature (that is, by the ordinary law of God) is formed to obey; for γυναικοκρατία (the government of women) has always been regarded by all wise persons as a monstrous thing; and, therefore, so to speak, it will be a mingling of earth and heaven, if women usurp the right to teach.

It can be clearly seen that, whatever one thinks of Knox or Calvin, the idea that women are circumscribed certain roles due to creation did not originate from the Victorian era. In fact, it can be said that Miller has misrepresented the great Christian tradition when it comes to gender roles. Now, if Miller wants to argue that there is an "exceptional" amount of misogyny during the Victorian era unlike that in the Reformation era, that is another argument altogether, and one she has not even begun to substantiate.

The following from Achord on history is thus apropos:<sup>6</sup>

There is much to learn, good and bad, from the ancient pagan world. Everyone knew this, by the way, until late-moderns, half-educated, became so distant from both it and our own recent past, that they began to simplify both periods and wield them for political arguments. Be wary whenever someone "connects the dots" between vast civilizations spanning continents and thousands of years. Not only is it pseudo-historical but also a sort of neomythical stereotyping of its own.

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<sup>4</sup> John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. Available at <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLS/firblast.htm> (accessed Dec 16, 2019)

<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on The Epistles to Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (trans. William Pringle; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), accessed Dec 16, 2019, [https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43/calcom43/Page\\_68.html](https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43/calcom43/Page_68.html)

<sup>6</sup> Achord

Miller has misrepresented history in her supposed portrayal of gender relations in history. Unfortunately, that is far from the last error she has made.

### **Misrepresentation of sources**

When one cites a source, one ought to represent the source correctly. Unfortunately, it seems that Miller has misrepresented many people in her work. As Steven Wedgworth points out in his review of the book:<sup>7</sup>

Miller also frequently gives her citations readings which run contrary to their original intent. On page 27, she cites Emily Jenson as an example of someone who believes that a wife should “cater to their husband’s preferences.” Miller suggests this is a matter of viewing authority in “military terms” (27). Yet when Jenson’s original article is read on its own terms, Jenson states that the goal was “nearness,” to “start the day as companions and make traditions for us to remember.” Jenson believed that she was pursuing companionship and intimacy. A similar situation appears in Miller’s citation of Mark Jones. She cites him as an example of someone with a low view of “companionship” in marriage (168). But again, when one reads the original source, he does not see Jones criticizing a companionship theory of marriage but rather the contemporary use of the title “best friend.” Jones states that his wife “belongs in a category that goes beyond friendship,” and then goes on to explain that he has a different sort of relationship with his male friends than with his wife. A reader might disagree with both Jenson’s and Jones’s articles, but they ought to actually make an argument, rather than just describing their views in overly negative ways.

On a few other occasions, Miller’s footnotes are entirely prejudicial. On page 143, she writes, “Others go so far as to say that men are emasculated by taking an active role in caring for their children.” She then cites Voddie Baucham Jr. This is an incredibly strong claim, and Miller does not quote Baucham directly. When readers check the footnote she gives (pg. 76 of the Kindle edition of *What He Must Be... If He Wants to Marry My Daughter*) they do not find any discussion about men and childcare. Instead, Baucham is explaining that Christians must not marry non-Christians. Perhaps Miller simply got the page number wrong, but one suspects that no matter which quotation is finally supplied, it will not so baldly state what she has claimed. Douglas Wilson suffers a similarly harsh fate. In one place, Miller says Wilson teaches that “men should control the finances, because women

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<sup>7</sup> Steven Wedgworth, “A New Way to Understand Men and Women in Christ? A Review of Rachel Green Miller’s *Beyond Authority and Submission*,” *CMBW.org*, Oct 17, 2019, accessed Dec 16, 2019, <https://cbmw.org/topics/book-reviews/a-new-way-to-understand-men-and-women-in-christ-a-review-of-rachel-green-millers-beyond-authority-and-submission/>

will spend too much if men let them” (164). But when the citation is checked, Wilson says that a husband can be a poor leader in the area of finances by failing to set appropriate limits. Wilson says that this can happen in two ways, husbands can either “allow their wives to spend beyond the family’s resources” or the man can “make irresponsible purchases for himself.” This is an entirely different kind of argument, an illustration about passivity in leadership and not a claim about essential gender characteristics. On another occasion, she says that Wilson defines women by how they are useful to men, thus reducing women to objects. She illustrates this by stating that Wilson calls the wife “‘a man’s vessel’ for ‘sexual possession’” (236). Yet again, when one follows Miller’s footnote, they find nothing of the sort. Wilson is arguing against various forms of sexual immorality, and the only use of “sexual possession of a man’s vessel” is in his quotation of 1 Thessalonians 4:4. Wilson is not here saying that a man must control his wife. Wilson is saying that a man must control himself by being faithful to his wife. He says this directly, “Christian men must discipline themselves in their faithfulness to their own wives.” Miller has given an egregious misrepresentation of Wilson on this point. Wilson is certainly a controversial writer, known for his love of startling statements, but on this occasion it seems that the entire shock factor comes simply from the fact that he used the King James Version.

