ChristCommunity
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EXPLORING GOD'S DESIGN FOR MALE AND FEMALE FLOURISHING IN THE CHURCH

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God's Design for Male and Female Flourishing in The Church: A Biblical Theology of Male and Female
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WHAT ARE MALE & FEMALE FOR?

"God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27-28 New English Translation)

What are male and female for? This question is at the heart of a quest for a robustly biblical theology of male and female. In short, male and female, in their shared humanity, are created by God for his glory to reign together with God over his good world.

God in his infinite creativity and glorious love of unity and diversity did not just create generic, undifferentiated humanity. He created an embodied pair — male and female — irreducibly human and beautifully distinct. Created in God's own image, women and men together reflect the joyful unity and diversity of God's own triune life. As image-bearers, men and women are irrevocably equal in their ontology, humanity, dignity, and worth. Together women and men are created for *interdependent union,* not *independent autonomy*. Each one offers unique contributions to God's mission.

In the biblical theology of male and female that follows, we will explore how the following foundational themes develop and deepen in the biblical story and how each ultimately points to Jesus.

- Embodied Pair – Male and Female
- Image-bearers – Ontologically Equal[1]
- Complementarity – Necessary Allies
- Interdependent Union as Goal
- Unique Contributors to God's Mission

Each of these themes is anchored in the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 and is distorted in the fall, that is the rupture and disintegration in Genesis 3. First, we will look at *Creation and Fall*. Then we will turn our attention to how these themes unfold in the stunning and sometimes heart-wrenching storyline of *Redemption* in the rest of the Scripture. Finally, we will see how each theme finds its ultimate expression in *New Creation*.

1 Ontology is the branch of metaphysics in philosophy dealing with the nature of being. The language of "ontologically equal" in this context indicates that both men and women are fully and truly human, fully bearing the image of God.

MALE AND FEMALE IN CREATION AND FALL

INTRODUCTION

Like the opening movement of a symphony or the overture of a musical, the opening chapters of Genesis introduces readers to themes and patterns that will repeat and develop throughout the rest of Scripture. What harmonies are sounded in this opening movement about male and female? What dissonances are introduced when sin enters uninvited into the score? What hope is there for harmony to be restored? Let's listen together.

GENESIS 1

Genesis 1 opens with a declaration: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* (Genesis 1:1)[2] Everything that exists — including male and female — is created by God for his glory from the overflow of his life and goodness.[3] In the Genesis 1 creation account, humans enter the story on Day 6:

> [26] *Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, so they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth."* [27] *God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.* [28] *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it! Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and every creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:26–28 NET)*

First, we learn in verse 26 of God's plan to make humans. The word translated "humankind" in the New English Translation (NET) is the Hebrew word *adam*. It is translated "man" or "mankind" in most English versions (ESV, NIV, CSB, NASB, KJV). In Hebrew *adam* can refer to (1) generic humanity, (2) males specifically, or (3) the proper name "Adam."[4] In verse 26 *adam* refers to humankind generically.

Second, in verse 27 we discover that God is not just creating generic, androgynous humanity, but male (Hb. *zakhar*) and female (Hb. *neevah*). This follows God's pattern of creating in binary pairs — heaven and earth, evening and morning, above and below, sea and land, day and night — and now male and female.[5]

2 All Scripture quotations are from *The Christian Standard Bible* (CSB) unless otherwise noted. It will be the paper writing team's recommendation that Christ Community adopt the CSB as our church translation. The CSB does an excellent job of highlighting the places biblical authors are addressing men and women. We also quote the New English Translation (NET) frequently because of the clarity it brings to the Hebrew and Greek words and grammar in several key passages, especially in Genesis and the epistles.

3 This stands in stark contrast to other ancient origin accounts of humans created by the gods to be their slaves. It is also in contrast to contemporary purely naturalistic origin accounts of humans as the result of natural processes without meaning, design, or purpose.

4 See Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT). Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994, s.v. "אדם mda (*adam*)."

5 While it is outside the scope of this paper to discuss intersex and gender dysphoria, we acknowledge the pain and difficulty that those who journey with these experiences carry. For more on intersex and gender dysphria, see Preston Sprinkle, *Embodied: Transgender Identities, the Church, and What the Bible Has to Say.*

Third, we see that male and female, created in God's image, are together given a specific responsibility — namely, to rule. Just as the sun, moon, and stars were created to rule the realm of the heavens (Genesis 1:17), God creates humans to rule the realm of the earth.[6] God blesses and commissions male and female together for the work of being fruitful, multiplying, filling, subduing, and ruling. Several key insights emerge here.

- *Humans as male and female are more alike than different.* Discussions about male and female often focus primarily on what makes them distinct. While important, this focus can easily eclipse the profound truth that our human experiences, while shaped by who we are as male and female, are *human* experiences. They are not squirrel, seagull, squid, or spider experiences.

- *Humans as male and female are both made in the image of God.* This not only vitally means that male and female share equal worth, dignity, and value, it also means that male and female together image God. While the one God whose name is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has chosen to reveal himself in Scripture with masculine pronouns, he is neither male nor female. Rather, as John McKinley states concisely, "...God is above human gender and inclusive of both human genders. Both genders are expressive of God and reflect him in creation. God's traits are not a more natural fit with male human beings."[7]

- *Humans as male and female are both commissioned to rule over the earth, seas, and sky.* There is an interdependent relationship between male and female — and not just in the narrow function of procreation. The entirety of the work of ruling, filling, subduing is entrusted to *them* — not just *him* or *her.*

Yet, what we find as Genesis 2 opens is an *adam* — a human, a male human to be precise[8] — who is alone. And it is *not* good.

GENESIS 2

In Genesis 1 we get the "satellite view" of creation; in Genesis 2 we move to the street view.[9] Sandra Richter explains, "Simply put, Genesis 1 has a sweeping panoramic view of creation that emphasizes the transcendence of God; Genesis 2 is more 'anthropomorphic' in its approach, portraying God with the human qualities of first a craftsman (Genesis 2:7), then a gardener (Genesis 2:8), and finally a builder (Genesis 2:22)."[10] Genesis 1 opens with a watery, chaotic "deep" out of which God brings order

6 Some have noticed a significance in humanity being the second set of "rulers" to be created after the sun, moon, and stars who are created first. The pattern in the ancient Near East was for the firstborn to receive the greater glory, but God continually reverses this pattern in the rest of the book of Genesis. (See the stories of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers.) Is it possible that this pattern of reversal begins here in Genesis 1? Humans are created second, but only they are made in God's image. The "second born" humans become the crown of creation.

7 John McKinley, "The Need for a Third Way Between Egalitarianism and Complementarianism," https://fathommag.com/stories/the-need-for-a-third-way-between-egalitarianism-and-complementarianism. Accessed 2022-03-21. Moreover Lucy Peppiatt reminds us: "We have to acknowledge that all language for God is metaphorical and figurative because of both the nature of language and the nature of God. We are attempting to describe the indescribable. On the other hand, we want to acknowledge that these metaphors also point to something real and meaningful" (Lucy Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scriptures Vision for Women,* 19).

8 Because *adam* is regularly used to refer to all of humanity (not only males), some have suggested the *adam* before the making of the female human is androgynous. However, in Genesis 2:23 when the male describes the female saying, "she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man," the word translated "Man" is the Hebrew word *'ish,* not *adam*. In Hebrew *'ish* only refers to "males" or "husbands," not "humanity" in general.

9 Thanks to Alistair Roberts for this metaphor. See his "Theology of the Sexes Lecture Series", Lecture 3. *https://theopolisinstitute.com/lectures/theology-of-the-sexes/*

10 Sandra Richter, *The Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament,* 93.

and life. Likewise, Genesis 2 opens in a disordered state, but instead of chaotic water, we find an empty land without plants because there is no rain to water it and no *adam* to cultivate it (Genesis 2:5).

God solves the rain problem in verse 6 with springs of water from the ground and the *adam*-less problem in verse 7: "Then the LORD God formed the man [the *adam*] out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man [the *adam*] became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Here it becomes explicit that to be an *adam* is to be *physically embodied*. Like a master craftsman, God fashions the male *adam* out of the dust of the ground and then breathes life into him.

Next, God plants a garden, puts the *adam* in the garden, and gives him a very specific responsibility: "The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it (Hb. *avad)* and watch over it (Hb. *shamar*)" (Genesis 2:15). Both *avad* and *shamar* are used in Numbers 18 to describe the duties of the priests caring for and protecting the tabernacle/temple. The garden in Eden is depicted as a temple, a place where God's space and human space overlap. The male *adam* is given the unique responsibility of "working" and "watching over" the garden space. Critically, the *adam* is also entrusted with the responsibility of keeping the command given in Genesis 2:16-17:

> [16] *And the LORD God commanded the man [adam], "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden,* [17] *but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."*

While male and female together will do this work, we believe there is significance to the fact that God entrusts the command to *male* before the *female* is created and hints at the beginning of a pattern that we will see unfold of male guardianship of God's word. But the *adam* cannot do this work God has entrusted him alone. Thus, we read in 2:18, "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion [Hb. *ezer*] for him who corresponds to him'" (NET).

Traditionally, the Hebrew word *ezer* has been translated with the English word "helper" (ESV, NIV, CSB, NASB), but the NET's "companion for him" better captures its distinct meaning. The translators explain:

> *Usage of the Hebrew term does not suggest a subordinate role, a connotation which English "helper" can have. In the Bible God is frequently described as the "helper," the one who does for us what we cannot do for ourselves, the one who meets our needs. In this context the word seems to express the idea of an "indispensable companion."* [11]

John McKinley has coined the phrase "necessary ally" to capture the idea of *ezer* as it is used in this context.[12] The language of "correspondence" is also key. The female, too, is an *adam*. She is fully human as the male is fully human. This is the point of God bringing all the animals to the man to name in (Genesis 2:19-20). The *adam* is looking for, but cannot find, another *adam* corresponding to him among the animals.[13]

11 NET Genesis 2:18, note 57.

12 "In the context of the woman and her relation to the man, *ezer* refers to her as a *necessary* ally because the commission from God to rule creation is impossible without the collaboration of women and men." John McKinley, "The Need for a Third Way."

13 See NET Genesis 2:18, note 58: "The man's form and nature are matched by the woman's as she reflects him and complements him. Together they correspond. In short, this prepositional phrase indicates that she has everything that God had invested in him."

The *ezer* God will provide is not just a necessary ally for *someone* but a necessary ally for *something*, namely, *fruitfulness* (Hb. *para*) not just in procreation but in *productivity*. For example, in Exodus 23:16-17 *para* is used to describe the productivity of human labor. (This insight is critical for a Christian theology of singleness.)

So how will this problem, this *not*-goodness, be solved? How will God provide the necessary ally? The answer may seem surprising — but only if we haven't noticed the pattern of separation and ordering from Genesis 1.

In Genesis 1 God creates and orders by separating. He separates the light and dark, the waters above from the waters below, thus separating the water and dry land. This pattern continues in Genesis 2:21-22.

> [21] *So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was asleep, he took part of the man's side and closed up the place with flesh.* [22] *Then the LORD God made a woman from the part he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. (NET)*

God splits the *adam*'s "side" and from it builds a woman. Most English versions translate the Hebrew word *sela* as "rib." However, the same word (*sela*) is used of the "side" of the tabernacle/temple structure (Exodus 25:12-14). As the NET translators explain, "side" is a better translation:

> *Traditionally translated "rib," the Hebrew word actually means "side." The Hebrew text reads, "and he took one from his sides," which could be rendered "part of his sides." That idea may fit better the explanation by the man that the woman is his flesh and bone.* [14]

They are both *adam* but beautifully distinct. And as we see in the following verse they are designed for union, to be one, while remaining differentiated. And so they mirror the triune life of the God whose image they bear.

> [23] *Then the man said, "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."* [24] *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife, and they become one family. (Genesis 2:23–24 NET)* [15]

The female *adam* is the pinnacle of the creation account. She is the glory of all humanity! The male *adam* recognizes in the female *adam* the necessary ally for whom he has longed.[16] Aimee Byrd articulates well the meaning and significance of this moment:

14 NET Genesis 2:21 note 65.

15 More than just sexual, "the one flesh" (see most English translations) union describes the creation of a whole life unity and the creation of a new family unit. See NET Genesis 2:24, note 75, "The Hebrew word [for "flesh"] refers to more than just a sexual union. The man and woman bring into being a new family unit."

16 Some have argued that the male's statement — "she shall be called 'woman'" — is an indication of an authority/ruling over of the female by the male or an indication of hierarchy in "role." While this argument can be made, the NET translators explain that this may not be the case: "Some argue that naming implies the man's authority or ownership over the woman here. Naming can indicate ownership or authority if one is calling someone or something by one's name and/or calling a name over someone or something (see 2 Samuel 12:28; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 4:1; Jeremiah 7:14; 15:16), especially if one is conquering and renaming a site. But the idiomatic construction used here… does not suggest such an idea. In each case where it is used, the one naming discerns something about the object being named and gives it an appropriate name (See 1 Samuel 9:9; 2 Samuel 18:18; Proverbs 16:21; Isaiah 1:26, 32:5, 35:8, 62:4, 12; Jeremiah 19:6). Adam is not so much naming the woman as he is discerning her close relationship to him and referring to her accordingly. He may simply be anticipating that she will be given an appropriate name based on the discernible similarity." (NET 2:24, note 69) Additionally, Eve not Adam names their son Cain in Genesis 4:1, and Hagar names God himself in Genesis 16:13.

> *She was... the crown of creation week, in which Adam saw his telos (his aim and all of ours) as joining the collective bride of Christ [i.e., the church].... In all these ways, woman tells the story behind creation. And we see the groom sacrifices for his bride. As we are told in Genesis 2:24, the man is to leave mother and father to cling to his wife. Adam, who was given the priestly vocation of guarding the temple, sacrificed his own body for the creation of the bride.*[17]

Chapter 2 of Genesis then concludes with a powerful statement of the relationship male and female enjoy at this moment: "Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). They are completely vulnerable to one another and yet they are completely safe, fearing no harm or hurt from one another.[18]

So at the end of the creation account, we find humanity — male and female — bearing God's image as an embodied pair. They are necessary and complementary allies, distinct yet united, prepared to carry out the mission of ruling that God has entrusted to them. All is now truly *very* good (Genesis 1:31). And it is the very goodness of it all that makes what happens next so very devastating.

GENESIS 3

Genesis 3 opens with an invader. Described as a "beast of the field," perhaps indicating that it has come from outside the garden, the serpent is more cunning than all the wild animals. He entices the female human to eat from the tree that God had commanded the humans not to eat from:

> [6] *The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

She eats and the male human eats too. Death seeps into the garden of life. The beauty and wholeness of creation are vandalized. And the epicenter[19] of the destruction is the joyful union of male and female: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (vs. 7). Where there was once nakedness and no fear, there is now hiding and suspicion. The necessary allies now fear the other may now be an enemy. This is terror and despair. For just as their interdependent union pointed to the union of God and humanity in a loving, joyful relationship, so too their hiding and shame telegraph their alienation from their Creator.

First, the male and female humans hide from each other. Then, they hide from God. The Creator seeks out his image-bearing creatures even in their rebellion against him. He speaks first to the male, the one specifically entrusted with the responsibility "to work and watch over" the garden. He asks him, "Where are you?" (vs. 9)[20] The male replies, "I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."[21] Then God asks if he's eaten from the prohibited tree.

17 Aimee Byrd, *The Sexual Reformation: Restoring the Dignity of Man and Woman*, 48.

18 See NET 2:24, note 77, "The meaning of the Hebrew term… is 'to be ashamed, to put to shame,' but its meaning is stronger than 'to be embarrassed.'" The word conveys the fear of exploitation or evil — enemies are put to shame through military victory. It indicates the feeling of shame that approximates a fear of evil."

19 The metaphor of *epicenter* is particularly apt here because in an earthquake the place underground where quake the occurs is called the *focus*. The epicenter is the place on the surface of the earth directly above the focus where effects are most violently felt. In Genesis 3 the "focus" of the quake is the humans' rebellion against their Creator. However, it is in their relationship with one another that the effects are first experienced.

