

## The Published Writings of Aimee Byrd: A Summary Analysis

By Mike Myers

From *Housewife Theologian (HWT)* in 2013 to *Recovering from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Recovering)* in 2020, the published work of Aimee Byrd spans nearly a decade. Throughout my reviews of her books, I have indicated marks of evident theological drift. Certainly every thinker, writer, pastor, and person for that matter, will change over the course of a decade. I certainly have. For the Christian, the key question is this: are the changes occurring in my life and thought more and more conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ? We must always ask, “Am I finding my mind more and more transformed by its renewal, or conformed to this present world (Rom. 12:1-2)?

My concern is that the writings of Mrs. Byrd have gradually drifted from helpful, orthodox, and godly, to harmful, heterodox, and worldly. Such a serious statement requires documentation, which I have done in my previous reviews. As a representative sample, compare the following quotations.

Here she spoke honorably about a husband’s leadership:

Our husbands have been given a very serious responsibility. As Christian women, we are to be helping them, respecting their duty. Many women have told me that they wish their husbands would be leaders. However, they already are leaders. Husbands will be held accountable to God for the way they have led their families...The question is whether or not they are good ones. In that case, I love my husband way too much to contribute purposely to his failing before God. I do want to be his helper, easing his role. And if we look at this conversely, whether or not we want to be a helper, that is how we as wives will be held accountable before God (*HWT*, 22, see also page 43).

In 2020 she called it a trope:

The tropes [created by [CBMW](#)] signify that biblical men are the leaders and initiators, the sex with virility, and the decision makers. Biblical women are submissive, quiet, tenders of the home, and overall, affirmers for these masculine leaders. As [feminist] Virginia Woolf put it, ‘Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man twice its natural size’ (*Recovering*, 170).

In 2013 she cautioned against mishandling God’s Word by pointing to Eve’s *error*:

Many messages are flung at us every day that are contradictory to Scripture. What are we going to believe? As we can see from the story of Eve (and should know from our own experience) there are severe consequences for mishandling the Word of God. Even within the church we are constantly flooded with false teaching. Are we jealous to protect the truth of God's Word? (*HWT*, 24-25)

But as I pointed out [here](#), in 2020 she argued that Eve’s *addition* to God’s Word in Genesis 3:2-3 actually helps us see “more of the story behind the story” (*Recovering*, 207):

We see the value of woman’s contributing voice in the very beginning. Many of us have been taught that Eve added to the Word of God in her response to the serpent...(Gen 3:3). Some of us have learned from this that Eve was the first legalist by adding ‘or touch it’ to God’s prohibition (*Recovering*, 207).

Citing from P. Wayne Townsend, she enlarged on this theme, “Given this context for Genesis and the writer’s familiarity with the Sinai law, we see that although ‘do not touch’ is not part of the prohibition God spoke to Adam, Eve is expanding on the story” (*Recovering*, 208). I find it remarkable that while Mrs. Byrd speaks of “the value of woman’s contributing *voice in the very beginning*,” God said to Adam, “‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: ‘Cursed is the ground for your sake’” (Gen. 3:17).

If these two representative comparisons do not adequately prove my observation, Mrs. Byrd herself did. When reflecting on her former excitement about *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (RBMW)*, she clearly signaled her departure from her earlier views:

I remember my young, impressionable self learning, underlining, and later even quoting from this book. I wanted to be a *biblical* woman, a good wife and mom. But I was also confused by some of what I read. Was it my own sinful proclivity, or were some of the distinctives being taught in the book taking things too far? As a young wife, I gave the benefit of the doubt to the authors, who were much more educated and experienced than I. But here I am, no longer a ‘young’ wife, finding myself tripping over some of the teachings in that same book as they have been further amplified and applied. (*Recovering*, 20).

I am not writing to countenance or defend the serious theological errors related to eternal subordination of the Son. I am not offering a wholesale endorsement of Piper and Grudem’s *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (though I could easily have written more detailing how Mrs. Byrd consistently misrepresents both of these men and the book). Interestingly, I am writing for the same reason Mrs. Byrd did, though in a different direction. She wrote,

I know there are many young, impressionable women, like I was, who want to be good Christian wives. And even though the teaching may have good intentions behind it, it is damaging. And it is separating men and women into some of the same *Yellow Wallpaper* stereotypes from the nineteenth century. This is not good for the family, and it is not good for God’s church (*Recovering*, 21).