While Mark Jones is many things, I think it is clear enough from his blog post that he does not think of “companionship as a downgrade in marriage” (p. 168) as Miller accused him of doing. Rather, a cursory reading of Jones’ post<sup>8</sup> indicates that he is putting his wife in a special category above that of “best friend,” a proposition that is subsequently affirmed by Jones himself.<sup>9</sup> It is certainly puzzling how Miller can fail to comprehend something that is as clear as day, and twists it to mean the opposite of what Jones actually means in his article.

Another major work which Miller misrepresented is Susan Foh’s journal article.<sup>10</sup> This is rather shocking because Miller does not even interact with the exegetical arguments in the article. The key point in Foh’s article is an **exegetical** one contrasting the Hebrew of Genesis 3:16 and Genesis 4:7. Instead of actually addressing the text of Scripture, here is what Miller writes:

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<sup>8</sup> Mark Jones, “My Spouse is my Best Friend,” *reformation 21* (blog), Alliances of Confessing Evangelicals, Nov 2, 2015, <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2015/11/my-spouse-is-my-best-friend.php>. Accessed Dec 16, 2019,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20190406140349/http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2015/11/my-spouse-is-my-best-friend.php>. For some strange reason, the original link is no more.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Jones, “Book Review: Beyond Authority and Submission by Rachel Green Miller,” *Mere Orthodoxy* (blog), Oct 2, 2019, accessed Dec 16, 2019, <https://mereorthodoxy.com/book-review-beyond-authority-and-submission/>

<sup>10</sup> Susan T. Foh, “What is the Woman’s Desire?” *Westminster Theological Journal* **37** (1974): 376-83

The problem is that Foh's interpretation presumes that all wives want to control and usurp their husbands' leadership, which misses the context of the curse: the frustration of existing conditions. She states that a husband's headship, in itself, is not part of the culture. That's certainly true—but neither is a wife's desire. Like childbirth and work, a wife's desire and a husband's headship are pre-fall realities. ... Eve had just been told that childbearing would now be painful. Despite that, and despite the broken relationship between her and Adam, ... she could continue to desire her husband. And he would rule over her. This is a descriptive statement of the future of Eve and her daughters, not a prescriptive one. (p. 118)

Contrast that with the Hebrew placed in parallel by Foh:

וְאֶל-אִשָּׁה תְּשׁוּקָתָהּ יִהְיֶה כִּי-לֹא-לְבָדָהּ  
וְאֶל-אִשָּׁה יִהְיֶה תְּשׁוּקָתָהּ וְאֵתָהּ תִּמְשָׁל-בָּהּ

The Hebrew word תְּשׁוּקָה is also an unusual word which occurs only three times in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:16, 4:7, SoS 7:11). The key point here is that Foh is putting forward an exegetical argument for why she thinks the “desire” in Genesis 3:16 is a desire of usurpation of authority. Miller is free to disagree with that interpretation, but since it is an exegetical argument, she is only free to reject it if she deals with the exegetical arguments there. Instead, Foh's argument is distorted as a theological assertion that Miller then rejects based upon what she claims is a better theological understanding of the text. Foh's exegetical argument is totally ignored as Miller misrepresented Foh's journal article.

### **Treating non-authoritative sources as representative of movements**

Another thing that does not bode well for Miller's thesis is how she quotes from various online sources. Now, there is nothing necessarily wrong from quoting from online sources and blogs, if either these are authoritative (e.g. the website of CMBW), or one wishes to talk about “popular teachings” of manhood and womanhood in culture. However, one is left flabbergasted with the sheer number of online sites referenced and addressed as somehow representative of complementarianism. On page 121 footnote 59, Miller even referenced a twitter post by Twitter user Angela Whitehorn (@ImAngelaPangela) as somehow representative of some complementarian teaching! Now, I know that Twitter is a popular social media tool, but in what manner is referencing a person who is not an authoritative representative of complementarianism as somehow representative of complementarianism acceptable, and on Twitter too?

Miller's use of online sources from various blogs and websites is extremely questionable, as if these sources are somehow representative of any movement, complementarian or otherwise. Since complementarianism has had many articles written and published over the years, why is it that she could not referenced the authoritative teachings of complementarianism, unless she is looking for evidence to support her pre-determined thesis?