20 This question isn't a query for information that God doesn't have. It is an invitation to a relationship.

21 For excellent discussion on hiding and shame, see Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves.*

Now pause here for a moment. This is the male human's opportunity to perform his priestly duty. It is his opportunity to take responsibility for his failure to watch over the garden and — ultimately even more significantly — his failure to obey the command.[22] This is his opportunity to offer himself as a sacrifice for his bride, the female human. But instead of sacrificing himself for her, he blames her and God: "The woman you gave me to be with—she gave me some of the fruit from the tree, and I ate" (Genesis 3:2). In referring to her this way (as "the woman you gave"), he distances himself from her. She is no longer his beloved: "She has become an object, not a companion."[23]

Then God asks what the female human has done, and she pleads that she was deceived by the serpent (vs. 3:13). Then God curses the serpent (vs. 3:14-15). In that curse is hope: the seed of the female *adam* will be locked in battle with the seed of the serpent, but one day the female's seed will deal a death blow to the serpent.[24]

Next, God speaks again to the female human: "He said to the woman: I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children with painful effort. Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you" (vs. 3:16).[25] Then to the male human, he says:

> [17] *"Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it': The ground is cursed because of you. You will eat from it by means of painful labor all the days of your life.* [18] *It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.* [19] *You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground, since you were taken from it. For you are dust, and you will return to dust."*

The male is specifically condemned for obeying a creature rather than the Creator. Rather than obeying God's word he obeys the word of his fellow human. The result for him is cursed ground, painful work, anxiety, and death.[26]

For the female human, the outcome of the rebellion is intensified pain in the whole process of childbearing from conception to childrearing — not just pain in labor and delivery.[27] Additionally, God states: "Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you" (vs. 3:16). How one understands this statement has massive implications for how one reads the rest of the entire Bible

22 Michelle Lee-Barnwell points out: "Even though some have proposed Adam's failure was that he did not take the 'lead' in resisting Satan's temptations and instead stood by passively while Eve fell into sin, the text itself points to the primary aspect of his failure as his disobedience instead. The importance of Adam's disobedience should not be underestimated, especially since Paul affirms this understanding in Romans 5. Paul does not describe someone who abandoned his headship but rather as someone whose disobedience led to death" (*Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate,* 134).

23 Alan John Hauser, quoted in Michelle Lee-Barnwell, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate,* 142.

24 "Genesis 3:15 is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where the Hebrew word for 'seed' or descendant' occurs with the third person feminine pronominal suffix–'her seed' (*zar aka*)." (T Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors, Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch, 242)

25 Notably, God does not "curse" her as he did the serpent. The language of "cursing" is only explicitly used of serpent (Genesis 3:14) and the ground (Genesis 3:17). It is not directly used of the humans, female or male.

26 Sandra Richter makes this fascinating observation: "Most read the phrase 'by the sweat of your face' as having to do with difficult physical labor. But an article by Daniel Flemming of New York University has demonstrated that this is actually an old ancient Near Eastern idiom having nothing to do with hard work. Rather, this idiom speaks of anxiety — perspiration-inducing *fear*" (*The Epic of Eden*, 111).

27 For example, one of the major obstacles to God's promises being fulfilled in Genesis is the infertility of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel.

going forward.[28] The pivotal question is whether the "desire" of the female is a good thing that is now distorted or whether the desire itself is a result of the rebellion against God.[29]

Anna Anderson makes a compelling case that in light of the use of the language of desire in the Song of Songs, this is a good desire now distorted just as the male's work is good but now distorted by cursed ground.[30] Summarizing Anderson's scholarship, Aimee Byrd writes:

> *...she concludes that just as Adam's work is still good, even though the consequences of sin have corrupted the land, woman's desire is also good yet it is thwarted.... And if this is so, "then we will not see rabid lust as specifically identified and unfolded in regard to the woman, but rather thwarted and unrequited desire as a theme attached to her in the pages of Scripture."* [31]

But then how are we to understand the husband ruling over her? Is it prescriptive? (*This is how things ought to be now.*) Or is it descriptive? (*This simply is how things are now.*) Byrd understands it to be descriptive: "It is telling us the way things are. It is not telling us that all men are violent, but that male dominance and violence as the result of sin would be the key factor in thwarting the woman's desire."[32] As Iain Provain insightfully explains: "So in Genesis 3:16, infected now by evil, the man will relate to the woman as if she were a part of the creation over which humans are given dominion, rather than co-ruler over creation along with the man."[33] Sandra Richter articulates poignantly the lived reality of this: "A relationship that should have been characterized by mutual self-sacrifice, productivity, and joy will create instead the deepest frustration and pain … and yet she [the woman] will still yearn for this relationship. There is not a marriage on the planet that has not felt the aftershock of this."[34]

28 Anna Anderson writes: "I believe what we decide to do with the "desire" question in Genesis 3:16c has vast implications — from the rule of man in Genesis 3:16d all the way through to the wife of the lamb in Revelation 21. It will inform every appearance of the women in the Bible. It will be the backdrop of every interaction between the husband and wife in the Bible and set the trajectory of the woman and a path to understanding her right through till the end." (Anna Anderson, "Is the Woman's Desire Bad?," *Reforming Anthropology*, blog, August 17, 2020. Quoted in Byrd, *The Sexual Reformation*, 77).

29 Anna Anderson explains the history of current common interpretation: "In 1974, a student at Westminster Theological Seminary wrote a journal article on the woman's desire in Genesis 3:16b that caused a seismic shift in how the woman is perceived. Her article, "What is the Woman's Desire?" is the basis for a prevailing view of women's "desire" today. Unlike the church fathers who spoke of her inferiority by nature (Genesis 1-2), this article surmised her inferiority by her new fallen nature in Genesis 3. God cursed her with a desire to overthrow the man in Genesis 3, in a way analogous to sin's desire to destroy Cain in Genesis 4. Her view, though novel in the 1960s, has been incorporated into the most recent versions of the NLT, "And you will desire to control your husband," and the ESV, "Your desire shall be contrary to your husband." Her article threw biblical weight to a long-ripened idea that what the woman wants most is to overcome her position as second and her "role" as helper. This has resulted in heavy-handedness in the church. The passions warring within us, that lead to power struggles among us, are thought to be especially the woman's lot (cf. James 4:1-12). Believed to be ethically cursed at the core of her being in Genesis 3:16b, many think that the woman requires preemptive and expeditious rule from the men in authority over her." (Anna Anderson, "A New Reading of Desire and Rule," blog, *https://aimeebyrd.com/2022/01/25/a-new-reading-of-desire-and-rule/*)

30 Anna Anderson, "A New Reading of Desire and Rule," *https://aimeebyrd.com/2022/01/25/a-new-reading-of-desire-and-rule/*

31 Aimee Byrd, *The Sexual Revolution*, 78. For a concise and insightful treatment of an alternate view, see Genesis 3:16 NET notes 59 and 50.

32 Aimee Byrd, *The Sexual Revolution*, 98. Critiquing the prescriptive view, she writes: "Reading Genesis 3:16 in light of Paul's address to wives and husbands in Ephesians 5:22-23 contradicts this [the prescriptive] interpretation.… Husbands are not told to rule over their wives but to love them," 96.

33 Iain Provain, *Discovering Genesis*, 86.

34 Richter, *Epic of Eden*, 110.

CONCLUSION

At this point in the story, the male and female image-bearers find themselves separated from God, one another, and the rest of creation. It is dark and lonely. But it is not without hope. The serpent-destroying seed of the woman has been promised. God has fashioned coverings for the human pair. The husband names his wife Eve, which means "Life."[35] Then this couple, Human *(Adam)* and Life *(Eve)*, have children. We read: "The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'I have had a male child with the LORD's help.' She also gave birth to his brother Abel" (Genesis 4:1–2). All is not as it ought to be anymore, but with the birth of these sons there is hope that someday it will be again. And it is to that part of the story — the story of what will be — that we turn to next.

35 As noted above, this act of naming is not an indication of innate hierarchy but rather an insight of recognition. Adam sees and recognizes her for who she is. Additionally, what is more important is what he named her, than that he named her. In naming her "Eve" ("Life") he is expressing faith in God's promise to bring the snake-defeating seed from her.

MALE & FEMALE IN REDEMPTION: OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE FALL, HOPE FOR REDEMPTION

Turning to what "is" in the state of affairs after the fall, we see males and females are left with deep relational brokenness as well as hope. The hope of redemption is given by God after the fall in Genesis 3:15 (the *protoevangelium*) where the woman's offspring or "seed"[36] is promised who will one day crush the head of the serpent, the evil one.

From this point onward, the audience anticipates the one who will come from the woman to overcome the sin and evil that has corrupted the world. Thereby, we are taught to pay attention to women whenever they are mentioned, hoping with all of creation for the offspring to come who will finally conquer evil and set the world aright.

In the meantime, the regal couple whose relationship had been characterized by an intimate, trusting, and interdependent union ("one flesh," "naked and unashamed" Genesis 2:24-25), now must endure a relationship twisted by sin, often characterized by frustrated longing and dominance ("Your desire shall be for your husband, yet he will rule over you." Genesis 3:16).

A RENEWED ADAM AND EVE MEET BARRENNESS

The literary structure of Genesis continues using genealogies to propel the story forward, focusing on the generations through the lineage of the man as was the patriarchal custom. However, the attuned reader knows to look also to the woman since she is vital to the plan. In Genesis 12:1-3 Abram (Abraham) is called by God to leave his land and take his wife, Sarai (Sarah), to a new land where God promised to make him a great nation, saying "all peoples of the earth will be blessed through you."

The immersed reader would recognize this as a replaying of the Eden story. Abraham and Sarah as a type of Adam and Eve have a renewed blessing, land and multiplication of their offspring promised, heightening the hope of redemption. However, another pattern is also emerging — that of the barren woman.[37] The blessing of multiplication will indeed prove painful.

This barren woman motif will repeat through the biblical narrative (Rebekah, Rachel, Ruth, Hannah to Elizabeth in the New Testament), prompting the hopeful audience to plead to God for intervention, realizing that it is only by God's hand that the promised "seed" will be brought forth.

36 "Genesis 3:15 is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where the Hebrew word for 'seed' or 'descendant' occurs with the third person feminine pronominal suffix – 'her seed' *(zar aka)."* T Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch,* 242.

37 "The children who are eventually born to barren women, with one exception, are important figures in Israelite history, and are used in the purposes of God (Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist, the exception being the son born to the Shunnamite woman)." T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D.A. Carson, Graeme Goldsworthy, editors, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology,* 406.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL: DESIRE AND DOMINATION

Several other threats arise to the promised offspring in this account. Twice[38] Abraham gives his wife to another in order to preserve his own life, only to have God intervene on Sarah's behalf. Sadly, these humans, in an effort to bring their own solution to God's delayed promise, resort to polygamy, further threatening the promised offspring.

Sarah gives Hagar, her Egyptian slave, to her husband to produce the child she had been incapable of conceiving. The consequences of this action are manifold, but not the least is the terrible abuse that Hagar endured at the hands of her masters. And while Hagar's abuse is by Abraham *and* Sarah, the Old Testament goes on to recount numerous occasions when women are shown to be victims of men's power, demonstrating the painful consequences foretold in Genesis 3:16.[39] Here are some examples: Sarah,[40] Hagar (also a victim of Sarah),[41] the daughters of Lot,[42] Bilhah and Zilpah (also victims of Leah and Rachel),[43] Dinah,[44] Tamar,[45] the Levite's concubine,[46] Bathsheba,[47] Tamar,[48] Esther, and Vashti.[49] Potiphar's wife and Jezebel are also examples of abusive power plays, but these are exceptional reversals. It is by far more common for females to be victims of male power than the reverse.

In fact, God's law recognizes the vulnerability and powerlessness of women in the Ancient Near Eastern culture and protects them in many ways. Widows are given special protections as ones among the most vulnerable in society.[50] In addition, the law especially repudiates violence against women and protects them from their assailants in remarkable ways. This would have been an extraordinary contrast to the manner in which women were treated in the surrounding cultures.[51]

Dr. Katie McCoy of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary provides this sobering example:

> *The Bible neither covers up nor ignores sexual assault. In fact, biblical law shows how the Lord takes up the cause of the victim and vulnerable. Deuteronomy 22:25-27 safeguarded the survivor of sexual assault from being unjustly blamed or ignored.... Biblical law was revolutionary for the dignity of women. Scripture recognized rape as a violent crime. In fact, biblical law considers rape on par with murder. She was the non-consenting victim of premeditated violence. The attacker alone is held guilty. Because she was overpowered and did not consent, the victim is considered blameless.*[52]

38 Genesis 12; 20

39 Matthew J. Lynch, "The Roots of Violence: Male Violence against Women in Genesis." *The Biblical Mind* (blog), Center for Hebraic Thought, September 29, 2020, *https://hebraicthought.org/male-violence-against-women-in-genesis*

40 Genesis 12:11-20; 20

41 Genesis 16; 21:8-21

42 Genesis 19:8

43 Genesis 30; 35:22

44 Genesis 34

45 Genesis 38

46 Judges 19

47 2 Samuel 11

48 2 Samuel 13:1-22

49 Esther 1-2:8

50 Deuteronomy 14:29; 24:20; 26:12

51 Sandra Richter, "Sexual Violence Against Women and the Old Testament Law," Think Biblically Podcast, *Sexual Violence Against Women and the OT Law - Think Biblically - Biola University*

52 Katie McCoy, "The Old Testament Law and Women," Credo Magazine, September 26, 2019

The Old Testament account vividly demonstrates how the fall led to the undoing of the image-bearers' creational design to be in a relationship of interdependent union of equal dignity and worth.

THE WOMAN OUTWITS THE SERPENT: STANDING ON THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION

While the shrewdness (craftiness)[53] of the serpent had led Eve into temptation, the Old Testament goes on to provide examples of how the shrewdness of women[54] protects the promised line of the offspring who will crush the serpent's head, thereby outwitting the one who had outwitted her.[55] Examples include Rebecca/Isaac,[56] Tamar/Judah,[57] Hebrew midwives/Pharoah,[58] Miriam and Jochebed, Pharaoh's daughter/Pharaoh,[59] Deborah and Jael/Canaanites,[60] Rahab/Canaanites,[61] Ruth and Naomi/Boaz,[62] Abigail/Nabal,[63] and Esther/King Xerxes.[64] While men's power is often displayed by position, physical strength, and skill, women's power is seldom one of position and is therefore most often displayed by the use of their wits for which the Bible often highly commends them.

RENEWED PICTURE OF GOD'S GOOD DESIGN: UNION OF MALE AND FEMALE

The book of Proverbs personifies wisdom (as well as folly) as a woman. Wisdom is not shown as a possession but as a "charged union,"[65] structured by a desire that calls beyond ourselves. "Women are called to bring wisdom to men. Men are called to listen to women in order to see a fuller view of reality."[66] Wisdom is pictured as a bride to be sought, treasured, and praised, as one fit for a king.

This picture of the royal couple in an interdependent mutual alliance of godly service harkens back to the garden, where woman was created as the man's *ezer*, the necessary ally who would fulfill the creation mandate in union with him. And while the king pictured in the text is Solomon's son, we know that neither Solomon, with all his wisdom, nor his son lived up to the wisdom pictured in Proverbs. Only the true king to come, Jesus, will embody this wisdom in himself.

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53 "The word 'crafty' is not primarily a negative term in the Bible but suggests wisdom and adroitness." John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative,* 103.

54 Alistair Roberts, *Theology of the Sexes,* Lecture 6.

55 For a detailed discussion of this, see Jen's Wilkin's lecture, *https://thegospelcoalition.com/podcasts/tgc-podcast/female-bravery-mission-of-god*, August 13, 2021.

56 Genesis 27

57 Genesis 38

58 Exodus 1

59 Exodus 2

60 Judges 4, 5

61 Joshua 2

62 Ruth 3

63 1 Samuel 25

64 Esther 5

65 "Charged union" is a term borrowed from Alistair Roberts meaning dynamic relational connection: "We tend to think of male and female as fundamentally distinct realities, but what is most important is the bond that is between them. If we forget the bond, it is like losing music by disconnecting notes. Male and female is how God forms society, not just fills it" (Roberts, Lecture 2).

66 Roberts, Lecture 7. In *Gender Roles and the People of God*, Alice Mathews comments on recent neuroscience research: "It turns out that gender differences in our brains have significant implications for men and women working together as they pool their different modes of thinking for better joint decision making."

The beautiful poem at the end of Proverbs demonstrates how the honored woman, pictured as the embodiment of wisdom, displays "fruitfulness" (*para*), referring to her diligent productivity,[67] not just her procreation. Whether married or single, the wisdom of women is necessary and honored as they work fruitfully alongside men to reign and rule as God designed.

Another scroll in the Writings, the Song of Songs gives an explicit picture of a "charged union" of mutual dependence between a husband and a wife. While its erotic poetry speaks of the beauty of the mutual and complementary physical union of male and female, it also points ahead to the telos of God's chosen people: that is, to be in union with her true bridegroom, the Lord. While this book is often overlooked, there is a beautiful picture of human and divine relationships presented, which should inform how we view God's design for temporal marriage, as well as illuminating the metaphor of the ultimate marriage of the Savior to his people.

RENEWED PICTURE OF GOD'S GOOD DESIGN: UNION WITH HIS PEOPLE AS MARRIAGE

The picture of God's commitment to a covenantal marriage relationship is described as his "lovingkindness" (*hesed*).[68] This commitment to his people is vividly drawn in the prophets' writings, particularly Hosea. The prophet lived out this metaphor of restoration of his broken marriage to Gomer, an adulterous wife, whom God commanded the prophet to pursue repeatedly and restore to himself. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah all take up this imagery describing the Lord's marriage relationship to his people. Here is an example from Isaiah:

> *"Indeed, your husband is your Maker — his name is the Lord of Armies — and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, he is called the God of the whole earth. For the Lord has called you, like a wife deserted and wounded in spirit, a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. (Isaiah 54:5-6)*

Throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the Song of Songs, Isaiah, and Hosea, there is a tie between the woman and the land.