Mrs. Byrd assigns blame for damage and separation to *RBMW*. I argue that her increasing dependence on critical scholarship and her poor exegesis is more dangerous in the long run, especially to those who look to her for instruction. In fact, what she wrote back in *No Little Women (NLW)* was prescient of her own work:

Many of the top selling Christian books **appear to have a high view of Scripture**, but, once you get past the sparkling endorsements and attractive cover design, they teach extrabiblical revelation, mysticism, New Age spirituality, the prosperity gospel, and **just plain bad exposition. These are not harmless books** (NLW, 116, emphasis mine).

Indeed.

How did Mrs. Byrd arrive at this point, all the while claiming that she wrote within the bounds of the theological standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (as she states [here](#) at 23:10)? I can also ask my question in Twitter terms: Why did she go from @aimeebyrdHWT to @aimeebyrdPYW? Does this mean the onetime Housewife Theologian now identifies herself as

Peeling Yellow Wallpaper? Whatever the answer, one clear influence on Mrs. Byrd's changing trajectory has been her most recent editor.

### Her Editor

*Why Can't We Be Friends?* proved to be Mrs. Byrd's final work with P&R. Her new [editor](#) at Zondervan Academic is Katya Covrett (*Recovering*, 11). In a May 18, 2020 [interview](#) with *The Christian Post* about *Recovering*, Mrs. Byrd said:

But as a woman writing about these things I found a roadblock — this whole woman thing. Me being a woman talking about it and also discipling women alongside of men and the differences in separation that are so saturated now in our church culture. In talking with my editor, we decided that the roadblocks need to be addressed directly, and I kind of have that more direct voice in my writing anyway. So she encouraged me to do that. The book is sort of presented as an alternative to all the resources we have marketed to us in this evangelical so-called 'biblical womanhood' culture.

She clearly connected the input of her editor with the thrust of her book, i.e., addressing roadblocks (she reiterates her editor's influence on the title [here](#) at 33:45-34:35). This is understandable in principle, but it begs the question, what are the convictions that Mrs. Covrett holds that would lead her to encourage Mrs. Byrd in this direction?

When asked in an August 13, 2020 [interview](#) "about how publishing in biblical studies can and/or should change in the next ten years," Mrs. Covrett responded,

I hope and pray that publishing in biblical studies will become more diverse. Historically, the discipline has been dominated by white men (please understand that I have nothing against white men; many of my best friends among authors are white guys), *but this must change...* Zondervan Academic has made this commitment and, as our friendly competitors do so as well, we will begin to see the tide change for the better (emphasis original).

This is entirely consistent with what Mrs. Covrett [wrote](#) five years earlier in 2015:

Try as we might, the 'lack of balance' in the academy continues to constrain us. Everything I've said here about women can also be said about ethnic minorities and global voices, which have been other significant areas of publishing for Zondervan Academic. Whether we like it or not, the White Male Club that is the Christian academia—no offense, guys—is the context in which we acquire and publish. The uphill battle continues. And so we continue to seek balance and diversity—not out of a sense of political correctness, but because as members of the body of Christ we all complement one another. When we do not have the voices and perspectives of women, ethnic minorities, and scholars from the Majority World, we all suffer—men, women, biblical scholars and theologians, students, and the church as a whole.

In our age of post-modernism, liberalism, and general decline in theological standards, Christians should find this emphasis troubling. Without question, Mrs. Byrd's editor has resolutely focused her goals upon conformity to the Siren call of diversity, not to the sacred call of firm commitment to biblical fidelity. As far as I know, Mrs. Covrett is not a member of the OPC. I do not know if she is reformed or even evangelical. For that reason, I simply express my concern about the clear agenda that leads away from the clarity and authority of the Word of God. This is

something that every Christian must recognize. If we abandon the sole authority and standard of the Word of God, we have lost everything.

### **A Final Concern**

Public theological drift of a public person calls for public correction from the elders of the church. This is especially true when opinions that are published are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ has established in the church (Westminster Confession 20.4). I have been disappointed in this—that a good number of elders close to Mrs. Byrd seem to have failed to engage thoroughly and critically with her work, especially with her more recent and troubling changes in emphasis. Over the last two years I have personally corresponded multiple times with the session of Mrs. Byrd’s now former church, hoping for their help and counsel regarding my concerns. Beyond acknowledging receipt of my communications, my pleas for engagement and public action on this topic received minimal response.

