

In His Image

Understanding the Masculine and Feminine

by **Don Corne**

Strong or sensitive? Leading or nurturing? Homebuilder or home-maker? What does it mean to be masculine or feminine? While these two terms are common, little is said about what truly defines them. We're familiar with the cultural stereotypes: men don't cry, love sports, understand cars and are muscular; women enjoy decorating, shopping, dolls and are expected to be slim. Still, when asked to define masculinity and femininity, most people have difficulty explaining the differences apart from cultural roles and expectations. Do men have a feminine side, and vice versa? I would like to help clarify the differences, while exploring how understanding these terms can help us with relational skills, especially

to the person struggling with their sexuality.

Back to the Basics

Then God said, *"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* Genesis 1:27.

You know the story, but what does it tell us about masculinity and femininity? From this account I believe we can logically conclude two things. First, since we are created in the image of God, then God possesses both the masculine and

feminine. These are characteristics and qualities of God that He has bestowed upon us. We know that God created Adam first in His image, which would mean that Adam possessed both masculine and feminine qualities. Second, when God created a helper from Adam's rib, the result was an interdependent pair. Rather than making a clone of Adam, he created another human that would complement the other. While each possessed both masculine and feminine qualities, based on physical differences, the two are designed to express one more predominantly than the other.

Differences Defined

Below are words that help define what is masculine and feminine.



Don Corne

Keep in mind that I am not talking about male and female at this point. Both men and women have the ability to express terms used in each column. This list is also not exhaustive, but hopefully gives clarity to what distinguishes one from the other.

Masculine	Feminine
Doing	Being
Outward focused	Inward focused
Factual	Intuitive
Authority	Power
Proverbs	Psalms
Lead, direct	Nurture
Initiate, Assert	Respond
Mechanical	Relational

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These differences go beyond culture and are reflected in our physical and psychological make-up. For example: muscular and skeletal development allow men to become stronger *'doers'* than women overall. However, it is the female's physical and psychological make-up and emotional capacity to *'be'* pregnant, *'be'* better at relational activities, and to *'be'* more intuitive.

This idea is backed by recent research. "Simon Baron-Cohen, Chair of Psychology at Cambridge University, has been researching sex differences in brain and behavior. Baron-Cohen characterizes male and female brains as being respectively better at 'systemizing' (understanding how systems work) and empathizing (understanding what and why people feel). A more convincing study was done on babies of 24 hours old. It found that boys looked more often and for longer at a mobile than at a human face, and girls did the opposite. Baron-Cohen concluded from this that girls are more predisposed to look at the social stimulus rather than the mechanical, and vice versa for boys".¹ This does not mean that men are *always* more muscular and mechanical, while women *always* are more social and intuitive. But it does appear to indicate

that part of God's design in creating man and woman was to give basic differences in biological make-up that would distinguish yet complement one another and express certain characteristics explicitly.

A difference in genitalia further illustrates my point. The male genitalia are outwardly extended, while the females are inward directed. The design of the male/female sex organs allow for the most natural and pleasurable sexual expression. Furthermore, it is the giving of man's seed and the woman's responsiveness to nurture the seed that work together to produce life. It is these natural complementary designs that I believe validates God's intent for sexual intercourse to be only between a male and female in a marriage relationship. While many argue over scripture references, such innate observations lend credibility to the traditional theology that homosexuality is not God's intent. Homosexual activity and any sex outside of marriage have the potential to produce much physical, emotional, and psychological harm. The medical community has well documented the health risks for these types of behaviors, especially for those who engage in homosexual activity.²

Complementary vs. Competitive

Since the fall in the Garden of Eden

there has been conflict between man and woman. We see this throughout history, along with contemporary circumstances. Sermons which attempt to address scriptures about how husband and wife are to relate to one another can produce tension and disagreement. They sometimes teach or imply that one is superior to the other. Looking at the above list, however, we see the masculine and feminine are designed to complement one another. Competition has replaced complementarities in many situations. Masculine traits are esteemed over the feminine in our culture and many others. However, it is only as the two works together that you have genuine masculinity and femininity expressing itself. Exploring the relationship between power and authority gives greater clarity to this concept.