Her connection to place, first shown in Genesis 2 when she is taken from the man's side, continues and expands throughout Scripture. "The hope of the bride is tied to the hope of the land. The metaphors are so tied together that they reveal this typology of woman — sacred space, the second order, restored land, restored Israel, church, bride, mother of the living." [69] Another example from Isaiah: "You will no longer be called Deserted, and your land will not be called Desolate; instead, you will be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married, for the Lord delights in you, and your land will be married." (Isaiah 62:4-5)

67 Tom Nelson, *The Economics of Neighborly Love,* 200.

68 Strong's, H2617.

69 Byrd, 153.

EMERGING PICTURE: GOD AS FATHER

As we've seen, marriage provides the overriding metaphor of God's relationship to his chosen people as a corporate whole (Israel) in the Old Testament, while the metaphor of children of Israel is more often used of individuals. God named as "Father" is sparse in the Old Testament; however, Isaiah employs this title in regard to his relationship with Israel several times in chapters 63 and 64, relating it to that of Redeemer (the close kinsman) in 63:16.

In addition, a particularly tender form of God's love, *rachamim* (from the root word for "womb"), expresses a mother's boundaryless love for her child.[70] Often translated as "compassion," this word is another demonstration that God's character is expressed in feminine as well as masculine ways. Scripture often joins God's loyal lovingkindness (*hesed*) with his tender compassion (*rachamim*) to give us a fuller picture of our loving parent. Here is an example: "Though the mountains move and the hills shake, my love (*hesed*) will not be removed from you and my covenant of peace will not be shaken, says your compassionate (*racham*) LORD." (Isaiah 54:10) In Isaiah, God explicitly highlights this feminine character quality in 49:15: "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or lack compassion (*racham)* for the child of her womb? Even if these forget, I will not forget you."

All through Scripture we notice that a robust imagery of God's design for the family is crucially important to understanding God's design for a relationship with his people; therefore, how we understand gender as a reflection of his order and his design for marriage and family has far-reaching implications for how we understand not only our own families, but even more, how we understand God's relationship with and intentions for his people.

MALE AND FEMALE IN OLD TESTAMENT LEADERSHIP

As the story of Scripture unfolds and God's people became a nation, offices were instituted to facilitate his people's relationship with himself, one another, and the other nations. There were three primary offices of leadership in the Old Testament: prophet, priest, and king.

> *Each of the three was to be responsible to the other two in important ways. The prophet and priest served under the leadership of the king; the priest and king were to obey God's word through the prophet, and the king and prophet depended on the priest to offer sacrifices on their behalf. Through this threefold leadership model, God established a balance of power.* [71]

The Old Testament priest was the mediator between man and God and was to be a Levite and a male because he stood in as a substitute for the firstborn son (Numbers 3:45).[72] In addition, purity ritual laws regarding bodily discharges would have made it impossible for women to serve in this capacity.[73]

The Old Testament prophet was one called and inspired by God to speak to the people on his behalf. This calling was in no way dependent upon ancestry, and while it was most often given to males, there were female prophets, including Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Isaiah's wife, and Naodiah. Furthermore, Joel 2:28 predicts that both sons and daughters shall prophesy when the Lord's Spirit is poured out

70 Strong's, H7355.

71 Ron Pierce, "Deborah: Only When a Good Man Is Hard to Find?" *Vindicating the Vixens,* ed. Sandra Glahn, 194-195.

72 T Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, editors, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch,* 648.

73 Leviticus 15:19

on all humanity. Micah 6:4 indicates that Miriam was alongside Moses and Aaron leading the people during the Exodus.

Of particular interest are Deborah and Huldah. In the case of Huldah,[74] it is noteworthy that when King Josiah commanded his dignitaries to, "Go, inquire of the Lord for me," they immediately sought out Huldah, who appeared to be the obvious choice (Zephaniah and Jeremiah were contemporaries). They also showed remarkable respect by going to her house rather than summoning her to the palace. Josiah, the rare example of a righteous king, submitted to the authoritative word of God communicated by a woman.[75]

The kings gave general overall leadership to the people, often leading in battle, securing the land and securing progeny for future generational leadership. Above all they were to secure fidelity of worship to Yahweh, but unfortunately, they often failed at this task. While the kings were always males, the judges provided a precursor to this office, which included Deborah, a female.

Judges were dissimilar to kings in that they were raised up from among the people as needed and led a volunteer army. However, they were similar in that both normally had sustained periods of recognized leadership that went beyond an immediate military crisis for an extended time of peace. Interestingly, Deborah was a judge *and* a prophet (comparing her to Samuel). She, too, led in battle, securing the land, and fidelity to Yahweh.

GOD'S GOOD DESIGN FOR MALES AND FEMALES: CONCLUSION FROM OLD TESTAMENT

In summary, God has made it clear throughout the Old Testament that both male and female are his embodied image-bearers whom he created to fulfill his mandate to rule and reign on his behalf and fill the earth. A power dynamic that demeans women, considers them as unnecessary, or excludes them from all positions of leadership does not align with the Old Testament's account. Even more, the fact that God so clearly expresses a mutual union as the foretaste of his relationship to his people requires us to embrace his beautiful design and humbly view one another as unique, necessary contributors on God's mission together.

74 2 Kings 22

75 Christa L. McKirland, "Huldah: Malfunction with the Wardrobe Keeper's Wife," *Vindicating the Vixens,* 219.

MALE AND FEMALE IN REDEMPTION: THE GOSPELS

REDEMPTION AT LAST: THE SEED OF THE WOMAN

As the New Testament opens, the hope of redemption comes to fruition as the long-awaited, promised seed of the woman is finally introduced in the opening of the Gospel of Matthew through the genealogy of Jesus Christ (reminding us of the genealogical structure of Genesis). Matthew opens with the vital covenantal connection that Jesus has to both David and Abraham.[76] However, as the genealogy progresses, the reader surprisingly notices that five women are mentioned, a rare inclusion in the patriarchal system. These women are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the one "who had been the wife of Uriah," and finally Mary. All four of the Old Testament women mentioned were likely Gentiles.[77]

Throughout the gospel narratives, women often represent the marginalized whom Jesus will welcome and include in his kingdom. While Matthew's introductory genealogy leads to Joseph, he is imperatively linked to Mary, the woman, the type of Eve, truly the mother of all the living, as her womb becomes the temple for the long-awaited, promised seed who will crush the head of the serpent.[78]

The gospels go on to show that Jesus' mother is uniquely present at every stage of Jesus' life: his conception, birth, childhood, ministry, and death. After becoming pregnant Mary recites the Magnificat, a literary and theological masterpiece[79] that puts her in the company of Old Testament women hymn writers: Miriam, Deborah, and Hannah. Mary's vocation to become the mother of God's son, the one in whom salvation would come to Israel, leads to a salvation that reverses the status of the lowly and the exalted. What happens in her lowly sphere will have national, worldwide, and cosmic significance and effect.[80] As Lucy Peppiatt explains:

> *There are three creation stories of the creation of humanity in the Bible. The first is that humanity is made in the image and likeness of God. The second that a human is formed from the dust of the earth and woman is taken from man: she is flesh of his flesh. The third is that humanity is reborn through a Savior, who is born of a woman, and he is flesh of her flesh. When God chose to come to earth, he chose the hiddenness of a woman's womb. When God chose to take on flesh, he chose to take this flesh from a woman. When God chose to appear, he chose to come as a baby, entrusting himself to a woman's body to be born and to a woman for his care and nurture. Through a man, God reveals himself to us, and through a woman, God makes the connection to humanity.*[81]

New creation is already breaking into the old, and women and men alike will be renewed.

76 Elyse Fitzpatrick and Eric Schumacher, *Worthy,* 140.

77 Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels,* 27.

78 "Christ is the seed of the woman grown to full stature, the husband who will deliver the woman from the serpent." Roberts, Lecture 6.

79 Luke 1:46-55

80 Bauckham, 59.

81 Lucy Peppiatt, *Rediscovering Scripture's Vision for Women,* 31.

THE NEW ADAM

Luke's genealogy, while also displaying the ancestry of Jesus, has a different purpose than that of Matthew.[82] Luke's unique account is presented in descending order beginning with Joseph and ending with Adam. This helps to highlight Jesus as the true and better Adam, the human representative, which Paul will take up in Romans and in 1 Corinthians, explaining why humankind's fate is so closely tied to these two men.

Jesus took on human flesh as a male in order to become the New Adam, qualifying him as our near human kinsman, our Redeemer, who could purchase us out of slavery and restore our inheritance. As a human, he was the perfect substitutionary sacrifice, making atonement for our sins. His embodiment demonstrates the goodness of our own embodiment. "He became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). William Witt further explains the significance of Jesus' male embodiment:

> *The first-century Mediterranean culture in which Jesus exercised his ministry was an honor/shame culture in which women were already necessarily in submission to men. Only a male Savior could challenge and defeat Mediterranean honor culture by voluntarily undergoing the humiliation of death by crucifixion and then conquering death through resurrection. Only a male Savior could meaningfully teach that salvation comes not through domination, but through voluntarily becoming a servant.*[83]

Humanity's embodiment as male and female is not incidental to God's mission. It is deeply woven into the fabric of the story.

THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN

Through our Lord's lineage, conception, birth, ministry, death, and resurrection, the gospels depict the inclusion of women as well as men. For instance, Luke introduces Simeon and Anna as the first two to welcome the infant Jesus to the temple. Luke is fond of pairing males and females in narratives,[84] highlighting their unique contributions.

Anna is the only Jewish character in the New Testament who is not said to belong to the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, or Levi, but instead she is from one of the northern tribes, Asher.[85] In this way she is representative of Israel as a whole, ensuring the messianic hopes of inclusion by the northern tribes and exiles. Simeon is presumably from Jerusalem. Together, Simeon and Anna represent two key aspects of the eschatological salvation predicted in Isaiah 40–66.

The gospels name a number of women who became close disciples of Jesus. Alice Mathews notes that "people weren't named unless they were well-known among the churches for their commitment to Jesus Christ and to the spread of his gospel."[86] The gospels specifically name the following women as

82 Luke 3:23–38. "It seems that Luke wishes descent from David to evoke not the high status of royal descent, but the low status of David's humble origins. This is confirmed by the genealogy Luke records of Jesus, a genealogy that traces Jesus' descent through Joseph from David and back to Adam." Bauckham, 73.

83 William Witt, *Icons of Christ*, 262.

84 Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 195.

85 Bauckham, 98.

86 Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 84.

Jesus' disciples: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, Salome, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Mary and Martha of Bethany.

The Bethany sisters and their brother, Lazarus, regularly hosted Jesus in their home. Luke identifies the latter Mary as "sitting at Jesus' feet."[87] N.T. Wright explains, "To sit at someone's feet meant, quite simply, to be their student. And to sit at the feet of a rabbi was what you did if you wanted to be a rabbi yourself. There was no thought here of learning for learning's sake."[88] For a rabbi to come into a woman's house and teach her would have been unheard of in their culture, but Mary is commended by Jesus for pursuing this countercultural calling.

Indeed, women were among the seventy-two who traveled with Jesus (Luke 8:2), and they actually paid for the tour (Luke 8:3). Linda Belleville observes, "While Jesus did not have a woman among his immediate Twelve, it was commonly assumed by the church fathers from Origen in the third century to Herveus Burgidolensis in the twelfth century that Jesus did include women among the group of seventy-two who were commissioned and sent out."[89] However, the twelve apostles in the gospels were exclusively males, evidently called to be representatives of the New Israel and of the twelve tribes (Luke 22:30; Revelation 7).

Veracity of the New Testament accounts is of paramount importance to the reliability of Scripture. Of note, at a time when a woman's testimony was highly suspect, the gospels present women as uniquely qualified eyewitnesses to the events of the first Easter morning. Because they had been present when Jesus died (John 19), were the first to the tomb on resurrection morning (John 20), and were the first to see the resurrected Lord (John 20; Matthew 28), the women were privileged to be the unique eyewitnesses to the angelic message and the resurrected Lord.

Richard Bauckham remarks, "Hence the gospel stories of the empty tomb perpetuate the women's witness: all readers of them are confronted with their distinctive witness."[90] It was Thomas Aquinas who first called Mary Magdalene "the apostle to the apostles," since it was she who first told the others of the shocking good news of the Savior's resurrection. She is noticeably always placed first among the lists of women in the Synoptic accounts. According to Bauckham, "She must have been of special importance in early Christian communities."[91]

Jesus' inclusion of women was also demonstrated in his teaching methods. According to Kenneth Bailey, "Jesus deliberately shaped his teachings in order to communicate his message as powerfully to women as to men."[92] Many of his parables were told using females as main characters: the Parable of the Widow and the Judge,[93] the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Young Women,[94] the Parable of the Leaven,[95] and the Parable of the Lost Coin[96] are examples.

87 Luke 10:39

88 N.T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone,* 131.

89 Linda Belleview, *Two Views on Women in Ministry,* 45. For more on the developments regarding how the view of women in leadership changed during and after the medieval era, see *The Making of Biblical Womanhood* by Beth Allison Barr.

90 Bauckham, 295.

91 Bauckham, 301.

92 Kenneth Bailey, *Women in Scripture* (video series), Lecture 2.

93 Luke 18:1-8

94 Matthew 25:1-13

95 Matthew 13:33

96 Luke 15:8-10

All three of the Synoptic Gospels place Jesus' raising of Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman accounts side by side.[97] William Witt points out the significance of this healing:

> *Under Jewish law, Jesus should have been made ceremonially unclean both by his touching a corpse and by being touched by a menstruating woman. Instead, by raising the dead girl to life and by healing the anonymous woman, rather than being contaminated by ceremonial uncleanness, Jesus extended the realm of holiness by raising the dead to life and by making the ceremonially unclean to be clean through an act of healing.... In Jewish culture, rules about ritual uncleanness effectively cut women off from taking an active part in public religious practice. In his act of healing, Jesus made clear that women are not defiled or defiling and thus make it possible for women to participate fully as his disciples.*[98]

This repeated account powerfully demonstrated that Jesus' presence overcame the distinctions between males and females regarding ceremonial purity and impurity.

Jesus acknowledged and/or regularly ministered to many more hurting and marginalized women. Examples include the Samaritan woman,[99] the Syro-Phoenician (Canaanite) woman,[100] the woman who anointed Jesus' feet,[101] the woman who gave her two mites,[102] and the woman who was caught in adultery.[103] The manner in which Jesus interacted, lifted up, and treated women with dignity stands in opposition to their treatment throughout much of history as a result of the fall.

It is quite noteworthy that several of these women are positioned in bridal-like imagery as they interact with Jesus. For instance, the Samaritan woman meets him at the well, a place where Old Testament characters often met their future spouses[104] (and Hagar had met the angel of the Lord), and Mary of Bethany lets down her hair as she anoints Jesus's body, performing an act reserved for one's husband.[105] Of course, these women were not to be in a temporal marriage relationship with Jesus, but he is being presented as a true and faithful husband to his beloved bride, the church, of which they are to be included.

JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM'S VIEW OF MARRIAGE

Significantly, Jesus' first sign in John's Gospel was performed at a wedding. In fact, all the gospels identify Jesus as the ultimate bridegroom[106] who will one day marry his bride, the church. Truly, the Creator's design of our embodied distinctive genders is a reminder to proclaim this story throughout time as we look forward to the marriage that all marriages point to: that is of Christ Jesus and his church who will dwell together in union forever (Revelation 21). Aimee Byrd writes, "Providentially, both man and woman are created for communion with the triune God. Our whole ontology, or nature, is directed toward this covenantal communion."[107]

97 Mark 5:25-34; Matthew 9:20-23; Luke 8:42-48

98 Witt, 88.

99 John 4:1-42

100 Matthew 15:21-28

101 Luke 7

102 Mark 12

103 John 8

104 Gary M. Burge, *The NIV Application Commentary,* 142.

105 For more on the theme of mistreated adulteress becoming the bride in Scripture, see Roberts, Lecture 9.

106 John 3:29; Matthew 9:15; Mark 2:19-20; Luke 5:34-35

107 Aimee Byrd, *The Sexual Reformation,* 8.

However, Jesus certainly did not reduce the imagery of his eternal marriage to that of temporal marriage, which is too often filled with brokenness and even abuse. Rather, he affirmed the goodness of the design of temporal marriage, pointing back to creation, uplifting the portrait of an interdependent complementary union of male and female image-bearers, and quoting Genesis: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh."[108] This he said in response to the Pharisees, who were testing him about divorce laws, a source of much debate in the first century. By responding in this way, Jesus was protecting women who had no right to divorce or defense from divorce, while men could easily divorce their wives.[109]

As an unmarried human, Jesus also affirmed the goodness and difficulty of celibacy.[110] In another account, when responding to the Sadducees who asked an insincere question regarding levirate marriage in the age to come,[111] Jesus responded that marriage is a state given for this age alone. Taken together, Christ teaches that whether married or unmarried in this age, all who are in him are in his bride and are destined for union with him in his kingdom.

