

**A  
CRITIQUE  
OF  
“WILD AT HEART”  
THE ANSWER  
TO  
THE “FEMINIZING” OF MEN  
WILL NOT BE FOUND IN  
THE “HUMANIZING” OF GOD**

In the religious best-seller, *Wild At Heart*, John Eldridge says that:

*In an attempt to secure the sovereignty of God, theologians have overstated their case and left us with a chess-player God playing both sides of the board, making all his moves and all ours too. (p. 56)*

It is no secret that I believe that the fatalism found in Calvinism (or anywhere else for that matter) is hopelessly unbiblical. I strongly disagree with the notion that God is making all of our moves. Divine sovereignty (scripturally speaking) does not require that God does everything that is done or that his decisions are the only decisions that can and do make a difference. There are some things that only God can do (regenerate, justify, wash away our sins, etc) and there are some things that He requires us to do (believe, repent, confess etc). *The Reformed view* of an all-encompassing and all-inclusive decree that says God causes everything that has or will happen does not correspond to the biblical concept of divine sovereignty. It does, however, contradict the biblical concept of moral accountability for man (Phil. 2: 5-10) and the absolute holy, righteous and unchanging nature of God (1 Pet. 1: 16, 1 Jn, 2: 1, Heb. 1: 10-12). I agree with Eldridge when he says (with a view to God making all the moves for us):

*...Clearly, this is not so.*

The problem is that Eldridge in *Wild At Heart* tries to correct one serious error or misunderstanding with another equally serious error and misunderstanding. In what I assume is a sincere effort on the part of Eldridge to exonerate God from the

false charge of fatalism\* and rescue Christians from the practical implications of fatalism, he takes some things that may be true of men (even of regenerate men) and theologically imposes them on God. He did not need to do this and he should not have done this. In his effort to save men from the plague of modern day cultural “feminizing” he commits an even more egregious error by “humanizing” God. In order to make men *more* than they are, he has apparently found it necessary (in his thinking and theology) to make God *less* than what He is (Ps. 8: 4). While Eldridge is theologically orthodox in many areas of importance and doctrinal concern, he clearly lost his bearings in his doctrine of God (theology proper) and his doctrine of man (anthropology). Eldridge is serious (and seriously wrong) and wants us to take him serious when he insists that:

*God is a person who takes immense risks. No doubt the biggest risk of all was when he gave angels and men free will, including the freedom to reject him-not just once but every single day ... there is something much more risky here than we are often willing to admit. (30)*

Now I am one of the millions of non-Reformed Evangelicals who believe God created our first parents with a meaningful and relatively free-will. Eldridge wants us to believe that by doing so God lost some of what defines God (scripturally speaking) as God. God is both immutable and self-existent. Nothing can be added to the nature God's existence or taken from the nature of God's existence. Theologians use the word Aseity to describe this attribute of God. Whatever capacity or ability God gave man when He created man, it does not diminish and could not (in reality or by definition) change what God is or is like. I am here specifically referring to God's eternal and absolute attributes both moral and ontological\*. Given the realities of life (even the Christian life) risk-taking may be (more or less) essential to what it means to be a man (and perhaps even to what it means to be human-male and female).

Projecting the way we must or should function in our world on God (i.e., to survive or thrive) is “a cure worse than the disease”. It is (theologically) to take from God what cannot (by definition) be taken from Him. In other words, to recognize that men need to be risk-takers or that they are risk-takers, does not mean that God is a risk-taker. In saying this, however unwittingly, Eldridge is *defining down* what it means to be God. I do not need to go into details, but there are a lot of things; non-sinful things, that a man must do in his present mortal state that God does not do. God created us in His image (Gen. 1: 26). But we should not attempt to return the favor and recreate Him in our image.

In fact, this is what Eldridge does (in his thinking and theology). As there are some things true about God that are not true of man (2 Tim. 6: 11-16) so there are some things true of men that are not true of God. Thus, what theologians refer to as the “analogy of being” only goes so far. In other words, even though there are real and meaningful ways in which we are like God and even ways we can say that God is

like us, so we can say we bare His image in ways He does not bare our image. Moreover, the image of God reflected in man is of a different kind than what Eldridge imagines and suggests (Eph. 2:10, 4: 24).