Power (feminine) is the ability to bring various elements and components together to create energy. For example, power is created when lawmakers come together to decide governing rules; people forming an alliance have more power than a single individual in most endeavors. Conversely, authority (masculine) is the ability to enforce and act upon power. Police officers have the authority to enforce the law, but do not have the power to create those laws.

Think of electricity and the power

plants that send energy to our homes. Power, or energy, is created by the union of various elements coming together. However, that energy does little good if it does not get carried into homes and businesses, but has no ability to do that within itself. Therefore, power lines are designed to carry out this duty. It is the "authority" of power lines that lend shape, protection, and boundaries when delivering electricity. Imagine what would happen if these two tried to function without the other. As energy builds with no outlet it may cause an explosion. Or if the power line is broken, electricity will go in many different directions. Likewise, what would happen if those lines had no electricity to deliver? For the sake of illustration imagine them attempting to force appliances to work with no electricity. In human terms, this often results in using physical force or dominance to abuse authority with no power to back it up. Thus we can see that it would be quite dangerous for the two to function independently.

Putting this in perspective for this discussion, it is the power of the feminine to use intuition, to nurture information, and lend emotion, which in turn gives us the authority to act with wisdom, to lead honorably, and do what is right. For example, a Pastor's wife may pick up on body language and other signals that tune her into the

needs of the congregation. She may sense that someone is really hurting even though they say they're okay. Communicating this to her husband allows him to lead and minister more effectively to his congregation in ways that she may not have the authority to do.

To further explain how these complement one another, consider Psalms and Proverbs. Psalms is a wonderful display of emotions being expressed. This feminine characteristic is beautifully displayed from a male. David didn't always do the right thing, but he was responsive to God and desired to know His heart. He freely expressed his worship in creative ways, such as dancing in the streets. How powerful to read about David's relationship with the Father. On the other hand is the wisdom we receive from Proverbs. The rational masculine way of thinking is boldly laid out as we repeatedly read logical ways to live our lives. Proverbs seems to convey... "if you do this, then this will result". Psalms and Proverbs do not compete, but each provides great insight into living a balanced life surrendered to God.

And finally, the beauty of the masculine and feminine working together also brings about personal wholeness. Andy Comiskey explains it best: *"Human beings are created to reflect this fullness of being in right relationship with the oppo-*

site-sex. Before that can occur, however, we must make peace with the masculine and feminine dimensions of our individual personalities. The closer we operate out of union with the Creator, the more nearly we reflect both the masculine and the feminine in balance, in a manner appropriate to our sexual identities as male and female.

We need to be grounded in the gender identity tied to our biological sex. An affirmed child is always one who has been adequately blessed and built up as a distinctly male or female person. Security in our respective gender identities as male or female grants us the freedom to own the gender qualities most closely tied to our biological gender, e.g. a boy embracing the masculine. That security frees one to make peace with those qualities within oneself that are typically associated with the opposite gender, e.g. a girl accepting her capacity to initiate and give form, a boy's capacity to connect with others meaningfully"³.

Differences Distorted

Hindrances for many people to live with this peace occur when concepts of the masculine and feminine are distorted. Masculine traits of doing, initiating, & acting in authority are often replaced with

over-doing, behaving aggressively, and using physical force. Likewise, feminine abilities to be receptive, use power, and be relational can turn into passivity, manipulation, and emotional dependency. When this happens, masculinity or femininity can be perceived as something undesirable.

Men born with more sensitive personalities tend to pull away from the rough and tough images and activities of associated with the male world. Women often see femininity as a liability when they experience responsiveness as passivity, and physical differences as a weakness. Ironically, a natural desire to connect with the true masculine or true feminine in part leads one into homosexual relationships. For example: for a homosexual male, it is safer to connect with masculinity in others who also have same-sex attractions; there is less risk of encountering rejection from condescending macho attitudes.