JESUS' NEW FAMILY

While corporately the church comprises the bride, Jesus taught his disciples to see one another as a new kind of family. William Witt describes this radical call to Christ's new family:

> *Jesus subverted the way in which the family had been used as a means to uphold the traditional honor system. Jesus insisted that following him could disrupt traditional family ties and that loyalty to him superseded loyalty to family (Matthew 10:21, 34-37). By designating God as 'Father,' Jesus provided an alternative 'fictive kinship' system. Jesus identified his family not with his mother and brothers, but with 'whoever does the will of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 12:46-50). In designating God as Father, Jesus also undermined traditional patriarchal understandings of what it means to be a father. Fatherhood is not to be defined by the expected actions of typical fathers, but by the character of God whom Jesus called Father.*[112]

Although our own relationships always fall short, Lucy Peppiatt reminds us that the "Father-Son language is a rich and generative metaphor for God. It tells us how the first and second person of the Trinity relate to one another."[113]

Jesus boldly (and controversially in his day) addressed God as his "Father," and further instructed his followers to do so as well, enfolding them into the familial relationship of the Trinity (Matthew 6; John 5, 17, 20). The beautiful prelude to John's Gospel proclaims: "But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not of natural descent, or the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God."[114] While we are directed to embrace God as our Heavenly Father, God greatly transcends our conception of "father."[115] In fact,

108 Matthew 19:4-5

109 Jesus does make the exception of "immorality" as grounds for divorce. Matthew 19:19

110 Matthew 19:12

111 Luke 20:28-40

112 Witt, p. 84.

113 Peppiatt, p. 23.

114 John 1:12

115 "Furthermore, we do not find many good fathers in the Bible; in fact, it is difficult to think of a human father who functions well over the course of his lifetime," Leland Ryken, James C Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 273.

female imagery for God is used throughout Scripture. Probably the most frequent gynomorphic imagery used of God is that of giving birth,[116] John 3, for example.

Again, God the Father is not gendered (he is Spirit, John 4:24) and transcends gender, yet somehow both embodied male and female together bear his image. Jesus' desire for his people to be in a union reflective of his own trinitarian relationship is expressed in his prayer in John 17:21: "May they all be one, as you Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me." Our united family resemblance to the Trinity is indeed the most compelling witness to the world.

This family imagery is presented as lived reality in John's letters ("See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children—and we are!"[117]). This new family is explored extensively in Pauline theology where it becomes the overriding metaphor in which members of the Lord's church are called to live in the "household of faith." Therefore, whether one is married or single, each one who is in Christ Jesus is enfolded into this new family. Each gender is necessary, and each gender needs the other in order to form the family.

As we will see, the gospels present Jesus as the bridegroom who will one day consummate his union with his bride, the church. His love and respect for women is a redemptive picture of creational design, contrasted with the fractured relationship between male and female which sin brought into the world. He goes out of his way to minister to women and welcome them into the company of his disciples, including them in many facets of his work except into the representative twelve.[118]

Jesus incorporates women into his kingdom as his "mother" and "sisters," showing himself to be in a close familial relationship with them. In contrast to an Old Testament pattern of abusive power, Jesus lifts women, treating them with tender care, honor, and respect as image-bearers of the triune God, inviting them to be on mission with him in his redemptive work in the world. They will become leaders in many ways in his church, as the epistles will testify. Andrew Wilson expresses well how our complementarity leads to the greater flourishing and effectiveness as the united body of Christ:

> *Rather, the power of these examples lies in the fact that women can do all sorts of things that men can't or don't do, and vice versa. As such, the women of Scripture debunk not just the conflation of men and women (as if there are no sex distinctions at all), but also the alterity of men and women (as if men are doing all the important things and women are essentially passive observers). They present us with a vision of genuine complementarity in which men need women, and women need men, and the image of God is expressed as both serve together. Remove either, or diminish the value of either, and we are all impoverished. The church is a family, and we will only flourish to the extent that we value, honor and esteem both mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters.*[119]

116 Bailey, Lecture 1.

117 1 John 3:1

118 "They will share in Jesus' own authority, speaking and taking actions as representatives of the Messiah," Leland Ryken, James C Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 60.

119 Andrew Wilson, *Beautiful Difference: The (Whole-Bible) Complementarity of Male and Female (thegospelcoalition.org)*

Roberts paints a beautiful picture of the dynamic between men and women in the kingdom Jesus is bringing:

> *Every man and every woman is unbalanced, and therefore, has a need to relate to the other. Each one of us is only working with one hand of humanity. Identity is not found in self-reference but in other-reference. We must all learn there is another vantage point you need. This disjunction entwines identity into beauty. Meaning is in the interplay.*[120]
>
> *Women can represent God's divine activity in ways that men cannot. Men and women are not interchangeable, but different genres of human persons. Gender is not a hierarchy, but is a constitutive difference.... The two hands of humanity need their full strength to operate together.*[121]

How do these two hands serve together for God's glory in the early church? Let's consider the portrait of male and female we receive in the New Testament letters.

MALE AND FEMALE IN REDEMPTION: THE EPISTLES

Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection — the bursting in of the overarching redemptive moment for the entire history of humanity — shifts the focus of the kingdom from Israel to the church, a family of God's people empowered by the indwelling Spirit. The epistles arise from a need to clarify doctrine and correct and further God's people on God's mission. Who belongs to the kingdom and the church? What inequalities and equalities exist? What responsibilities belong to people of the kingdom? What reversals catch people of distinct backgrounds and cultures by surprise? And most importantly for our purposes, what male and female patterns emerge as formative and normative for the church?

THE EARLY CHURCH AS FAMILY

Just as the Old Testament focused distinctly on the household of God through the familial relationships of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and down through the Davidic lineage, the New Testament continues to place huge significance on the concept of family — of a household of sojourners, keenly related to one another, pulling together to survive in a still-broken world, to grow, to reproduce, and to be fruitful on mission.

HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

Rather than emphasizing an authoritarian hierarchy or a democratic structure of rights, throughout the Pauline and general epistles, the writers seem to propose an inclusive family as the overriding, organic metaphor for the church concerning organization and intrapersonal relationships. Throughout, believers male and female alike are considered adopted as the children — even sons — of God, who is the ultimate Father.[122] All who believe are part of "God's household" (Ephesians 2:19), and Paul directs Timothy to consider all the believers he encounters as either a father, brother, mother, or sister (2 Timothy 5:1–2).

120 Roberts, Lecture 14.

121 Roberts, Lecture 17.

122 For example, Romans 8:14 explains that "For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons." Believers receive the "Spirit of adoption" and testify by and with the Spirit that we are God's children (Romans 8:15–16).

Paul himself predominantly uses the term *brothers* (*adelphoi)* to refer to all believers and co-laborers, male and female together,[123] as do James and the author of Hebrews. John relies on a language of fathers and children for spiritual mentors and mentees as well as feminine terms to denote congregations and churches ("elect lady," "elect sister").

Ultimately, large portions of the epistles address how this household should operate publicly, with five central concerns:

1. A concern for order, both in worship and teaching[124]
2. A concern for unity[125]
3. A concern for mutual submission, encouragement, exhortation[126]
4. A concern for inclusion[127]
5. A concern for doctrinal soundness and consistency[128]

Unlike Israel, whose visible existence and legacy depended on several principles of exclusion,[129] the church as family projects a startling message of inclusion for males, females, and all those of various races and social statuses who have pinned all their hope on the Lord of salvation. In this still-to-be-redeemed world, recognition of the ontological equality bestowed on all humanity at creation continues to tip and pivot on the fulcrum that has always stood as its foundation: the image of God. But now with Jesus' name written on that fulcrum — the name of the perfected image: *Salvation* — those whom the world had pushed to the margins are pulled closer to the middle, where they stand familially linked as kingdom people who can bring the whole world into better balance.

123 As with *adam* and *anthropos*, which can extend across genders to mean humankind, the plural forms of *adelphos* ("brothers," ἀδελφοι, ἀδελφοῖς, ἀδελφῶν) apply to both genders when a mixed group is in mind. So "brothers" can apply to either a group of males or to a group of brothers and sisters, and most frequently does apply to both genders in the epistles, as evidenced by its translation in the NET, NIV11, and CSB17 as "brothers and sisters" for precision and clarity throughout the text. This inclusive usage in translation is important for New Testament interpretation by a modern readership, as translations that use male-gendered language in a universal sense may frequently and erroneously be read by modern English speakers as addressed solely to males. Such use of male terms and pronouns as standing for universal humanity has faded from favor in American writing and publishing.

124 *e.g.*, 1 Corinthians 11–14; 1 Timothy 2:1–3:16

125 *e.g.*, 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:1–6

126 Many "one another" passages, inclusive of women and men, speak of mutual submission and service to one another (*e.g.*, Romans 12:4–5, 10, 14:12–13, 15:7–8, 14; 1 Corinthians 7:4–5; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 5:18–21; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14; Hebrews 10:24–25; 1 Peter 3:7–8; 5:4). Philippians 2:1–5 further commands believers to look to the interests of others in humility. And as though to ward off an understanding of this command as doable from an authoritative position, Paul invokes Christ's incarnational taking on the form of a servant, a form that included drying and washing his disciples' feet as well as his sacrificial death (Philippians 2:5–8). In the same manner of Paul's use of female imagery in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 — "Although we could have been a burden as Christ's apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nurse nurtures her own children" — the epistles seem to call on men and women to interact in ways that subvert and go beyond culturally traditional roles. They are both to "[submit] to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

127 *e.g.*, Romans 2:1–16; Galatians 3:27–4:7; Ephesians 2:11–21

128 *e.g.*, Galatians 2:3–5

129 The nature of Israel as a physical kingdom created a natural boundary between those within and those without. Dietary and purity laws along with community-specific festivals like Passover (Exodus 12:43) and the covenantal sign of circumcision also served to physically distinguish Israelites from the surrounding nations as a separate people and culture and covenant community. These differences helped maintain a strong Hebrew identity, worship community, and a secure lineage for the Messiah through the Davidic line. Despite these boundaries, God's mission all along was for Israel to welcome others into the family of God (Genesis 12:3).

CHRIST AS THE NEW ADAM

Paul moves beyond the implicit argument of the gospel genealogies and explicitly names Jesus, our salvation, with a new name: Adam. He is the second *Human*, the one who makes alive rather than the one in whom all are made dead (Romans 5:12–17; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45–49). Paul makes clear that the first Adam is a type of the second (Romans 5:14). But whereas the first Human fails to fulfill his interdependent union with his bride, *Life*, and offer himself as a sacrifice for her, the second Human succeeds. He offers himself as a cleansing sacrifice for the second Eve, his one-flesh bride, the church, the new "mother of all the living" (Ephesians 5:31–32; Genesis 3:20).

In this new one-flesh relationship, he is the head; she is the body. As we see in Ephesians 5:21–33, the metaphor seems to speak primarily and counterculturally not so much to headship or authority (though that idea is also there) but to unity, interdependence, and complementarity. We discover that all members of the church in this metaphor — male and female — are pictured side by side as Christ's body in inclusive, interdependent union, a restoration of the unity both horizontally among humanity and vertically with the divine. And now, this new embodied pair of husband and wife — head and body, the new Adam and Eve, Human and Life — births a new family, the kingdom family of God that grows to fulfill its *telos:* multiplying and filling the whole heaven and earth.

DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

It's within this inclusive, interdependent household of faith — God's bride and dwelling place — that the Holy Spirit distributes his empowering, mission-contributing gifts to all members of the family, male and female. Paul discusses these gifts as bestowed as the Lord wills (1 Corinthians 12:11), for the common good, with no distinction on gender for receiving gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4–8). Indeed, he exhorts *all* to "desire the higher gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1). These gifts include capacities needed for the responsibilities of the church, some of which are listed in Ephesians 4:11–12: "and [Christ] himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ."[130] Building up the body of Christ requires "the proper working of each individual part" according to their gifts, including the women (Ephesians 4:16).

In an individualistic society as ours is, it is easy to default to considering the believer's gifts as primarily an outworking of that individual — his or her vocation, talent, and opportunities. Yet the stage for God's epic story is not one set for individual actors but for a sojourning family — a household so tightly knit that it is described both as one body and as living stones built up into a spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:4–5; Ephesians 2:21–22). Both images house God. Michelle Lee-Barnewall writes that the

> *testimony of the church in the New Testament means that unity was a critical aspect for preserving the sanctity of the dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the relationships within the community were a supremely important way to manifest the divine life. Consequently, as we examine gender in the life of the church, we will consider it from the perspective of holiness and unity in the church's obedient response to God's saving*

130 In Ephesians 4:13 Paul uses *andra* ("man") rather than *anthropos* ("human") to indicate growth into a "mature manhood" that translations/versions like the ESV, NASB, and NKJV capture in their wording. Can this gendered usage here mean that the gifts/offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher are confined to men only? If the meaning is taken so, then the passage implies the work of the ministry excludes all women *and* that only men are built up into the body of Christ, but Romans 12:3–5 and 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 contradict this reading, among many others. So this male-specific noun on its own cannot disqualify women from the list of gifts/offices. Indeed, women *are* part of Christ's body of Ephesians 4:16, which when "fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part."

> *grace. This results in the corporate witness of the church, and not simply in terms of rights or privileges given to individuals or groups of individuals.*[131]

In this biblical theology, too, we are considering gender "from the perspective of holiness and unity in the church's obedient response to God's saving grace." As Lee-Barnewall also explains, we see in Scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament a series of reversals, and "it is through reversals that God demonstrates that his ways are not human ways (Isaiah 55:8–9)."[132] These reversals create the foundational ethics of God's kingdom, subvert cultural norms both old and new, and speak both to holy unity and new gender patterns.

KINGDOM ETHIC: REVERSAL OF CULTURAL NORMS

Jesus declares that "many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:31) and "whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12). His disciples love their enemies, do good to those who hate them, and pray for those who mistreat them (Luke 6:27–28). Lee-Barnewall notes that "significantly, one of the main results of such a 'reversal' is to increase unity.... The community is bonded together as the members care for one another."[133]

This kingdom ethic of reversal, of unity and humility and otherness, flows through the epistles as Paul and the other writers explain how families should relate to one another in the private and public spheres, how previous marks of preeminence no longer give status or exclude, how walls of division have fallen, and how the Aaronic priesthood has both expanded and decreased. We will next look at how all these reversals affect male and female relationships in the New Testament.

HOUSEHOLD CODES

Household codes, a common literary form of the time,[134] appear in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter.[135] So before we examine the content of these codes, we need to examine their cultural context.

Cynthia Westfall reminds us that many common "interpretations fail to recognize that Paul does not adopt the dominant culture but rather critiques it."[136] Greco-Roman authorities, with an Aristotellian view of the essential inferiority of women, took many strides to legislate their behavior

> *because they believed that disorder in the household had seditious ramifications for the welfare of the empire. Therefore, cults and sects were often attacked because of the wild behavior of the women participants. In order for Paul's gentile mission to succeed, the behavior of Christian women would need to be consistent with what was practiced by women in the broader first-century Greco-Roman world.*[137]

131 Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 76.

132 Lee-Barnewall, 76.

133 Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 79.

134 Craig S. Keener (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 580) writes, "Aristotle had developed 'household codes' directing a man how to rule his wife, children and slaves properly. By Paul's day persecuted or minority religious groups suspected of being socially subversive used such codes to show that they upheld traditional Roman family values. Paul takes over but modifies the codes considerably."

135 While each code has unique elements, the letter to the Colossians generally follows after the pattern of Ephesians. As such, it won't be covered individually.

136 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 2.

137 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 13.