It would right to say the sky is blue. It would be wrong to say that blue is the sky. Even so, it is true to say that the image of God is to found in man. It is false to say that the image of man is to be found in God. We changed in the fall in a very negative way (Gen. 2: 16, Rom. 3: 11-18). We changed in a very positive way in our regeneration and justification when we received Christ by faith (Jn, 1: 12-13, Rom. 5: 1-5, 2 Cor. 5: 17). We can continue to change and grow in a positive and godly way through spiritual maturation (1 Pet. 2: 1-3, Eph. 4: 15, 2 Pet. 3:18) and godly sanctification (1 Thess. 4: 3). We will change even more dramatically when we are glorified as we are finally manifest as the children of God in the resurrection of the just (1 Jn. 3: 1-3, 1 Cor. 15: 47-49, Phil. 3: 20-21. Rom. 8: 18-32). To support his misguided and misinformed idea of a risk-taking God (and all this implies), Eldridge rightly says that:

*[God] did not make Adam and Eve obey him.*

It is true that God did not make Adam and Eve obey Him. It is also true that God did not make Adam and Eve disobey Him. Adam and Eve, of their own volition disobeyed God as they had previously obeyed Him. God allowed or permitted Adam and Eve to obey Him. God allowed or permitted Adam and Eve to disobey Him. A sovereign God must permit everything we do or we would not be able to do it. To affirm less than this is to deny that God is sovereign. But in permitting what He permitted or allowing what He allowed, God did not cause man to do what He did (i.e., Theistic Fatalism). God is not taking risks in what He allows or permits (i.e., Open Theism). God never loses control, is never off the throne, never surprised by what happens or even in doubt about what will happen. He is omniscient and therefore knows everything that will happen and everything that could happen. He knows the actualities of what will happen and the possibilities of what could happen. To affirm anything less than this is to deny God (in our thinking and theology) His divine attributes. Nevertheless, Eldridge insists that in allowing or permitting Adam and Even to sin and disobey Him:

*It's not the nature of God to limit his risks and cover his bases. (31)*

God does not limit His risks because He takes no risks. He takes no risks because there is nothing and can be nothing at risk for God. God did not cover His basis. Nothing needed to be covered for God and there is nothing to cover for God. Nothing Adam and Eve did changed the way God is in the slightest way. Nothing that Adam and Eve did diminished God or His attributes in the smallest of ways. Everything that could accurately be said about God (in an orthodox “theology proper” or a truly biblical “doctrine of God”) before the fall of Adam and Eve could accurately be said about God after the fall. Those same things could have

accurately been said about God from all eternity we will be able to say them (about God) for all eternity. Man changed as a result of the fall. God did not change after man's sin because God does not change because God cannot change. He cannot be less than all-powerful and He cannot be less than perfectly righteous and He cannot know less than all things.

Adam and Eve lost a lot when they sinned, not only for themselves but for the rest of us as well. God did not and could not lose anything and nothing was, is, or will ever be at risk for the eternal and unchanging God. Eldridge is right when he says that:

*God's relationship with us and with our world is just that: a relationship.*

Eldridge is wrong (so very wrong) when he says that:

*As with every relationship, there's a certain amount of unpredictability, and the ever-present likelihood that you'll get hurt ... God's willingness to risk is just astounding-far beyond what any of us would do were we in his position.*  
(32)

Again, Eldridge confuses and confounds realities of a post-fall and pre-resurrection anthropology with the realities of an unchanging God and His eternal and unchanging nature. In the context in which these words were written and in light of the point that Eldridge is making, He makes it clear that he has a very low and thoroughly unbiblical view of God. By insisting that because God was taking a risk in the sin He was allowing, he is suggesting that God did not know with absolutely what would happen. God could not take a risk and God could not know less than everything. When he speaks about the potential or possibility of getting hurt (the ever-present likelihood) involved in the risk God took and the sin that He allowed Eldridge is wrongly projecting on to an unchanging God what is true for man in a fallen and changing world, a world that mortal man is subjected to and that God is not subjected to (Rom 8: 19-23).

Sin always displeases God. The first sin of the first sinners was displeasing to God. The last sin of the last sinner will be displeasing to God. But to say God is "hurt" in the way that Eldridge suggests is to project onto God the frailties of fallen man in a fallen world. Again his anthropology bleeds into his theology proper or stated differently, his doctrine of man is allowed to alter and diminish his doctrine of God. There are some good points to be made in *Wild At Heart*. It is a tragedy that Eldridge felt he had to make them in the context of a book that says and suggests terrible and diminishing things about God. A distorted view of God never leads to clear view of man. Men should be men. But we do not need to bring God down to our level in order to fulfill the biblically-based responsibilities and obligations of a man. The answer to the "feminizing" of men is not to be found in the "humanizing" of God. The answer to *theistic fatalism* is not to be found in an *open theism*.