I can testify to this in my own life. Even before I began seeking help with sexual conflict, I often felt that if I were to have sex with another male, I would feel more affirmed in my own manhood. Moreover, one only needs to read the gay ads in a "Personals" section of any newspaper to see the appetite for "masculinity" and how it is revered. On the other hand, women who are

more assertive, often project strong, tough personalities while seeking feminine comfort through lesbian relationships. These women may also appear less feminine physically in order to feel/appear less vulnerable to men (especially if rape or sexual abuse has occurred).

No matter one's sexual orientation, it is a challenge we all face to affirm and make peace with the masculine and feminine within us. Sexual promiscuity is often portrayed in our society as a means to make this happen. I know of men who were sexually addicted and falsely believed that hiring female prostitutes or having numerous illicit sexual encounters with women made them feel more like a man. It never satiated their hunger, however. Likewise, I've known women who use their bodies to attract men, thus hoping that their feminine self-esteem would grow. One woman I knew would dress up in sexy, revealing outfits and go to the mall. The more heads she turned, the more affirmed she felt. Yet once home alone, the emptiness would set in. This dilemma can manifest itself in other ways as well. Consider another quote from Andy Comiskey: *"Sons who grew up untouched by their fathers often become parents who can't meaningfully engage with their own kids. And the cycle continues.*

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Though all children are negatively impacted by the absence of good fathering, boys are especially hard-hit. They must hear and respond to the masculine voice if they are to rightfully separate from mother and make peace with their uniquely masculine identities. Without that voice, the boy will have great difficulty finding a reference point

through which his own masculinity can be given form and direction.

Like a vine without a trellis, a fatherless boy will be vulnerable to launching out into a void. No positive male image may exist for him. Thus, he may learn that becoming a man means little more than not being feminine. What results are fallen expressions of masculinity that are an out-working of his heartless, fatherless inheritance."

There is hope in all of this, however, by looking to the One who bestowed these traits upon us. Our Creator knows our need to look to Him for security and affirmation. He can mirror back to us the good of the masculine and feminine. The steps to achieving this will not usually be spiritual or mystic experiences, but learning to face fears leading to our misconceptions and sinful behaviors. We can learn also from one another. It has taken healthy relationships with other

men and women that have helped me and many others overcome gender insecurities. Healthy relating to God and others is at the core of living out our Father's desire and intent...to be made in His image.

1 Men and women: like chalk and cheese. Sex differences in brain and behavior, by Lucy Maddox.

<http://www.physicspost.com/articles.php?articleId=159&page=2>

2 For more information, visit <http://qrd.tcp.com/qrd/religion/anti/cameron/medical.consequences.of.what.homosexuals.do.txt>

THE SYNOD REVIEW OF BALTIMORE PRESBYTERY: NEGLECTING THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF THE LAW

by **Jim Berkley**,
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A deeply disappointing report has been issued by the Administrative Review Committee (ARC) of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic. Synod charged the ARC nearly a year ago with investigating how the Presbytery of Baltimore handled the judicial proceedings regarding the Rev. Donald Stroud.

With many other Presbyterians, PFR is frustrated over such a wasted kairos opportunity. Our troubled denomination had hoped that this synod review would provide steps toward sensible and pastoral enforcement of constitutional discipline. Many of Baltimore Presbytery's activities and decisions had created a pervasive appearance of contempt for the will of the larger church. The ARC could have done much to resolve the problem. But instead, the ARC delivered an incon-

sequential report that majors on the minors and offers not a word of counsel or admonishment about the salient issues. The weightier matters of the application of law were neglected, while the jot and tittle of organization and deadline were catalogued precisely. The moment is lost, the time and effort wasted, by a report that tries not the actions of Baltimore Presbytery but the patience of a waiting denomination.

The plain evidence

The ARC was not without a constellation of circumstances that indicate a presbytery ethos conducive to defiance of the Constitution, such as:

- The statement of Stroud in plenary at General Assembly in 2001 (he was elected a commissioner less than two years after entering the presbytery), in which he said he was "openly gay." In March 2002 he said "I am still in love" with a man he fell

in love with years ago. In November 2002 he said that he is in a relationship. Together, such statements give presbytery at least the presumption of sexual intimacy.