But even when Paul exhorts Christian women and men to pay attention to their cultural witness, he routinely "invests [the metaphors] with new meaning that was *abnormal and shocking"* in Greco-Roman culture.[138]

EPHESIANS 5:22–6:9

While we tend to focus on the "Wives, submit to your husbands"[139] of 5:22 as the important (and doable) instructions of the husband-wife part of the Ephesian household code, Paul builds to and emphasizes the *culturally unnatural actions* of a husband for his wife found in 5:25–30, showing what it means in the kingdom ethic to be joined as one flesh. The wife's submission is expected in the first century, unlike the "love your wives" that comes next for the husbands. This concern and action on his behalf for the wife is part of the upside-down kingdom ethic:

> *As [Scott] Bartchy states, "Among all social classes, traditional male socialization programmed males to pursue a never-ending quest for greater honor and influence." Since honor for men was gained through domination of others, the husband would have been expected to dominate and be served by his wife. However, Paul states that he should instead do the opposite and exercise his headship through service and sacrifice.*[140]

In the ancient Mediterranean world, "to attack a man's authority was to attack his masculinity." Yet Paul persists in the passage in telling husbands to serve their wives, with language invoking women's traditional work: doing laundry, feeding, and nurturing. This behavior, while "shameful in the larger culture...was considered honorable in God's economy."[141] Similarly, in each of the two pairings that follow the code of husbands and wives, Paul exhorts the culturally weaker component (children and slaves) to behave respectably, in godly adherence to their culture. But he commands the person with cultural influence and power (fathers and masters) to lead the way in recognizing the image-bearing of those in their care and service as well as their agency in God's kingdom, and treating them as fellow servants of the same master: Jesus.[142]

It is in this context that we approach the meaning of Paul's wordplay in verse 23, about the husband as head of the wife (Gk., *kephalē*) as Christ is *kephalē* of the church. This word is much disputed here and elsewhere in the epistles. One camp tends to see a definition of "authority" or "headship" in every use, while the other camp tends toward a definition of "source," as in the head of a river or the source of Eve's being, having been created from Adam's side.[143] While each option has good lexical

138 McKinley, "Need for a Third Way," with a nod to the work of Michelle Lee-Barnewall.

139 Importantly, verse 22 has no main verb in the Greek form but borrows its verb translated "submit" (Gk., *hupotassō)* from verse 21 (NET), "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." The two English sentences are inextricably linked in the original language and reflect the greater kingdom ethic contextually. Yet, since the sister passage in Colossians has a similar lead in (caring for one another) but not the same borrowing of the verb and since 1 Peter 3:1 also employs *hupotassō* within the sentence calling for wives to submit to husbands, this point cannot be pushed too far solely on grammatical terms. Rather, it is the overarching context of cultural reversals and voluntary emptying self of the status of power that reinforces Paul's call to complementarity and unity.

140 Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian Nor Egalitarian,* 158.

141 Lee-Barnewall, 158.

142 Colossians 3:18–4:1 repeats Paul's description of the kingdom ethic in abbreviated statements for both wife/husband, and child/father, while emphasizing his point through extended focus the bondservant/slave's responsibility. As with Ephesians, Paul doesn't tear down society's structures. Instead, he reminds the people, especially those in positions of earthly authority, that they are not the sovereign ones, and they are, in the eyes of God, on the same level as those they oversee — a huge departure from culture at the time.

143 While both definitions are possible and have been argued for extensively, it is important to remember that most of the word uses in question involve metaphor. And as Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians,* rev. ed., NICNT, 555–556) has written, The metaphorical use of *kephalē* ("head") to mean "chief" or "the person of the highest rank" is rare in Greek literature — so much so that, even though the Hebrew word *rosh* sometimes carried this sense, the Greek translators of the LXX, who ordinarily used *kephalē* to translate *rosh* when the physical "head" was intended, almost never did so when "ruler" was intended, thus indicating that this metaphorical sense is an exceptional usage and not part of the ordinary range of meanings for the Greek word.

or contextual support in many of the various places it occurs in Scripture, we must consider that no one definition holds sway in every instance.[144] Indeed, the metaphorical context of many of the word's occurrences in Paul's letters creates reason to examine "Paul's actual use of the metaphor on a case-by-case meaning," as John McKinley has called for.

While McKinley concedes that the two "meanings of 'source' and 'authority' are both possibly in view in" the following five uses "of *head* for Jesus' relation to the church as his body (Ephesians 1:20–23; 4:15–16; Colossians 1:18; 2:18–19) and in relation to all humanity (1 Corinthians 11:3)...the temptation is to read these uses...into every use of 'head.'" Doing so, he says, deprives "Paul the option to use a single term in various ways and for a unique meaning according to his detailed explanation in Ephesians 5."[145] Something more seems to be going on in this passage of Ephesians than declaring the husband as authority over the wife, a condition that would fit well with cultural assumptions of the time, but not necessarily so with the original side-by-side relationship pictured in Genesis 2:21.[146] Neither does Paul primarily seem to be making an argument about woman being sourced out of man. Ultimately, it seems best to emphasize here with Paul what a position of loving leadership looks like in Christ: selfless service for the uplifting and good of the other, whether that means the wife serving the husband or the husband serving the wife.

1 PETER 2:18–3:7

Peter begins with servants and clarifies that they are to respect and submit to the good and gentle master but also to the "cruel" (2:18). This sense of submission without the master "earning" respect seems to flow down "in the same way" into the discussion of husbands and wives, where Peter makes clear that the wife's godly submissive behavior is done not because of the husband's status but because of his spiritual need (3:1–2).[147] Peter, as with Paul to the Ephesians through Timothy, seems to call even the woman of wealth and status (the one who could afford braids and gold) to submit to her husband, and that she should hold her status as Christ's representative as more important than asserting herself in the ways that she might have had agency or power culturally.[148]

144 *i.e.*, avoiding the fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer.

145 McKinley, "Need for a Third Way."

146 McKinley ("Need for a Third Way," note 17) notes, "Adam is never called head of humanity or of Eve. The twelve apostles are judges for the remnant of faithful Israel, following the twelve sons of Jacob, and the role of Adam as created first can have more to do with the role of Jesus in salvation than a divine intention to align authority with the masculine (1 Corinthians 15:45–49)."

147 While Paul and, by proxy, the Lord calls servants and wives to endure persecution for the sake of the gospel, we acknowledge that this calling is one that comes from the Spirit's calling and empowerment and not by way of human manipulation, guilt, or forced requirements. Egregious abuse of women and marginal groups has regularly been excused or even perpetrated by an inadequate understanding and application of these verses. The church has often been guilty of enabling abusive husbands while placing all the burden for "following Christ" on the victimized spouses, women, and girls. We wish to state clearly that it is the church's role to stand in the gap between abuser and abused, to call out and correct behavior that victimizes and marginalizes. The biblical scope of God's kingdom ethic is a picture of protecting the vulnerable and not allowing them to suffer, especially within the family of God. Much of Old Testament law, even the issuing of a divorce certificate, involves protecting women from further neglect or abuse (*e.g.*, Deuteronomy 24:1; Exodus 21:7–11). It is with these realities in mind that our position paper *"Exploring God's Design for Human Sexuality"* states:

> Although God's kingdom is marked by reconciliation and redemption, it is possible a marriage could be at such a destructive level that efforts to keep the couple together may exacerbate the situation and perhaps amplify the harm within the family. In addition to God's command for marital fidelity, He also deeply desires that the vulnerable be cared for and protected. If you find that you are in an abusive relationship, it is vital that you seek help immediately. While God does hate divorce he also hates the abuse of others (26).

148 According to Westfall, "Throughout the Roman Empire, women were involved in a range of nontraditional activities, including functioning as patrons, business owners, and cultic and public officials. A woman who exhibited what were considered manly virtues and strengths might be given some positive recognition or honor, particularly if she were upper class and donated a large sum of money or performed a necessary service" (*Paul and Gender,* 17).

As for husbands, Peter commands a similar countercultural reversal as Paul, calling on men to live with their wives "in an understanding way" (3:7). Much abuse has been made through the years of Peter's description here of the woman as the "weaker partner," not the least of which is an Aristotellian view of women having an inferior intellect. We can state clearly that nothing in Scripture supports that view. The remaining candidates for Paul's intention behind the words "weaker partner" are (1) biological — a woman's weaker physicality and (2) cultural — her weaker agency in a patriarchal world. But either way, the emphasis of the sentence seems not on her apparent weakness but on the husbands' responsibility: they are to bestow honor upon their wives "as coheirs of the grace of life" (3:7), seeking to understand them and their plight in culture rather than dominate them (3:6). Aimee Byrd describes this statement and its outcome in striking terms:

> *Peter implores husbands to treat their wives with honor, as they are the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). Is this a contradiction? No, Peter is likely referring to the physical differences women have in strength, but mostly in conjunction to their resulting status in the world. Men throughout history have held their power over women, and Peter says, No, you are heirs together and your own prayers will be hindered if you treat your wife the way the world does. See her as Christ sees his bride. Her whole body and presence points you to true strength — in receiving the love of the Lord, you have the strongest advantage. Her very breasts point to your absolute dependence on her for life, just like the collective bride is absolutely dependent on Christ, who nurtures her by his Word and sacrament in his church.*[149]

Rather than a statement that diminishes or subordinates women, Peter's statement seems an astonishing command in Greco-Roman times, reflecting the mutual image bearing of male and female as well as their interdependent union.

CIRCUMCISION NO LONGER NECESSARY

With the coming of Messiah, the prophesied seed of the woman has been born. The prophecy is fulfilled. Notably, prior to the coming seed through the patriarchs and then David's lineage, this had been a unique contribution to God's mission given to the embodied form of females. Now, no longer will the messianic seed be propagated through a woman; instead the fruit of that seed — the kingdom people — will be rebirthed by God himself (John 3:3).

Similarly, the mark of the covenant community — circumcision — was a mark given solely to the embodied form of men, a male's unique contribution to God's mission. This mark separated the Jewish covenantal person from the uncircumcised males of the surrounding nations;[150] it also separated covenantal men from covenantal women. The man bore a physical reminder in his flesh of God's covenant and had access to the temple and its inner parts in ways the woman did not. Together in marriage, however, for man and woman this circumcision was a regular reminder and pledge for purity and responsibility.

For the church, God makes clear that physical circumcision is no longer the mark of covenant community (*e.g.*, Romans 2:28–29, 3:30, 4:9–13; 1 Corinthians 7:18–19). The purpose of that physical demarcation and its role in caretaking of the oracles of God for all humanity[151] has been fulfilled in

149 Aimee Byrd, *The Sexual Reformation*, 159.

150 For instance, "If an alien resides among you and wants to observe the LORD's Passover, every male in his household must be circumcised, and then he may participate; he will become like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat it" (Exodus 12:48).

151 Romans 3:2

Christ's coming. Both male and female embodied, gendered responsibilities given early in the Genesis record[152]— bearing the promised seed, keeping the covenant community pure, and protecting the oracles of God through the Hebrew covenant community — are complete. Baptism has now become the sign of belonging to the covenant family, and this sign belongs indiscriminately to both the embodied pair, male and female, as explained in Colossians 2:11–12:

> [11] *You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh, in the circumcision of Christ,* [12] *when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.*

The previous, bright line of division for each gender's unique contribution to the birth of Messiah fades with that mission's completion, and the emphasis for the spiritual community shifts toward more inclusion. Yet even so, this inclusion does not mean the community shifts to a sort of homogenous androgyny, where each member is replaceable by any other member. Just as the raising of a biological family takes a mother and father, sisters and brothers, elders and children, each with a unique contribution, so it is in the family of God. We each bring unique and diverse perspectives to our gendered membership. These varied perspectives are a kaleidoscope of beauty that add to the flourishing of the spiritual family.

INHERITANCE EXTENDED TO ALL, NOT JUST MALES

Likewise, in the Old Testament, the term *son* (Hb., *ben*) refers particularly to males and the patriarchal passing down of inheritance through the male line, with a double portion given to the firstborn, who becomes the next patriarch responsible for the safety and survival of the whole family. Greco-Roman culture also passed inheritance through the male lineage. But in the epistles reversal, the term *son* (Gk., *huios*) as "son of God" or "son of Abraham" when applied to the community of faith, applies its special meaning of progeniture and general male inheritance to both male and female, with Christ viewed as the elder firstborn:

> *For all who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons...and if children, also heirs. (Romans 8:14, 17).*
>
> *For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (Romans 8:29)*
>
> *Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (Galatians 3:7, 26)*

Inclusion in God's kingdom raises the cultural status of women as well as slaves, gentiles, and the lower classes to that of coheirs of God himself.

PRIESTHOOD BOTH EXPANDED AND DECREASED

In the Old Testament God called all of Israel to be a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:3). Each member, male and female, had access in some form to God as well as were called to guard and keep his word and to mediate on behalf of the nations to bring them into the fold.[153] But in this system, the temple priesthood was exclusively male, as was the high priest who mediated on behalf of the nation of

152 Genesis 3:15; 17:10

153 John D. Hannah, *Exodus* (The Bible Knowledge Commentary; ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; Accordance electronic ed. 2 vols.; Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1:138.

Israel. Men were barred in some ways from God's throne, both by the veil of the holy of holies and by designation of priests through family lineage. But as mentioned previously, purity laws prohibited women from these duties completely as well as from entering the inner parts of the temple. And in the first century AD, "architects had added barriers for non-Jews and for women" to keep them even further out in the courtyard.[154]

Peter renames the church, female and male, as the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), reiterating that they are "to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5) and proclaim the praises of the one who called them out of darkness. Paul declares the dividing wall broken down, that both those who were "far off" and those who are "near" now "both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:17–18). Indeed, all members of God's family are called "fellow citizens," a mark of inclusiveness and unity in the kingdom ethic rather than the mark of exclusive citizenship given in Roman-Greco culture, where women were named as citizens only in reference to their relationship with a man.[155]

Most importantly, Paul declares that there is only one mediator, Jesus, between God and humanity (Gk., *anthropos*).[156] No longer does the community of faith need the Aaronic priesthood to offer sacrifice on their behalf or to have their sins placed on the scapegoat by the high priest on *Yom Kippur* (Lev 16:7–10). Jesus takes on the eternal role of our high priest (Hebrews 4:14–15, 10:21), and through his mediation, all the church, both male and female, have direct access to God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) and can boldly enter his sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19).

Like never before since the fall, men *and* women have full access to God. The epistles bring in women from the margins, and establish them again at the center of the kingdom as necessary allies.

DISPUTED PASSAGES

Several passages in Paul's letters are (1) hard to understand due to cultural distance and (2) disputed as to meaning by well-intentioned, faithful scholars. Yet these passages have been bestowed with great weight for a faithful reader's understanding of gender in the church. The following discussion will present some of the primary interpretations along with comments about which interpretations seem to unlock/fit the greater context of the passage as well as fit with the arc of gender Scripture-wide.

1 TIMOTHY 2:8–15

Concerned about the strategic church at Ephesus, Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, his faithful co-laborer ministering there, to encourage him to press forward in squelching the unorthodox doctrines and folktales that were rising up, as well as bring more order to the contentious worship services. Both of these problems are addressed in 1 Timothy 2:8–15:

154 Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 544.

155 F. F. Bruce, s.v. "CITIZENSHIP," in *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 1:1,048. "The possession of Roman citizenship was a high social distinction in the Near East."

156 1 Timothy 2:5

> *8 Therefore, I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. 9 Also, the women are to dress themselves in modest clothing, with decency and good sense, not with elaborate hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive apparel, 10 but with good works, as is proper for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman is to learn quietly with full submission. 12 I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; instead, she is to remain quiet. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed. 15 But she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense.*

Just as Paul wants the men to participate in prayer without anger or argument, he has directions for the women of the church, some of whom were flaunting wealth and perhaps assertiveness. Several parts of this passage in Paul's letter to Timothy in Ephesus come under dispute: (1) the nature of the quietness Paul commands, (2) Paul's command about a woman's teaching and authority, and (3) the connection/meaning of the argument from creation to Paul's directions for order in public worship.

QUIETNESS

While some argue that women have no role to speak during public worship, the majority views agree that the Greek word translated here as "quietly" and "quiet" (*hēsuchia*) means a calm, respectful demeanor and not "silence."[157] In fact, in this passage we see yet another reversal as women in this culture were typically uneducated. The Greek form for this verb is an imperative: "Let her learn!" with a quiet demeanor and submissiveness as expected by any novice learner at this time.

AUTHORITY

The prohibition against teaching or having authority over a man has been interpreted by some to mean no woman should teach an adult male in the church, or even that women are not to give direction to or have authority in any sphere over men.[158] Most, however, contend that it is public worship that Paul has in mind here in the context. The remainder of the interpretive arguments hinge on the meaning of *authentein*, a Greek word occurring only once in the New Testament, which the CSB and many modern versions translate in a benign manner as "have authority over." Some have argued that this proposed authority refers to the oversight of the church and doctrine, but such an argument, while certainly possible, fails to wrestle fully with the translation history of *authentein* and the connection of this teaching and authority to the Adam and Eve reference.[159]

157 Essentially the same word is used earlier in the chapter as Paul commands all to pray for kings and those in authority "so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:2). The Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG) lists the use of *hēsuchia* in 1 Timothy 2:11 under the gloss, "state of saying nothing or very little, silence," but tellingly in the same entry explains the use of the word in Acts 2:2 and in Heroditus as meaning a quietness out of "reverence," "devotion," or "respect," and not directly as "silence." BDAG, s.v. "ἡσυχία," 440.

158 Sandra L. Glahn (*The First Century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity,* Bibliotheca Sacra 172, October–December 2015, 459–460) notes that how one translates *gunē* (Gk., γυνή) in this passage (a word that can mean both "woman" and "wife" and is most frequently translated here as "woman"), "can make the difference between whether the author was saying that wives should refrain from teaching their husbands and not that no woman should teach any man." She argues, "The presence in the pericope of the word 'submissive' applied to how these women should learn and the word 'childbearing' relating to what they will do suggests that 'wife' better reflects the author's intent."

159 Though not a prevalent argument in the scholarly literature, the connection of the passage to its immediate context of 1 Timothy 2:1–7, where Paul declares that there is one mediator between God and humanity (*anthropos*), is important to understanding the instructions that follow for men and women to worship publicly with good order. That passage specifically mentions the inclusion of the Gentiles, but it surely cannot be leaving women out of that equation. The emphasis is on interdependent unity rather than hierarchy.