### **Confusion between patriarchy, complementarianism and shades of either**

Throughout the book, Miller strings together quotes from diverse sources to paint a portrayal of what she opposes. Although Miller officially states that there are four views on gender roles (feminism, egalitarianism, complementarianism, patriarchy) (p. 15), in the rest of the book, it is often unclear whether she is actually critiquing patriarchy or complementarianism. For example, on page 155, Miller strings together a quote from a Vision Forum Ministries post on "the Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy" with a quote from the complementarian "Danvers Statement" and a citation from a Mormon Helen Andelin, as if they represent one particular movement. This pattern is repeated as seen in page 159 whereby Douglas Wilson is placed alongside John Piper as if they represent the same movement. The conflation of sources put together can create a false impression of either movement, as if patriarchy is the same as complementarianism. This is sloppy research at best. Since it is endemic within the book, the question is raised as to whether Miller intentionally refuses to differentiate the two movements, thinking that the more tar she can pile on them, the better her own position will appear.

### **Biblical eisegesis**

As a Christian, and a Reformed Christian, one thing that should be important to us is the right interpretation of Scripture. After all, Scripture is to be our ultimate authority. Sadly, even here Miller falls short. We have already seen Miller's failure to engage in proper exegesis while discounting Foh's exegesis of Genesis 3:16. But even when we are not dealing with journal articles, she still falls short.

The first error of Miller is to claim that Ephesians 5:22 does not have its own verb, meaning that verse 21 ought to inform verse 22, and thus the submission of the wife to her husband is to be understood as an example of mutual submission (p. 26). However, when one actually looks at the text of the passage, it is realized that the issue here is much more complicated. There are textual variants here where the verb is present in verse 22. Notably, the text chosen by the committee has the support of  $p^{46}$ , B and a few church fathers, while all the other texts, including Sinaiticus ( $\kappa$ ), has the verb "submit" in the text. According to Bruce Metzger, the shorter reading is chosen for the "succinct style

of the author's admonitions, and explained the other readings as expansions introduced for the sake of clarity."<sup>11</sup> Metzger further states that the main verb "is required especially when the words Αἱ γυναῖκες stood at the beginning of a scripture lesson."<sup>12</sup>

With significant textual variants involved in the text, the last thing someone should be doing is to make superficial arguments about what the text means when she does not interact with the text exegetically. First of all, the variation in the textual support does not lend itself easily to the claim that "verse 22 doesn't have its own verb" (p. 26). Even if we accept Metzger's reasoning for the shorter reading, Metzger himself states that the main verb is required "when the words Αἱ γυναῖκες stood at the beginning of a scripture lesson,"<sup>13</sup> indicating that ancient Christians see the verb present even if implied, and that the phrase Αἱ γυναῖκες function here in the vocative case, thus setting verse 22 as the beginning of a separate clause from verse 21. More importantly for our purposes is the connective ὅτι ("that, because") in Ephesians 5:23 that links the reason why wives ought to submit to their husbands to the fact that the husband is the head of the wife. Since verse 23 is connected to verse 22, it is clear that verse 21 should not be directly connected to verse 21. Miller is thus wrong here in her interpretation of Ephesians 5:22.

In her attempted interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, Miller commits the error of jumping ahead to other verses (verse 11 and 12) instead of actually dealing with the text itself (p. 174). Instead of exegeting verses 8 and 9, Miller instead go to verses 11 and 12 as if the whole of 1 Corinthians 11 is teaching interdependence of the sexes! That is not a proper exegesis of the text as it fails to do justice to verse 8 and 9 and the surrounding contexts. In fact, if verses 11 and 12 are the key to understanding the entirety of 1 Corinthians 11, why then does Paul talk about nature in dealing with women praying with an uncovered head in verse 13? After all, according to Miller, don't verses 11 and 12 establish the "interdependence" between men and women?

Further on page 220, Miller asserted that the reason why Paul told the women in the Corinthian church to cover their head in worship is because "a woman with her hair uncovered was considered 'available,'" and thus "Paul provided protection for all women in church." However, if we read 1 Corinthians 11 again specifically verses 7 to 10, we see that Paul's explicit reason for why women ought to cover her head is because "man was not made from woman, but woman from man" (1 Cor. 11:8). Whether Paul did in fact provide protection for all women in church is secondary to the explicit reason Paul had actually given for his command, which is the creation order. Again, Miller is in error In her interpretation of Scripture.

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<sup>11</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (4<sup>th</sup> Rev Ed.; Edmons, VA: Deustcher Bibelgesellschaft – United Bible Societies, 2007), 541

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

At other times, Miller doesn't even deal with what the biblical texts say but just assert what she thinks it *does not* say. On page 109, she asserts that just because 1 Peter 3:7 state that women is the "weaker vessel," that does not indicate anything of women's nature (So what does it indicate?).

For all that Miller claims to be Reformed, her interactions with the biblical text are lacking. Where they occur, her interpretations sound more like egalitarian interpretations than complementarian ones. Besides the point of male-only ordination, what specifically is non-egalitarian about her position and her interpretation of the few Scriptures she attempts to interpret?

