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Husband and Wife: The Sexes in Scripture and Society (Book Review)

Richard Buckham
Dordt College

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several reasons for this probable obscurity. First of all, *The Playbook's* scripts are short and undramatic; they are more than clear enough for the chancel, but a bit too preachy for the stage. Second, all but a couple of the scenes follow television plot lines. The whole story comes to maturity in less than 15 minutes, leaving little time for building meaningful characters. And finally, in most of the scripts the authors' overriding intentions seem to be to say something rather than play

Husband and Wife: The Sexes in Scripture and Society, by P. DeJong and D.R. Wilson. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979. 224 pages, \$6.95. Reviewed by Richard Buckham, Assistant Professor of Psychology.

De Jong and Wilson's *Husband and Wife* is a welcome addition to the already extensive literature by Christians on topics and issues relative to maleness and femaleness, sexuality and sex roles, and male-female interaction. Both professors at Calvin College (De Jong in Sociology, Wilson in Anthropology), they have authored a book that is both Christianly directed and responsibly sensitive to the theoretical positions, empirical data, and normative issues related to their subject matter. The value of the book is further enhanced by the inclusion of discussion questions and annotated references at the end of each chapter.

There are several major thrusts to their book. First, they contend with a number of "myths" Christians (and non-Christians as well) hold regarding the sexes in society and Scripture. For example, they would contend with the frequent assumption (by both Christians and non-Christians) that the Bible supports the notion of divinely mandated differences in the tasks males and females are called to perform. Such task differences as do exist between males and females, assert De Jong and Wilson, are due to reproductive and biological differences and social influences on sex role development, not divine fiat. Another myth they demolish by biblical exegesis is that there are divinely mandated biological differences which render males superior to females. They also appeal to the social scientific research on such matters. As they state it:

One would be hard put to argue on the basis of this evidence that men are biologically destined to be providers while women are biologically programmed to care for children and the household. Admittedly, the biological research is not definitive; perhaps other biological differences between the sexes are yet to be discovered. However, the research that has been done

something. The scenes make good object lessons but are shallow examples of provocative drama.

Nevertheless, I hope that the public response to the book is good. In the past few years, the churches and schools of our denomination have been scratching to find playable material. *The Playbook* is a collection of drama which makes no bones about taking a stand. Perhaps in this, our embryonic stage, it is the most palatable food available.

has failed to find clear biological differences that would better fit the sexes for certain tasks or roles in society rather than others (p. 62).

Furthermore, they make the following related claim:

The fact of pregnancy also throws some light on the question why men rather than women inevitably held the positions of authority in nonmodern societies Religious, governmental, or military leadership requires either constant attention or immediate attention at unexpected times, or perhaps both. It would have been very difficult for women to function in these roles, being pregnant so much of their adult lives and having small children to care for. What's more, the major form of nourishment for infants and young children in these societies was mother's milk. This meant that women were limited to those tasks that would allow them to be near their young children (p. 73).

A second major thrust is their argument that the correct biblical understanding of male and female interaction has been undermined by the attitudes and customs of our own culture. For example, in reference to modern American society and Paul's understanding of "headship" they state the following:

It is not easy for modern Americans to understand what Paul was emphasizing with this metaphor of headship. First, we come to this passage with a cultural heritage that includes the man as "the head of the house." To most Americans, the head is the one who has the "say-so" in marriage; but to Paul, headship

suggested the role of family representative within the "one flesh" or organically unified marriage relationship as laid down in Genesis 1 and 2 (p. 168).

A third major thrust is to emphasize the *social* origins of and influences toward traditional sex roles, the *social* costs for both males and females of traditional sex roles, current *social* changes affecting the traditional sex role differentiation, and the biblical mandate toward a more biblically-driven *social* structure which would bring God's

redemptive power to bear upon the misunderstandings, inequities, and injustices that characterize much male-female interaction in contemporary society and among Christians.

In conclusion, this book is to be highly recommended, both for its currency (note their discussion of the ERA, women and the draft, and so on, in chapter 7) and its judicious handling of a number of controversial issues, many of which trouble the contemporary church and the Christian community.

Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey, by Theodore Plantinga. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980. 205 pages. Reviewed by Nick Van Til, Professor of Philosophy.

No doubt it is a mark of distinction and honor when a doctoral dissertation is published by the degree-conferring institution. This work enjoys that distinction and honor. The work represents ten years of study which Plantinga began at the urging of Professor Evan Runner of Calvin College. For Plantinga as for many others Runner was the first philosophy mentor and inspiration.

Historical understanding for Dilthey, Plantinga writes, is more than anything else an understanding (*Verstehen*) of the persons who constitute the central characters in history and its unfolding. This requires an empathy for the psychological states of the persons studied, but it must not be a psychoanalysis. It must supercede psychology to become an understanding of the indications of character that come to expression particularly in the fine arts. In that respect one could suggest that Dilthey's emphasis is similar to that of Kenneth Clark in the BBC series on western civilization.

Further, according to Dilthey, understanding not only differs from individual to individual, but it is a special gift which has been conferred upon Germans (p. 108). Moreover, by the good exercise of that gift one can develop understanding to the point of *Besserverstehen*, that is, understanding some person in the past better than he understands himself. *Besserverstehen* is not to be equated with scientific analysis or psychoanalysis. *Besserverstehen* is the kind of understanding which supports the concept of history, initiated at least in part by Dilthey, *Geisteswissenschaften* is understanding the moving spirit which stands behind human actions.

Dilthey did not support the position of Auguste Comte concerning the place of the social sciences. He would not with positivistic intent make them an extension of the natural sciences.

While an empiricist, Dilthey did not capitulate to empiricism but felt there was a well-defined split between the natural sciences and the *Geisteswissenschaften*. But for all that, Dilthey did not read into history *Zeitgeist* (a special spirit for a specific age) or *Volksgeist* (a special spirit for a particular people). One might add that Dilthey's claim that the Germans had a special gift for historical understanding seemed to mitigate against his repudiation of special *Geists*.

Understanding is for the most part an understanding of a person's expression. For Dilthey "poetic imagination and creation—as exemplified by Goethe—was his model for expression in general" (p. 87). Dilthey chose poetry as the model of expression even though early in life he had confessed that music was his favorite form of expression. All those who particularly appreciate the fine arts can appreciate this emphasis, but there were critics who felt Dilthey neglected the social and economic aspects of history. For example, Dilthey took very little account of the work of Karl Marx.

Dilthey also brought to history a special interest in hermeneutics which he had acquired as the result of his special study of Schleiermacher, who had introduced the general science of hermeneutics and had applied it particularly as he renovated the more traditional and orthodox interpretations of the Bible. Moving his emphasis from language-oriented conceptions of hermeneutics to a greater emphasis on subjectivity and psychological factors, Dilthey regarded hermeneutics as a major component of the *Geisteswissenschaften* (p. 103).

For Dilthey interpretation is an on-going process. The past is always reinterpreted in view of the present. This may eliminate a certain kind of objectivity but