In an extensive study on *authentein*, Linde Belleville notes that the current, gold standard Koine Greek lexicon gives a definition for the word as "to have authority" based on a source that has been proven to be in error. Translations prior to World War II more consistently translate *authentein* with a negative force, such as "domineer" or the King James Version "to usurp authority."[160] This rare New Testament word also occurs just once in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament and other apocryphal books, as an adjective translated as "murdering." Belleville notes that this single "LXX occurrence should give us pause in opting for a translation such as 'to have [or exercise] authority over' [in 1 Timothy 2:12]. If Paul had wanted to speak of an ordinary exercise of authority, he could have picked any number of words."[161]

Further, however one reads the word *authentein* for women's behavior in 1 Timothy 2:12, Cynthia Westfall reminds us that "the prohibition of this action by women is not an endorsement of the action by men, as is often taken to be the case."[162] She cites Chrysostom's *Homilies on Colossians* as the "closest parallel passage to 1 Timothy 2:12," in which "he commands husbands not to αὐθεντεῖν [*authentein*] their wives":

> *Chrysostom says that the husband's role is to love and the wife's role is to obey. He then says, "Therefore don't αὐθεντεῖν because your wife is submissive to you." . . . In the passage, Chrysostom compares the ideal husband to a loving ἄρχων ("leader/ruler"), and the action in view [authentein] cannot be the husband's loving exercise of legal/cultural domestic rule, but rather exceeds loving domestic authority; today we would probably use the term "spousal abuse," which would nevertheless be well within the rights of the Roman paterfamilias in the patriarchal culture.*[163]

Chrysostom's use of the word *authentein* seems to lend a compelling reason to avoid anchoring any view of male or female leadership on a reading of 1 Timothy 2:12 alone.

With the problems of the modern translation of *authentein* in mind, Belleview recommends that a more judicious understanding of the prohibition against women teaching in this passage should not be teaching in general or at all, but teaching "with a view to dominating a man." Instead, she should have a quiet and calm demeanor.[164] Moreover, John Dickson argues that *teaching* (*didaskō*) is a technical term in the pastoral epistles:

> *"For Paul, 'teaching' (in a technical sense) involved carefully preserving and laying down for the congregation the traditions handed on by the apostles. In the period before the texts of the New Testament were readily*

160 Linda L. Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11–15," in Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural & Practical Perspectives, 3rd ed., ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Cynthia Long Westfall (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 210. She explains the discrepancy between the Louw and Nida biblical lexicon that has "thirteen entries under 'Exercise Authority' and forty-eight under of 'Rule, Govern' without listing authentein in any of them" (213), and the "assume a stance of independent authority" entry in the current gold standard BAGD in the following manner, regarding George Knight's 1984 article "ΑΥΘΕΝΤΕΩ in Reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2.12" NTS 30 (1984): 143–57:

> Knight translates the Greek quotation syn authent[ou]sin anaxin as "those in authority," claiming as his source a paraphrase by Yale classicist Harry Hubbell. However, Hubbell actually renders authent[ou]sin as it rightly is—an adjective meaning "powerful" modifying the noun "rulers" or "lords".... While some have noted and corrected Knight's mistake, most have not and continue to perpetuate the error, including A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (2000), citing Knight as the source (219).

161 Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," 212.

162 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 293.

163 Westfall, Paul and Gender, 293.

164 Belleville, "Teaching and Usurping Authority," 223.

available (before about AD 100), a church's only access to the range of things the apostles had said about Jesus and his demands was through a teacher, the one entrusted with the "apostolic deposit."[165]

"Teaching" in this technical sense is not the explanation and application of an authoritative text, but rather the preserving of these teachings intact.[166] In light of this scholarship, Craig Blomberg contends Dickson "has convincingly demonstrated that even a conservative complementarian has no exegetically-based grounds for preventing women from delivering sermons."[167]

"ADAM WAS FORMED FIRST, THEN EVE"

While many interpreters have tried their hand at determining Paul's intent for this reference back to the creation of Adam, few have been able to expound its meaning in relation to the next, often troubling, verse about women saved by childbearing. Several problems present themselves.

If the argument is made that Paul is invoking primogeniture, that Adam's order in creation gives him status, headship, or special function, then the sentence that follows, Paul's support for what he is saying — "and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and transgressed"— seems understood in a way that contradicts other Scripture, that Eve's deception is the cause for her need of headship. Paul's emphasis on Eve's deception and transgression does not deny that Adam also transgressed (sinned). And elsewhere, Paul clearly states that men are subject to deception, not just women (*e.g.*, Romans 7:11; 16:8; 2 Corinthians 11:3).

But even if Paul were saying women need extra supervision because of Eve's transgression, how exactly is it that women are "saved" through childbearing? Paul surely is not recommending spiritual salvation by childbearing rather than by the Lord's death and resurrection. One strong argument notices the singular verb "she will be saved" and understands the childbearing in question as the bearing of the seed of the woman, Jesus, as the agency of salvation. The remainder of verse 15, however, which has a plural verb and subject, "if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with good sense," seems to have a weaker connection to the rest with this interpretation. Another argument notices that the Greek syntax points to a temporal or spatial definition of "through" rather than a causative meaning. In this argument the woman is rescued during or in the midst of the dangers of childbirth and not by giving birth.

Sandra Glahn has studied the first century Artemis cult in Ephesus at length and sees this cultural issue for Paul's audience as a key for interpreting verses 13–15 in a way that links these verses to the rest of the passage and letter. The Ephesian Artemis, the older twin to Apollo, was "a virgin in the strictest sense" who was associated with childbearing and midwifery.[168] The Gentile women of Ephesus revered her both for her virginity and her protection during childbearing. For those who married, the greatest cause of death for women in the first century was childbearing, Glahn notes:

Epigraphic evidence reveals that Artemis Ephesia's followers sometimes described her as "savior," or one who "saves" or "delivers." In addition to protecting the city, she was believed to have the power to bring women safely through childbirth, that most feared of passages. Such "saving" might involve delivering safely. But it

165 John Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice: A Case for Women Giving Sermons*, 29.

166 Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice*, 32.

167 Craig Blomberg endorsement in *Hearing Her Voice*.

168 Glahn, "First Century Ephesian Artemis," 450.

> *also might involve bringing swift death with her arrows. In this way the goddess would spare a woman from languishing for days before dying.*[169]

So Paul's comments about childbearing in verse 15 were likely directed toward these Gentile women to encourage them to put their faith in Jesus rather than Artemis, whom they had grown up with allegiance to before Paul's bringing of the gospel to them. The Lord would rescue them through childbearing in ways Artemis never could.

For those not yet married and those widowed, these women "formally participating in her rites appear to have been, like her, sexually *in*active" and preferring to remain so. This historical knowledge helps us understand Paul's concern in his letter to Timothy that widows and virgins (re)marry (1 Timothy 5:11–15) in contrast to his advice in his letter to the licentious Corinthians that remaining single and celebate was the better choice (1 Corinthians 7:1, 7–9).

Similarly, while the Jewish members of Timothy's community in Ephesus would have known the Adam and Eve creation story well,

> *The non-Jewish members of Timothy's spiritual community were well versed in a far different creation story. They had a special pride of place about this story, because they believed its events — known throughout the empire — took place near their city. In these Gentiles' creation narrative, the woman came first, and that gave her preeminence as the first twin. Competition persisted between cities that worshiped one or the other of the twins, with Artemis's followers insisting she was superior because she was born first. So in Timothy's context, the creation story from Genesis contrasts completely with the local story and would have served as a logical corrective.*[170]

Glahn notes the benefit of acknowledging this cultural background for Paul's letter, in that it avoids the necessity of reading back into Genesis 2 an understanding that may or may not be there:

> *Seeing the author's use of Genesis as a corrective to the local story's implications, rather than as an inviolate principle of firstborn preeminence, allows for reading Genesis in a straightforward way rather than reading back into it a prescription for female subordination when the text is actually emphasizing how much like Adam the woman "finally" is. (Genesis 2:23)* [171]

As with elsewhere in the epistles, the emphasis and concern of this 1 Timothy passage is on public order, unity, mutual submission, *inclusion* of women, and sound doctrine.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2–16

During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, he wrote a letter of correction to the Corinthian church he had recently founded. These believers, living in a highly sexualized city full of cosmopolitan temptations, desperately needed Paul's help to detach themselves from the norms of their lascivious, heathen culture and embrace God's kingdom ethic. After directing them toward God regarding issues of marriage and idols, Paul turned his attention to how the family of God should participate in public worship. Chapter 11 addresses how the believers are to relate to one another when they come together as a church, and the passage in question especially addresses the treatment of women.

169 Glahn, "First Century Ephesian Artemis," 451.

170 Glahn, "First Century Ephesian Artemis," 463.

171 Glahn, "First Century Ephesian Artemis," 463.

> *[2] Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions just as I delivered them to you. [3] But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ. [4] Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head. [5] Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since that is one and the same as having her head shaved. [6] For if a woman doesn't cover her head, she should have her hair cut off. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her head be covered.*

Notably, this Corinthians passage affirms with Paul's blessing that women may pray and prophesy within the church. The difficulties are generally (1) how the interpreter defines "head" (*kephalē*) and the head covering Paul has in mind, (2) the translation of "symbol of authority" for *exousia*, and (3) the apparent difference between whom the woman and man each "image."

HEAD AND HEAD COVERING

Many interpreters see the three uses of "head" in verse 3 as straightforward, a declaration of a hierarchy: God the Father > Christ > Men > Women.[172] Others, who favor reading a "source" definition for *kephalē* ("head") in most places, interpret verse 3 in this manner. Westfall, for one, sees this idea of "source" as part of the patron-benefactor relationship common to first century Greco-Roman culture: everyone had need of a patron, who (re)sourced and sustained them.[173] Gordon Fee denies both of these views, declaring this verse a metaphor and wordplay that transitions the discussion to the issue at hand: relationships in the church (by way of a woman's head covering).[174]

As the ESV notes for verse 5, the wearing of a veil was a sign of a married woman in first-century culture. In the "eastern Mediterranean women were expected to cover their hair. To fail to cover their hair was thought to provoke male lust as a bathing suit is thought to provoke it in some cultures today."[175] Keener argues that "upper-class women eager to show off their fashionable hairstyles did not practice [veiling]. Thus Paul must address a clash of culture in the church between upper-class fashion and lower-class concern that sexual propriety is being violated."[176] This argument has many valid points.

But Westfall makes note that in Corinth, "known for its wealth, religious temples and rites, and its vice — particularly for its sexual vice"— had no upperclass. Instead, it had "a class of nouveau riche... created by Corinth's prosperity."[177] She asks:

172 Generally, many interpreters who hold to a strong hierarchy either ontologically or functionally (or both) subscribe inherently or as a default to a doctrine called the Eternal Subordination of the Son, which has itself created much discussion and dispute among evangelicals. Kevin DeYoung (*Men and Women in the Church,* [Wheaton, IL:Crossway, 2021], 52), however, looks at the "activity of God" and notes "an eternal ordering (*taxis*) of the Trinity that finds expression in time" but states "the language of eternal subordination of the Son is not the best language to describe this order, nor do we ever see in Nicene tradition that the persons of the Trinity are distinguished by a relationship of authority and submission." He presents another option for verse 3: "We should be careful to note that there is an "economic" expression of the Son in view in verse 3 ("Christ"), not an immanent or ontological expression (*e.g.*, "Son"). We should not use the Trinity "as our model" for the marriage relationship, both because it is not necessary for complementarianism to be true and because the metaphysical inner works of the ineffable Trinity do not readily allow for easy lifestyle applications. In fact, it is striking how the New Testament often grounds ethical imperatives in the gospel (*e.g.*, marriage as an outworking of Christ and the church), but never in the eternal "ordering" of God."

173 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 20–22.

174 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed, 551.

175 Craig Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament,* 475.

176 Craig Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament,* 475.

177 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 25.

> *In such a [sexually-fraught] context, was it likely that Christian women would knowingly flout "the Roman legal convention that epitomized marriage" in the Corinthian house church? Or rather, would they be more careful and resistant to exposure and vulnerability in what some might have argued was a safe domestic context? How would the scenario be further complicated if low-status Corinthian house churches included women slaves or prostitutes? Slaves, prostitutes, and freedwomen were prohibited from veiling.*[178]

Indeed, she says, "Paul indicates that the Corinthian church did not draw its membership only from the wealthy elite but rather mostly from those who lacked status or power (1 Corinthians. 1:26).[179] And many of these women would have been prohibited culturally from veiling, which served "to differentiate between 'respectable' women and those who were publicly available. That is, use of the veil classified women according to their sexual activity and signaled to men which women were under male protection and which were fair game."[180] In the context of Paul's letter to the Corinthians, in which he criticizes the church for divisions, fornication, and class discrimination, it makes more sense to understand Paul as advocating for the universal veiling of all women in the Corinthian church irrespective of their marital status, securing "respect, honor, and sexual purity for women in the church who were denied that status in the culture."[181] All believing women were under the protection of God. They were not fair game.

AUTHORITY (EXOUSIA)

> *A man should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God. So too, woman is the glory of man.* **8** *For man did not come from woman, but woman came from man.* **9** *Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.* **10** *This is why a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.* **11** *In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, and man is not independent of woman.* **12** *For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, and all things come from God. (1 Corinthians 11:7)*

The reading that proposes women were *asking* to cover their heads rather than rebelling against veiling solves another interpretive problem in the passage. Because, traditionally, the rebellion had been assumed, translators have modified the term *exousia*, "authority" to the metaphorical "symbol of authority" to better fit the flow of the argument that women should be brought into submission and cover themselves to show that obedience outwardly.[182] But if the women were asking to be allowed to cover their heads, then the Greek grammar can stand as written: "This is why a woman *should have authority over* her head, because of the angels" (emphasis added). A woman *should* be given agency, especially while prophesying and praying in the church.[183]

178 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 25.

179 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 25.

180 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 14–15 quoted in Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 26–27.

181 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 34.

182 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 35.

183 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 35. Also in support of the view of the woman's agency over her own head is Paul's declaration that this issue of head coverings was not binding in all places: "If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16). If the issue were the moral necessity of head coverings in all places and times, or that women must outwardly show a sign of their submission to the proper God-given hierarchy, then Paul would have avoided such a culturally-contextual declaration. It was the nature of the highly sexed city and the dangerous and shameful denial of protection for some women that gave rise to Paul's argument for the sake of the Corinthian women.

Westfall explains that this reading best gives meaning to the "because of the angels" phrase, tying in Paul's argument here to 1 Corinthians 6:2–3: "Or don't you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the trivial cases? Don't you know that we will judge angels — how much more matters of this life?" She writes, "Women and men were supposed to be learning to exercise good judgment in ordinary matters in preparation for future responsibilities."[184] They are both contributors on God's mission.

WOMAN AS THE GLORY OF MAN

Some have proposed that Paul's statement of women as the glory of man and man as the *image* and glory of God along with the emphasis that woman came from man reinforces man's preeminence and emphasizes woman's secondary or "derivative" status.[185] In line with Genesis 2:21–23, however, where Eve is the *crown* of creation, a necessary ally for the man who was alone, Paul is highlighting the additional glory the woman brings to man through her beauty and partnership. Genesis 1:26–28 already includes her with man as the image and glory of God. Because she was created to be his ally in reigning and ruling, she certainly *should* have agency over her own behavior and appearance. Nonetheless, Paul reminds us, the embodied pair are interdependent: Eve was formed from Adam's side; men (including the precious Seed) are born from woman; and both depend on God for everything.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:26–40

In this continuation of Paul's discussion of how believers should relate to one another during public worship, Paul specifically addresses the problem of a lack of order that is keeping the church from being able to adequately learn and grow. The discussion that begins in chapter 11 continues here and includes the famous chapter 13, which beautifully describes love as an ethic where a person puts others before themselves and, in so doing avoids becoming a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). Indeed, chapters 11–14 are one unit concerned with maintaining order in worship, especially as it applies to tongues, prophecy, and the interpretation of both.

Specifically for this passage, we see Paul addressing the problem of the Corinthian men and women praying and prophesying chaotically, speaking over one another in public worship. The most disputed verses of the larger passage are these:

> [33] *God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints,* [34] *the women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says.* [35] *If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.* [36] *Or did the word of God originate from you, or did it come to you only?*

Paul has already endorsed women praying and prophesying in public worship in chapter 11, so the majority of scholars do not see Paul's injunction to remain silent (Gk., *sigaō*) as an absolute silence. It's a silence in response to something: the evaluation of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:29–30), namely, the hearing of God's word during public worship. The general views for reasons why are as follows: (1) evaluation of doctrine/law was given eternally at creation as part of the ontological priority of men

184 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 35.

185 Bruce A. Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," in Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 84–86.