### **Conflation of human and gender categories**

Earlier in this review, I had mentioned that one good point in Miller's book is the reminder of our common humanity we have in Christ, both male and female. That is a good reminder. However, Miller seems unable to move beyond the point of our common humanity, constantly calling us to unity and interdependence between the sexes. Along this vein is the issue of service, where her view of servant leadership is essentially to mostly serve and lead just a little (p. 24).

The problem with Miller's approach is that it remains stuck at the level of our common humanity. But we are so much more than just "a human." We are created male and female, and thus on top of our common humanity, we are gendered individuals. Miller consistently refuses to deal with gender categories and the real differences that makes, which brings us to the next point.

### **Failure to address issues of Creation and Nature**

For a book speaking about gender roles, Miller has surprisingly little to say about creation and nature of men and women. In Part 3 where she is supposed to write on the nature of women and men, what is written is how there are commands in Scripture for men to do things that women are normally known to do (e.g. be quiet), and women to do things that men are normally known to do (e.g. guard, protect). The problem with Miller's approach is there are no such thing as "man-actions," and "woman-actions." Both genders can do any action depending on the context! The nature of men and women are not dependent on what action they are currently doing, especially when the same action word can mean different things for both men and women. For example, the leadership of Deborah was one that seek to encourage a man to take up leadership (Barak; Jdg. 4:6-7), while the men in leadership in Israel do not do so. By focusing on actions instead of the manner of how things are done, Miller gives the impression that there is no essential difference

(besides biology) between men and women in their natures, which is essentially the egalitarian position.

Instead of looking at how creation frames the debate, Miller focuses very much on actions and activities, focusing on the supposed “spheres” of the “*oikos* (private domestic sphere) and the *polis* (the public sphere)” (p. 52). One gets the impression that Miller is fixated on what women can or cannot do, following the secular feminist mindset, instead of the biblical mindset of what women should be (nature). That would certainly explain why actions and activities are front and center in a book about gender roles, while nature disappears from sight.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Miller’s book is not a book that I would recommend on the topic of gender roles and relations. While it has some good points, the number and ubiquity of errors throughout the book ensures that there is no one part of the book that can be redeemed. It is precisely because the topic is so important that clear logical thinking is required. Miller’s book breeds only confusion, for it presents egalitarian arguments throughout the book with the exception of male-only ordination on the one hand, while creating distorted and false portrayals of complementarianism on the other. It serves only to muddy the water, and its “third way” is merely a way to be socially egalitarian while preserving male-only ordination in the church.

## **Appendix: Miller and ESS**

As I had stated, I will deal with the issue of ESS (Eternal Submission of the Son) in the Appendix. Rachel Miller was one of the more vocal people who condemned ESS during the 2016 ESS controversy. The problem with it is very simple: If ESS is falsely represented, then all the condemnations are void. The question therefore is this: Does Miller accurately represent ESS?

According to Miller, ESS is the “eternal subordination of the Son” and teaches that there is a difference of authority and submission within the Trinity. (p. 115). “Proponents of ESS teach that while God the Father and God the Son are equally God, from all eternity the Son submits to the will of the Father” (p. 115). Citing Bruce Ware’s controversial book, Miller claims that “ESS teaches that within the Trinity, God the Father has supreme authority ‘because He is Father,’” thus “they are teaching that authority and submission are part of the nature of God” (p. 116)

First of all, we prefer to call it “eternal submission of the Son” because the word “subordination” sounds a lot like Subordinationism, which we reject. It is true that in ESS, there is a difference of authority and submission within the Trinity, and that “from all eternity the Son submits to the will of the Father.” (p. 115) The problem however comes about because all of these are not predicated of the nature of the Triune God, but of the personal actions of the Persons of the Godhead. THAT is the main issue which ESS critics have persistently refused to understand. The main issue here is that the persons of the Godhead are not one person! In the *Pactum Salutis*, the person of the Son submits to the person of the Father in eternity past. We are not modalists, thus we do not believe that one part of God covenants with another part of God, or that God in one role (Son) covenants with God in another role (Father). The persons are distinct and are not each other, even in eternity past.

It is wrong to say that eternity implies nature. If eternity implies nature, then the persons of the Godhead cannot be eternal, for the three persons of the Godhead are not the one nature of the Godhead, but they are and have always been, and will always be, both one and three in eternity! Since the Scriptures teach the *Pactum Salutis*, a doctrine which is part of Reformed orthodoxy, then by definition ESS is a perfectly proper and Reformed doctrine.

As it can be seen, Miller, as with many ESS critics, misrepresents ESS, or at least the Reformed variation of ESS. As with many critics, I have lost hope that any of them would actually engage on the issue instead of burning strawmen, but one can always hope for vindication from the Lord one day.