I would also note the general encouragement of the hosts of the Mortification of Spin podcast regarding Mrs. Byrd’s work. For example, in a May 6, 2020 [discussion](#) Todd Pruitt introduced the topic of Mrs. Byrd’s then recently released book, jokingly saying, “Today it is our distinct pleasure to finally shed some light on Aimee Byrd’s latest hate-filled, feminist, left-wing, church destroying book called *Recovering...from Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*.” He, Carl Trueman, and Mrs. Byrd then proceeded to have a long discussion, punctuated by laughter and lightheartedness. Mr. Pruitt said that when he read her book, he expected to “come away with a fairly substantial list of significant areas of disagreement” but was surprised that he did not. He claimed later that he found it “thoroughly anchored to the Scriptures” and that “this is not a treatise for egalitarianism at all.” One wonders how carefully Mr. Pruitt and Dr. Trueman actually read this book. It contains serious errors related to canonicity, leans heavily on liberal sources, utilizes exegesis by ‘historical imagination,’ and its central working metaphor is a classic feminist symbol. How were these crucial elements missed?

Has Mrs. Byrd been treated uncharitably by some? Yes, and it ought not to have happened. That notwithstanding, did any elders with a formal or informal role in her life recognize her theological drift? If so, did anyone say or do anything substantial to help identify it and lead her to repentance (2 Tim 2:24-26)? In his commentary on Galatians, John Brown of Edinburgh wrote,

The elders should watch over the flock of Christ committed to their oversight, as they must answer at last to the great Shepherd of the sheep. They ought to wink at no violation of the law of Christ, to allow none to wander from the fold without warning them of their danger, and by every proper means endeavoring to bring them back (*Galatians*, 322).

Our inability to do this sufficiently does not remove our responsibility to faithfulness, for we will each give an account (Heb. 13:17).

### **Conclusion**

Some have wondered why I took the time to write these reviews. Perhaps I can explain in this way. A couple years ago I benefited greatly from a class I took that examined the pastoral theology of John Calvin and John Owen. Towering over nearly all figures of Reformation and post-Reformation history, they were scarcely equaled in their competence, piety, love for Christ and His Church, and their ability to engage the issues of their day. They did not take up public review and refutation of error because they were “obsessed with disputes and arguments over

words” (1 Tim. 6:4), but because they loved Jesus Christ and the truth as it is in Him. Calvin and Owen engaged in *pastoral polemics* because they were committed to the public proclamation of the truth and refutation of error for the good of the church.

I have been motivated by three primary concerns throughout my work. The first is the effect the errors in Mrs. Byrd’s writings have had—and will have—upon the church generally and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church particularly. Remember that even a little leaven leavens the whole lump (Gal. 5:9). I hope Mrs. Byrd’s readers will see the problems I have identified and take heed. As I noted above, these are not harmless books.

My second motivation is the good of Mrs. Byrd—that she would correct her errors and remember the better things of her earliest books. Readers who have taken the time to consider fairly what I have said will know that I have not written disrespectfully or in a sinfully disparaging manner. The reviews have been especially critical of three of her five books, noting a shift after the second. My hope is that she will turn from this trajectory, for it **will** lead to shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19).

Finally, I hope that the officers within my denomination who countenanced and supported Mrs. Byrd’s work will recognize their errors in doing so and turn from them as well. While my experience is limited, many elders to whom I have spoken, or whose reviews I have read, either received the books with very mild criticism or remain largely ignorant of them. To the latter I commend these words from R.L. Dabney, “let him accuse his own ignorance and set about informing it” (*Sacred Rhetoric*, 118). In 1923 J. Gresham Machen wrote, “God has always saved the Church. But He has always saved it not by theological pacifists, but by sturdy contenders for the truth” (*Christianity and Liberalism*, 174). May the Lord move in the hearts of His people, His officers in particular, to maintain a love for Christ, His truth, and His Church until the Day of His return.

Dr. Trueman ended the Mortification of Spin episode I referenced above with these words, which at the time were sarcastic but may prove prophetic: “It’s hard to imagine where she is going to go with her next book to cause more trouble.” With her next work [\*The Sexual Reformation\*](#) due to be released in 2022, I suppose only time will tell.