(Genesis 2:7–15);[186] (2) evaluation of prophecy was given to men who were trained and educated;[187] (3) evaluation of prophecy was given to qualified men *and* women, but Paul was calling out the women's typical noisy chatter that could be disruptive in a public worship setting;[188] and (4) that verses 34–35 are un-Pauline and an intrusion in the early text.[189]

We reject views one and four as overreaching. Regarding the first, whatever may have been given to men as a responsibility in Genesis 2:16–17 with the giving of the first command, the "others" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:29 who should evaluate the prophecy are not specifically named as male earlier and no connective explanation for that change is given here. Further, John calls on all believers, female and male, to "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Regarding the fourth, we recognize the many arguments regarding word usage and non-Pauline authorship, but believe more firmly substantiated data than has been given is required to remove any part of Scripture from the canon.

Between the second and third views, both have strong argumentation. Paul has encouraged the women to learn and prophecy — part of *leading* worship — but he is primarily in this passage working to reduce disruption among the listeners. Among the listeners, both men and women would be from various people groups in this diverse city with a large influx of internationals. The language of the worship service might be their second or third language. And as was common at the time, women were far less likely to be literate or educated as men.[190]

Therefore, it is possible to read this passage as Craig Keener does, that "the issue here is thus their weakness in Scripture, not their gender."[191] Thus he tells the women if they have questions about the interpretation of prophecy because they lack expertise in the Greek language or with the theological discussion, they should ask these questions of their husbands later. And "their husbands are to respect their intellectual capabilities and give them private instruction."[192]

It is also possible to read the passage as Westfall and Kenneth Bailey do, that due to oral culture methodology of chatting as a means of learning, lack of training in attention spans, difficulty with the language spoken and accents, and a cultural predisposition to process verbally, especially with children in tow, the women's chatter would regularly grow too loud for the congregation to hear the prophecy and evaluation being given.[193] Chrysostom once again weighs in on the issue, though regarding a cathedral in Antioch on the 1 Timothy 2:11–15 text:

186 Wayne Grudem, "The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward" in Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations*, 25–32.

187 Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 483.

188 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 238–239.

189 Gordon D. Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, 772) writes, "As will be noted later, there is substantial evidence that these clearly intruding, and thoroughly un-Pauline, sentences (verses 34–35) are not authentic, and therefore that Paul could not have intended it to go with what he did not write."

190 Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Culture Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 412–13.

191 Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 483.

192 Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 483.

193 Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, 413–16.

> *Then indeed the women, from such teaching keep silence; but now there is apt to be great noise among them, much clamor and talking, and nowhere so much as in this place [the cathedral]. They may all be seen here talking more than in the market, or at the bath... Thus all is confusion, and they seem not to understand, that unless they are quiet, they cannot learn anything that is useful. For when our discourse [sermon] strains against the talking, and no one minds what is said, what good can it do them?* [194]

Ultimately, in this passage we see the value of ordered worship, but not a prohibition against women evaluating the spirit of prophecy, if they are so called by the Holy Spirit and given that ability.

GALATIANS 3:28

In Galatians, chapters 3–4, Paul is primarily concerned with responding to the problems laid out in chapter 2 regarding Peter's hypocrisy at the table with gentiles in the presence of Jews (2:11–14) and the attempt by "false brothers" to require Gentile Christians to be circumcised (2:1–5). Paul argues that the former distinctions between Gentile and Jew that kept the uncircumcised Gentile segregated as an outgroup (even the Gentile God-fearer who worshiped Yahweh) have been superseded by baptism in Christ. The verse in question, 3:28, however, also includes the category of gender as a category that has been changed in some similar way by Christ's work:

> *[27] For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. [28] There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.*

The debate centers on whether the triple pair erases all distinctions in status and roles, or if it merely speaks to unity in Christ and access to the privilege of Abraham's blessing.

Importantly, as Wayne Grudem writes, "Galatians 3:28 simply says that we have a special kind of *unity* in the body of Christ. Our differences as male and female are not obliterated by this unity; rather, the unity is beautiful in God's sight particularly because it is a unity of different kinds of people."[195] Surely, unity is the common theme here and not the physical removal of race, social status, or gender. Few argue cogently that the new person in Christ somehow becomes nonethnic, nonclassed, or nongendered. The distinction between the positions falls more on how each side defines the term "equal," as Richard Hove has outlined. One argument emphasizes the equality in standing before Christ, in terms of justification, inheritance, and blessing, while retaining differentiated roles and authority structures based on gender. The other emphasizes the implied outcome of such equal standing before Christ in participation in the life of the church.[196]

Certainly, the triple couplets of Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female are encased by an argument in verses 27 and 29 that the most *salient* importance is our unified and equal standing in Christ. But the context of Paul's writing this argument to address the inequalities and hypocrisies occurring in the life of the church (Galatians 2) means that surely the participation in the life of the church is also in view. Westfall writes:

194 Chrysostom, "Homily IX," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 13:435 quoted in Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, 414–415.

195 Wayne Grudem, "The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward," in Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 43.

196 Richard Hove, "Does Galatians 3:28 Negate Gender-Specific Roles?" in Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations*, 119–137.

> *Being justified and "putting on Christ" at baptism entails all the benefits of membership in the context of Galatians. Paul specifies the pragmatic impact that this membership has on Gentiles, particularly Gentile males. The full inclusion of uncircumcised male Gentiles changed their status in the church's culture, social practices, and authority structure.*[197]

While Paul has been most concerned about Gentiles as the outgroup in this letter, Paul now includes "slaves and women as parallel cases to the membership of Gentiles. The identification of the scope of what changes for Greeks/Gentiles determines the scope of what changes for slaves and women."[198] If this new covenant community clothed in Christ removes barriers for leadership in some way for uncircumcised Gentiles, then so must it be also for slaves (*e.g.*, Onesimus) and women.

TITUS 2:3–5

Paul ended up in Crete after being shipwrecked, and he was heartbroken over the godless lifestyle of the people there. Following imprisonment in Rome, Paul took Titus to Crete and left him there to establish elders in every city and assure that the Cretan church would remain faithful to the true gospel and kingdom ethic. In this disputed passage, Paul discusses how the Cretan church should live among their neighbors as a gospel witness.

> [3]*In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good,* [4]*so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands and to love their children,* [5]*to be self-controlled, pure, workers at home, kind, and in submission to their husbands, so that God's word will not be slandered.*

The interpretation of Titus 2:3–5 has not been in question as much as its application has been made narrow, confining women to the sphere of the home and childrearing as their primary responsibilities — and often erroneously (and harmfully) used to tell women that their highest calling is raising their children.

As many women of color have mentioned, including Juliany González Nieves in her chapter in the third edition of *Discovering Biblical Equality*, being "stay-at-home" moms or homemakers has often been the privilege of well-off (and in the US, white) women. The Old Testament and Proverbs 31 gives us an understanding of the scope of widespread industry available to women who also managed households — indeed in an agrarian rather than industrial society, the woman's realm was much larger despite her considerable duties of clothing, food, childrearing, and household hygiene.

197 Cynthia Long Westfall, "Male and Female, One in Christ," in *DBE*, 167.

198 Westfall, "Male and Female," 168.

To say that a woman's place is solely in the home doing housework and raising children is to neglect necessity and the gifts given to many women. Indeed, Paul has no compunction about Priscilla or Junia or Claudia's work outside the home. Despite the stance of many commentators against Deborah as a judge (that she rose up only because the men were defunct), God called her to this position. Here, as with the household codes, Paul is concerned with a balance that brings about the proper work ethic, concern, and care for families, showing a good witness to society, and preserving unity and peace within the household of faith, especially (as Peter will more clearly state) to win the belief of an unbelieving husband.[199]

The entire chapter of Titus 2 instructs God's people not to contradict society's constructs in such a way that God's word is reviled. These verses do not necessarily mean that all women are confined to marriage, motherhood, and housework (which is not what "busy at home" means, but more "carrying out the care of the household," and all that pertains). It does mean for women, however, not to abandon these responsibilities.

NEW TESTAMENT OFFICES AND THE CALL TO RESPONSIBILITY

As we turn to look at the offices of the New Testament and the male and female call to responsibility, it is important to understand some of the categories and wording at play in this discussion. As Rebecca Groothius notes, John Piper and Wayne Grudem have proposed that "male authority and female submission are integral to the 'deeper differences,' the 'underlying nature,' and the 'true meaning' of manhood and womanhood."[200] In other words, directing the affairs of others is the male's inherent and eternal right, while women eternally are meant to be in submission. Groothius pushes back on this idea. She argues that Piper and Grudem's view is "typically presented as a matter of 'complementarity,' 'mutual interdependence,' and 'beneficial differences' between the sexes, without any implication of women's inferiority," language that is "carefully chosen...to make this position appear plausible and persuasive to modern ears."[201] She asks:

> *But what if it is not logically possible for the same person to be at once spiritually and ontologically equal and permanently, comprehensively, and necessarily subordinate? What if this sort of subordination cannot truthfully be described as merely a role or function that has no bearing on one's inherent being or essence?* [202]

Calling out "distinctive human capacities" such as "rationality, ethical reasoning, and the ability to analyze abstract concepts" as equally human for male and female, she questions a position that presupposes woman as being "uniquely designed by God *not* to perform [these] distinctively human activities" as part of her eternal state while men have no such abstentions "in order to be true to their

199 While women play a large role in the birthing and nurturing of children, Scripture calls men into complementarity in their role of raising the next generation. Women are not given the sole responsibility for raising up the children in the discipline and knowledge of the Lord. Nor is childrearing necessarily the "primary place" for women to exercise their teaching gifts, though there is no injunction against a woman teaching her children. She should. But the ultimate outcome of raising up the child in the knowledge of the Lord seems to be laid on the shoulders of fathers (Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12:7).

200 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers," in *RBMW,* 73–115, quoted in Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, "'Equal in Being, Unequal in Role': Challenging the Logic of Women's Subordination" in Pierce, Westfall, ed., *DEB* 3rd ed., 391.

201 Groothius, "Equal in Being," 396.

202 Groothius, "Equal in Being," 396.

masculine beings."[203] If all men have been given primacy for eternal oversight and authority over all women (or even all husbands over all wives) through the use of these human-defining faculties, then women cannot be truly considered ontologically equal. If they are *perpetually* subordinate in an area where there is no gendered difference in ability, then the difference changes from a difference in function or unique contribution to an ontological inequity — a hierarchy attached solely to their embodied sex, their *created* essence.

We recognize the logical fallacy Groothius has pointed out and therefore want to highlight that Scripture gives no eternal state of subordination to women. Rather, 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 give a *temporal* responsibility to the qualified male for the highest level of spiritual duty in the church, guarding sound doctrine and governing the local family of God, as will be discussed.

MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Much of the biblical responsibilities of the church belong to all the disciples of Jesus, male and female, as mutual responsibilities either for all believers by the nature of discipleship itself or as a responsibility for any believer according to his or her giftedness. Many of these responsibilities are listed below, with explanation where the qualifications and nature for these activities are often disputed.

- Evangelism (e.g., Ephesians 4:11; Acts 1:8; Mark 13:10; 16:15; Matthew 28:19)
- Discipleship (e.g., Matthew 28:19; Titus 2:3–5; Ephesians 5:15–21; Philippians 1:27)
- Fruitfulness spiritually, vocationally, and reproductively (e.g., Matthew 3:8; 13:23; 21:43; Luke 8:15; John 15:4–16; Romans 7:4; Galatians 5:22; Philippians 4:8–9)
- Seeking wisdom; teaching (e.g., Matthew 5:19; 28:20; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 2:11; and Acts 18:24–26, specifically of Priscilla and Aquila)
- Hospitality, mercy, and giving (Acts 18:27; Philippians 2:1–4, 25; 4:15–18)
- Prayer (e.g., Acts 1:14)
- Royal priesthood (Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 2:5)
- Preaching and exhortation (e.g., Acts 1:8; Philippians 1:14; Romans 10:14–15; 1 Corinthians 9:14; 11:15; 2 Timothy 4:2; Philippians 4:3)

  We understand the contemporary act of delivering a sermon (*i.e.*, the offering of an explanation and application of an authoritative text) to be much more closely related to the New Testament concepts of "preaching" (*kēryssō*), "exhortation" (*parakaleō*), and "prophecy" (*prophēteuō*) than the "teaching" (*didaskō*)[204] that some understand the Apostle Paul restricting to men only in 1 Timothy 2:12. Nowhere does the Bible restrict "preaching" (*kēryssō*), "exhortation" (*parakaleō*), and "prophecy" (*prophēteuō*) to men only.

203 Groothius, "Equal in Being," 400–401. Importantly, Groothius remarks that the oft proposed "special ability," function, or role of women to bear and nurse young is *not* a distinctively human activity since it is shared by female mammals.

204 John Dickson argues convincingly that "teaching" (*didaskō*), particularly in the pastoral epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus), is a technical term that does not mean "*expound* or *explain* … but *transmit words intact.*" He adds: "The fact that a 300-word Bible passage usually inspires a 3,000 word sermon is proof enough that far more is going on in an exposition (and far *less*) than preserving and laying down the apostolic deposit" (John Dickson, *Hearing Her Voice: A Biblical Invitation for Women to Preach*, 32, 68).

Indeed, the biblical record gives evidence of women participating in these activities and repeatedly calls them to it as part of the body of Christ. Preachers of the gospel should be qualified to preach an accurate gospel (*e.g.*, Priscilla and Aquila corrected Apollo's content in Acts 18:24–16). A preacher should demonstrate an accompanying witness of godly discipleship according to what is preached (1 Corinthians 9:27). And preaching should not be done out of intent to deceive or intentionally preach another gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3–4).

- Leading and organizing (female specific examples: Priscilla in Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19; Phoebe in Romans 16:1–2; Lydia in Romans 16:14–15; and Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2–3)

  Many examples occur in Scripture depicting men leading, but these examples of women leading in the mission and house churches — especially Lydia's story — show that leadership within the church is available to all who exhibit God's gifting.

TEMPORAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Temporal responsibilities are given to certain individuals, based on God's will and wisdom and mission, for a finite period. Many of these responsibilities are offices that men, and often women, are called to through the ministry and gifting of the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 7:23 acknowledges the finiteness of such offices: "Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office...(NIV)" Similarly, even the office of elder as a whole has a finite term. Eldership is about protecting the flock. In the New Creation, evil is defeated. The sea (and its implied chaos) is gone. The need for protecting the flock against the evil one, the invader, and sinful abuse will also pass away.

APOSTLE

The office of apostle (*i.e.*, Romans 1:1; Ephesians 4:11) applies primarily to those who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' earthly ministry. Generally, this official label applies to the twelve (Luke 6:13), with Matthias replacing Judas (Acts 1:21–26), as well as Paul, who met Jesus on the road to Damascus and became his apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). It can also apply to those, like the gospel writer Luke, who were given first-person eyewitness accounts by those who were eyewitnesses and who participated in the faithful recording of God's word, giving the word apostolic authority for the church. This apostolic authority shifts to the authority of the canon as the canon is completed and recognized.

Scripture, however, also names a few others as "apostles": Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus (Romans 16:7), and Junia (Romans 16:7), who has been often maligned by biblical translators, especially for translations made between 1940 and 1980.[205] Perhaps unconvinced that a woman could hold such prominence in the church, even in the Roman church, where culturally, women in leadership was a more common phenomenon in the first century,[206] translators have in the recent past made several grammatical leaps to name this person the masculine "Junias" rather than the feminine "Junia." However, we have no evidence of the masculine name "Junias" existing in the first century, while we

205 Linda L. Belleville, "Women Leaders in the Bible" in Pierce, Westfall, eds., *DBE* 3rd ed., 77–78.

206 Belleville, "Women Leaders," 76.

have inscription evidence of the name "Junia."[207] That the name in question in Romans 16:7 is of a female, we are certain.

Concerning the female Junia, Belleville notes that, unlike the NIV translators, "others attempt to get around Paul's apostolic acknowledgment by translating the Greek prepositional phrase as "esteemed by" or "in the sight of the apostles" rather than "outstanding among the apostles" the NIV translation."[208] Belleville's argument has merit, yet excellent Greek scholars and well-known advocates for women in the church, such as Michael Burer and Daniel Wallace, disagree with the NIV's reading of the syntax,[209] and so, as with so many points in this discussion, we hold this position with humility.

While we consider apostleship as an office now closed by time and distance, we acknowledge that Paul's commendation of Junia's high position in the church — potentially as an apostle — informs our understanding of gender relationships in church leadership.

PROPHET (ACTS 2:1–4, 17–18; 21:8–9; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:5)

Prophesying does not necessarily mean spontaneous speech. Prophetic speech is not opposed to thoughtful, sustained reflection; it is opposed to human origin. It is a ministry and calling of the Holy Spirit for "edifying," "building up," "strengthening" (1 Corinthians 14:3, 4, 5, 12, 17, 26), "encouraging" (14:3, 31), "comforting" (14:3), and "instructing" (14:19, 31) the congregation.

Anthony Thiselton argues convincingly that it is better to understand New Testament prophecy as a strong parallel to what modern churches consider "pastoral preaching." He summarizes the role of prophecy as follows:

> *Prophecy, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgment, decision, and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees.*[210]

Prophecy, it seems, takes doctrinal truth and applies it to specific pastoral situations within the church congregation. Thus, prophecy does not bear its own authority, but rather depends on what has been established as doctrinally accurate by those responsible for that ministry.