- Stroud's statement of defiance on the web site of That All May Freely Serve.
- The presbytery validation of Stroud's call in 1999 in spite of his very apparent conflict with constitutional standards for ministry. The process was contested by several attentive presbyters but nonetheless approved.
- The presbytery action in July 2002, audaciously asking the presbytery council to consider disobeying the Constitution and instructing the PJC not to consider any ordination-standards charges.
- The presbytery council's substitute motion in November 2002, obfuscating a clear overture (see page 14 of Whitebook) from sessions asking the presbytery to go on record as willing to obey the whole Constitution. The presbytery, apparently unwilling to endorse their Constitution, passed neither.
- The presbytery council's unwillingness to concede that three successive national votes on G-6.0106b, each sustaining it by a greater majority of presbyteries, constitute "a clear word" about the mind of the denomination!
- The composition of the presbytery PJC Investigating Committee on the Stroud case: four persons, three of whom contributed financially to Rev.

Stroud's support. This was a clear conflict of interest.

- The inexplicable decision of the PJC Investigating Committee, which chose to allow no charges to proceed, despite the clear, public, and blatant statements by Rev. Stroud.
- The similar decision by the PJC chair and secretary, when the Investigating Committee's decision was appealed.
- The many ties between Rev. Stroud and presbytery Stated Clerk Charles Forbes, who helped charter TAMFS in Baltimore and is treasurer and a board member. Forbes, a prominent Stroud promoter, could have recused himself, to allow the proceedings to function without shadow of a conflict of interest, but he chose not to.

What the ARC concluded

The ARC's 3,000-word report was both trivially thorough and thoroughly disappointing. Their charge was "to ascertain as to any irregularities or delinquencies related to whether "proceedings have been correctly recorded; proceedings have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution; proceedings have been prudent and equitable." It was later clarified that the ARC was "not charged with the task of reviewing judicial aspects of the investigation." So the ARC returned with a report that stated how they were constituted, that they had met, that they had read minutes and communications,

and that they had talked with people. They gave a narrative history of what transpired regarding Rev. Stroud. Then they made some conclusions:

1. Stroud was neither ordained nor installed by the presbytery. (This evidently is seen as absolving the presbytery for sustaining his examination, validating his call, or celebrating his ministry of defiance.)
2. Stroud hasn't participated in ordinations or installations of anyone in violation of the Constitution. (Perhaps true, since he's not in a parish position, but he has repeatedly said he would and has urged others to do so.)
3. There were no irregularities or delinquencies in the handling of the Stroud case. (In other words the right number of people was named to the Investigating Committee, reports were filed on time, etc. Apparently conflict of interest and turning a blind eye to the obvious were not considered irregular or delinquent.)
4. "The proceedings of both the IC and PJC were prudent, equitable and in accordance with the Book of Order." (The "prudent and equitable" part is particularly hard to swallow, in that allowing a pastor and presbytery to flout the Constitution would hardly seem prudent, and naming persons to an Investigating Committee with known conflicts of interest is hardly equitable.)

"Observations and conclusions" end the statement, but anyone expecting some word of correction or counsel will be dismayed. Nothing the presbytery, stated clerk, Investigating Committee, or PJC review committee did was deemed detrimental to justice. Not a raised eyebrow; not a "you might consider..." , which is absolutely remarkable, given the fact that our Constitution appears to be broken with impunity by Rev. Stroud with the blessing of the Presbytery of Baltimore.

What can be done now?

First, the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic as a whole could meet to discuss the report and further consider the culpability of the Presbytery of Baltimore. This matter is too grave for the Synod Council alone to handle. The Synod can well find the report inadequate, as we and many others have. Indeed, the Synod can attend to the minority opinion of synod council member C. Powell Sykes, who dissented strenuously with the majority of council. The Synod can constitute a new ARC or send this one back to work with firmer instructions.

Particularly, the Synod or an ARC could look at two neglected items from the first examination, namely to determine if "The proceedings have been faithful to the mission of the

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MATTERS OF THE LAW

whole church; and the lawful injunctions of a higher governing body have been obeyed" (G -9.0409). (Why was this not done the first time around? What could be more pertinent to the problem at hand?)

Stroud has looked defiant, but his presbytery has failed even to bring him to trial to prove or disprove misconduct. Instead, they have appeared to encourage him (see the wording of the worship service in his honor). In addition, any presbytery that urges its council to consider the "next steps" of providing support for defiant pastors and sessions, and declaring that their PJC shall not pursue G-6.0106b-related disciplinary actions must be called to account!

Second, ample new evidence of Stroud's personal culpability provides opportunity for local presbyters to seek Stroud's repentance or, if repentance remains lacking, to file new charges. These charges could be prosecuted diligently by those who know and serve alongside Stroud. This would provide far more hope for appropriate outcomes than did earlier filings by an elder from outside of the presbytery.

Stroud provides plenty of fodder for additional charges:

- The General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission says that intending to defy the Constitution is tantamount to defying it, and is not permitted. Stroud still says, "I cannot comply with G-6.0106b of the Book of Order," and he urges others, saying, "We must be engaged in conscientious acts of ecclesiastical disobedience against the injustice of G-6.0106b."

- To quote an interview in the Presbyterian Outlook: "Stroud said he is involved in a relationship. Many who support the 'fidelity and chastity' standard believe that 'homosexuality is a sin or homosexual practice is a sin,' he said. 'I can't agree with that.'" (If the other party in Stroud's "relationship" were female, what presbytery would look the other way?)

- Stroud urges others to "...celebrate the ordinations and installations of all whom the grace of Christ calls, even self-affirming, closet-defying LGBT members," in direct contradiction to G-6.0106b.

- Our Constitution includes G-6.0106b because a large majority of Presbyterians (74% of presbyteries at the last vote) believe it reflects God's will. Unilaterally, Stroud says that G-6.0106b "makes God complicit in unjust oppressive violence" and "makes the PC(USA) complicit with injustice."

The Presbytery of Cincinnati did the right thing in handling similar defiance by the Rev. Stephen Van Kuiken. With great determination and patience, the Presbytery of Cincinnati showed that a governing body can demonstrate loving discipline. They gave opportunity for repentance, but when that opportunity was squandered, they acted to uphold the integrity of our Constitution. Baltimore Presbytery could do the same. Such a proper course will not be without some soul searching and difficult moments, especially when reversing a presbytery ethos that has been marked by willful defiance. But it is the right thing to do, not just for

the presbytery and their integrity before God, but also for the peace, unity, and purity of the whole denomination.

To learn more about PFR and the issues ministry visit...

www.pfrenewal.org

You may want to consider writing a letter of concern or protest regarding this situation. Send to the Synod Council of the Synod of Mid-Atlantic, P.O. Box 27076, Richmond, VA 23261. Other options are writing an editorial to Presbyweb or to the Presbyterian Layman.

Help!

Each week we receive requests from people around the country (& sometimes other countries) who are looking for help and support as they overcome homosexuality and other forms of sexual conflict. One of the goals of OneByOne is to see this type of ministry taking place in local churches. We are therefore asking for your help in building a database of resources we can refer people to in their area. If your congregation is a safe place for a

person to find healing, offers support groups or counseling, or if you know of local counselors and ministries in your area, please send contact information to us. Don't feel prepared to minister to those in need? Let us help! OneByOne has a Speaker's Bureau eager to conduct seminars in local churches. Perhaps co-sponsor an event with other churches in your area. For more information visit our website oneby1.org or contact Don Corne, (804) 874-0092.

WANTED

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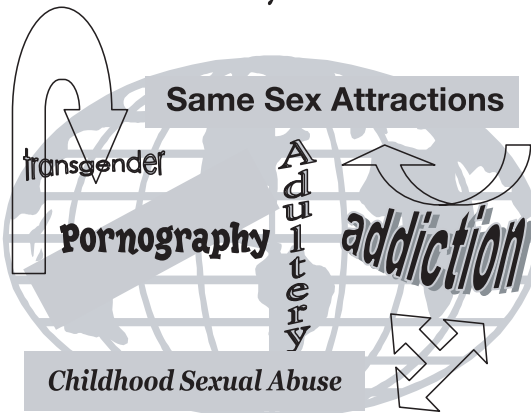
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