As with the prophecy in Joel 2:28–32 and its reiteration in Acts 2:1–4, 16–21, this temporal responsibility is a ministry and calling of the Holy Spirit that belongs to both male and female.

SHEPHERD/PASTOR

In line with the discussion of "prophet," the shepherd/pastor is a ministry and calling of the Holy Spirit on certain individuals, giving a responsibility to encourage, exhort, comfort, strengthen, and edify local flocks. This definition, with a list of ministries given by the Holy Spirit that aren't gendered, along with the many women that Paul named as coworkers for the gospel alongside

207 Belleville, "Women Leaders," 78.

208 Belleville, "Women Leaders," 78–80.

209 See Michael Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Romans 16:7," *NTS* 47 (2001): 76–91.

210 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC], 1090. While he recognizes significant similarities between the two, he is also wise to retain some significant differences. "Few [modern] churches appear 'to test' preaching from the pulpit, and nothing suggests that early Christian prophecy was a sustained, uninterrupted, twenty-minute monologue delivered by a 'trained' speaker" (961).

himself (Priscilla, Euodia and Syntyche, Apphia, and the deacon Phoebe), shows that the temporal responsibility of shepherding the flock belongs to both men and women. Senior pastors with an elder-like responsibility for the church, however, may fit best in the New Testament offices as having the full responsibilities of an elder rather than a pastorship alone.[211]

ELDER

The responsibilities of elder, or "overseer,"[212] come from 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, where the elder is described as "the husband of one wife" (more literally, a "one-wife man") who meets qualifications of godliness, good character and reputation, self-control, giftedness in leading his own household, being mature in the faith and able to teach, "holding to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and to refute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9).

Elders, specifically then unlike any other office, are charged as guardians over the doctrine and teaching of the church. Paul so keenly felt the need to appoint mature elders in every town to keep each local church following after the same "faithful message" that he left Titus, his "true son in our common faith" in Crete to "set right what was left undone": the lack of appointed elders there (Titus 1:4, 5).

An initial read of both texts in most English translations seems to establish males as the gender reserved for this office. The issue of gender is not quite so cut and dried in the Greek text, however. Several significant details are seen by some to push back on this male-only interpretation. For one, deacons are also called to be "one-wife men" (1 Timothy 3:12), yet the term *diakonos*, or "deacon" is applied to Phoebe in Romans 16:1. Further, in both the 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 passages, the English translations necessarily supply gendered pronouns for readable sense in English where no such pronouns occur in the Greek text. In the original language, both passages begin with a statement of "*Ei tis,*" or "if anyone," as the CSB translates. The indefinite pronoun, while technically a masculine form, also is the appropriate way to refer to "anyone" whether male or female. The list of elder qualifications that follow in the texts are then a list of participles and adjectives that take their masculine form from *tis* and cannot be relied on as a designation of male restriction to the office. The Greek text simply does not have the "He + main verb" such as "He must manage his own household" (1 Timothy 3:4) that we have in the English translations for the sake of modern, readable English. Therefore, any gender restrictions for elder simply cannot be based solely on the grammar of these passages.

Nevertheless, other patterns in Scripture that suggest a temporal male guardianship of sound doctrine give us a humble confidence that eldership *is* indeed reserved for males:

211 We also take into consideration here that the EFCA considers the ordained pastor as qualified for a senior pastorship.

212 We understand the Greek terms *episkopoi* (usually translated "overseers" or "bishops") and *presbuteroi* (usually translated "elders") as referring to the same office and responsibility in the early church community. Additionally, we acknowledge the negative connotations the word "overseer" can have in English due to the background of chattel slavery in American history. However, since the vast majority of English versions translate *episkopoi* with "overseer," we have retained it here for clarity rather than using a different term such as "watchman" or "guardian."

- In Genesis 2:15 God specifically placed the man in the garden to "work it (Hb. *avad*) and watch over it (Hb., *shamar*)." These verbs are also the terms used of the male priests guarding the temple.

- In Genesis 2:16–17, God gives the first word and command for obedience to the man before the woman is formed. The opening of their eyes happens only after the man eats the fruit and not immediately after the woman's bite (3:6–7). Further, only the man is called out specifically for transgressing the command God had given, though Eve has also sinned (3:9–11; 17).

- It is important to note that we see this responsibility given to Adam as a temporal responsibility rather than an ontological one since the second Adam was already God's "plan A" before creation. The male obligation to fulfill obedience to the command in the original creation has more to do with Christ's fulfillment of the obligation than Adam's eternal design.[213]

- The predominant, but not absolute, leadership of called-out men throughout biblical history continues this pattern: Abram, Moses, the twelve tribes from the twelve sons of Israel, the priests and high priest of the temple, and the twelve apostles of Jesus' inner circle. Not every male was a leader in this capacity. Not even the seventy-two of his close circle appointed for ministering were called in the same manner or with the same responsibility (Luke 10:1). It is also possible that some of the seventy-two might have been female. But as an overall pattern, males have been called to guard sound doctrine for God's covenant community.

Based on these passages and patterns, the office and temporal responsibility of eldership seems limited to qualified males who are called by God to exercise the highest level of doctrinal and spiritual oversight for the local church.

DEACON

The description of deacon (1 Timothy 3:8–13) also includes the phrase "one-wife husband" (v. 12), but as already mentioned, the designation of males only as deacons is questionable. Phoebe is called a "servant" in most English versions of Romans 16:1, yet as the NIV11 recognizes, the Greek word translated as "servant" here is *diakonos*, the very word translated as "deacon" in 1 Timothy 3:8. Also, the word frequently translated as "wives" in 1 Timothy 3:11 (Gk., *gunēkos*) can mean either "women" in general or "wives."[214] Therefore, for these reasons and others, we have evidence of the possibility of Paul's blessing on female deacons in the early church.

Deacons, however, do not have the same responsibility of guarding and teaching the sound doctrine of the church as elders do. Therefore, the tension around the question of female deacons does not affect our overall reading and position on the office of elder.[215]

213 See discussion in Christa L. McKirland, "Image of God and Divine Presence," *Fathom Magazine*, *http://www.fathommag.com*, March 28, 2022. She writes, "Jesus Christ has always been "Plan A," as the ultimate end for humanity and the New Testament affirms this pre-creational intent: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son," (Romans 8:29); "who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus *before the ages began*," (2 Timothy 1:9, emphasis added); "But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed *before the ages* for our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7, emphasis added); "He was foreknown *before the foundation of the world* but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you" (1 Peter 1:20, emphasis added). All of these passages support the second Adam preceding the first in the mind and intentions of an all-knowing God. God has always intended humanity's conformity into the image of Christ as this *is* the image of God."

214 BDAG, s.v., "γυνή (*gunē*)," 208.

215 As Christ Community does not use the office of deacon, and instead spreads out these responsibilities across the congregational leadership, both male and female, we have not pressed more into this office in this paper.

ETERNAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Ultimately, as the age of redemption transitions into the new heavens and earth, eternal offices and responsibilities will be recast in the following way:

- Jesus as eternal prophet (Hebrews 1:2), priest (Hebrews 7:24), and king (Hebrews 1:3, 8). The second Adam will fill all of these offices perfectly and eternally.
- The church as a family of coheirs, vice regents, and co-workers for God's kingdom as Christ's bride, the second Eve, fulfilling the initial mandate for humanity as the image of God.

The epistles transition us to the coming beauty of the creation made new and whole, and the perfection of God's church, humans, male and female, made to relate to one another and God again with perfect shalom. In the eschaton, to which we now turn, the *Human* and *Life* become the groom and bride at their wedding feast.

MALE AND FEMALE IN THE NEW CREATION

INTRODUCTION: THE TELOS OF MALE AND FEMALE[216]

So far throughout this paper we have followed the biblical story, looking at how Scripture explores themes surrounding male and female. Now, we will turn our attention to the end of the biblical story and how these themes culminate in the new creation.

When we consider male and female, it is a mistake to only focus on the realities of gender in the present moment. Of course, there are real questions and wrestlings regarding God's design for male and female as people inhabit their bodies and exist in the world now. Answering those questions is good and important. However, if we try to answer those questions without considering our hopeful future, then we'll be left living without the end in mind.

Again, if our horizon line ends in the "now," we will find ourselves forfeiting much. Why? If we do not have the same horizon line as our creator, we'll be travelers without our north star. What is the picture Scripture offers us regarding gender in new heavens and earth? As noted earlier: what hope is there for harmony to be restored?

The vision the biblical story gives us for gender in the new creation has four features:

1. Both male and female have an eschatological purpose to point us to Christ and his church.
2. Male and female experience the fullness of Christ's own destiny.
3. The eternal relationship between male and female that continues is that of brothers and sisters.
4. Physical male and female bodies continue into the new creation.

216 Telos: a term coined by Aristotle, generally to describe the end goal of man. In theology, it is used to understand God's ultimate direction, intentions, and final purposes for man. The telos of man is the apogee: the cumulative end and the final aim.

REVELATION: FEMALE TYPOLOGY

Throughout the biblical story, we consistently see that marriage between a male and a female is used as a metaphor for the covenant relationship of Christ and his bride. This remains true as John the evangelist writes about heavenly realities in Revelation. In fact, Revelation gives us a vision, using metaphor, for how to understand the eschatological[217] anchoring of gender by using typological[218] and symbolic ways of representing male and female.[219]

A clear example of this is the marriage supper of the Lamb, where the Lamb (Christ) is joined together with his pure and holy bride (the church in Revelation 19:6-10). The fact that a wedding is the chosen metaphor makes it clear that there are distinctly male and female parties. For the Jews it would have been assumed that a wedding, the covenant ceremony that joins two parties, joins together in marriage one male and one female. With that said, in this metaphor the bride (the church) is female and the Lamb (Christ) is male. Take note of the male and female realities of Revelation 19:7-9:

> [7] *Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory,*
> *because the marriage of the Lamb has come,*
> *and his bride has prepared herself.*
> [8] *She was given fine linen to wear, bright and pure.*
> *For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.*
> [9] *Then he said to me, "Write: Blessed are those invited to the marriage feast of the Lamb!" He also said to me, "These words of God are true."*

In this passage, we are given an initial taste of male and female as types that guide and point the church to Christ through their gender.

Even more, female is used symbolically as an eschatalogical marker. In this way the female is used by John as representing both people (bride) and realm (new Jerusalem). This symbolism is used as a way to call to the male, gesturing him to his ultimate end and purpose as Christ's bride. Aimee Byrd writes:

> *Woman was created second as an eschatological marker…indeed "all things" will be made new in the consummation of history…woman represents the second order, arrayed with glory and radiance of the Son (Revelation 21:11). Her very presence is a beckoning to the telos of mankind.*[220]

Revelation is clear: the female type is the guiding light into our understanding of being united with Christ as his bride.

217 Eschatology: a term used to denote the theology that is concerned with the end times and topics that come with it: death, resurrection, judgment, new creation, etc.

218 Typology: a term that revolves around a particular kind of symbol known as a 'type.' These symbols are unique in the biblical story, as they are a 'type' of something else (*i.e.* something that represents something else).

219 Byrd, The Sexual Reformation, 43-44.

220 Byrd, The Sexual Reformation, 179.

And Revelation doesn't stop there. Female is the bride, but she is also the realm that is reconciled to Christ in the new creation. For example, Revelation 21:2 describes the new Jerusalem as female:

> *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.* [2] *I also saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband.*

And Revelation 2:9-12:

> [9] *Then one of the seven angels, who had held the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me: "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* [10] *He then carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,* [11] *arrayed with God's glory. Her radiance was like a precious jewel, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.* [12] *The city had a massive high wall, with twelve gates. Twelve angels were at the gates; the names of the twelve tribes of Israel's sons were inscribed on the gates.*

For John, the female is a marked symbol, who represents and points to the uniting of a new creation to Christ in the form of the precious, glorious, holy city called the new Jerusalem. John uses female in such a way to guide us to see that she is an eschatological marker. In this way she symbolically represents both the bride of Christ (people) and the new Jerusalem (realm), who are to be united with Christ perfectly into eternity. The female gestures to us, beckons us, and points us home to that reality.

Thus, female is not only metaphorically significant, but equally, it holds that the female herself has the joyful and significant role of representing Christ's bride in her lived reality. She gestures the male to herself, calling him to join her as the bride ready to receive Christ. She is a marker of Christ's bride, guiding the church to Christ at the wedding, the joining together of the people of God and the new heavens and the new earth in the joyful celebration of full restoration.[221]

PAULINE ESCHATOLOGY: MALE TYPOLOGY

Just as Revelation helps us to see the typological and symbolic representation of the female, the writings of Paul help us gain an understanding of this same representation for the male. As previously remarked, throughout the biblical story male and female is used as a metaphor for the covenant relationship of Christ and his bride. In Revelation we found that the female is a type and a symbol of Christ's bride. She is an eschatological marker guiding the male to embrace his role as Christ's bride. Distinctly, for Paul, male is an eschatological marker of the second Adam (Christ).

Consider the most eschatologically rich chapter in Paul's writing: 1 Corinthians 15. To the church in Corinth, Paul is clarifying what happens at the time of resurrection. In the middle of this chapter, he turns toward the topic of the resurrected body:

> *If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.* [45] *So it is written,* ***The first man Adam became a living being;*** *the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* [46] *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, then the spiritual.*

221 Byrd, The Sexual Reformation, 175-178.

> [47] *The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven.* [48] *Like the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; like the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.* [49] *And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.*

First, it is important to respond to the question: is Paul saying we have no body in the resurrected state? In short, no. Instead, Paul says that the present physical body is one born through natural realities. But, the future resurrected body, as the one that Christ has in his resurrected state, is one born by the Spirit not of natural birth. Thus, the resurrection body is still a physical body, but is born through the Spirit.[222]

Second, the first Adam was a male, and the last Adam (Christ) was also a male. For Paul, Christ is the last Adam who does what the first Adam could not do, and so, offering full restoration. Thus, the male is a type — a particular kind of symbol that represents Christ. The male points to Christ and his work of restoring the world back to God through his self-giving sacrifice. Ultimately, the male calls out to the female, beckoning her to embrace Christ and his work to reconcile the world to God. How does the male do this? Not just by being a type of Christ, but living out that symbolism in doing exactly what Christ did for his bride: being faithful to the bride and the first to lay down his life for her (1 John 3:16; John 15:13).

Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...."

Deeply rooted in the culmination of the biblical story is the understanding that male and female hold eschatological significance. Male and female are not cast aside in the new creation, rather, they find their purpose and fulfillment in that future reality. The female gestures the church to Christ as his bride. In the opposite way, the male is a type of Christ. And therefore, guides the church to Christ, the Lamb who was faithful and the first to offer himself for the world and his bride.

UNDERSTANDING MALE AND FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NEW CREATION

The eschatological significance of male and female being types that highlight the glory of Christ and his church is a guidepost. A question remains: what does this mean for male and female relationships in the new creation? Paul writes in Galatians 3:27-29:

> [27] *For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ.* [28] *There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus.* [29] *And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.*

He writes in a sister passage in 1 Corinthians 12:13-14: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free — and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Indeed, the body is not one part but many."

222 There are other canonical connections that can be pointed to: most importantly, Jesus' own physically resurrected body. Also, the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37. Both of these contribute in different ways to a biblical theology of physical resurrection.

A few things are made clear in these passages. First, in their resurrected state, male and female share in the same resurrection body as Christ. The importance of this is twofold. They both share in the fullness of the resurrected state, regardless of gender. They are also both full participants in Christ's body as the church. Male and female experience the fullness of resurrection, both in their own bodies and as participants in Christ's body.

Second, they share the same Holy Spirit. There are not different spirits for male and female, there is one Holy Spirit; and this Spirit celebrates male and female while being unified in himself. Third, Paul is communicating there is no hierarchy or priority of male over female or female over male in Christ's body (the church). Cynthia Long Westfall writes in *Paul and Gender*:

> *It follows that our representation of Christ is based on our hope in him, and we share the same hope that we will be like him, male or female...there is no priority or entitlement for men and no hint of any primogeniture in gender relationships in Pauline eschatological fulfillment.*[223]

Any form of patriarchalism is a result of the fall and not of God's original design.

Fourth, resurrected genders both share together in Christ's destiny, which would be that they have the same resurrection life.[224] For Paul, all those who are in Christ, found in His body, are coheirs with him. He writes in Romans 8:15-17:

> [15] *For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!"* [16] *The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children,* [17] *and if children, also heirs — heirs of God and coheirs with Christ . . .*

The resurrection life that is promised is the same for male and female. Both are coheirs with Christ, without priority of male over the female. Same resurrection life; same identity as coheirs.

Notice as well the use of the language of God's children. Paul understands that having faith in Christ is to be adopted into being a member of God's family. Being adopted into God's family is a theme that runs richly throughout the biblical story. Paul takes it up regarding our future reality in the new creation by saying the relationship between male and female that continues into the new creation, as members of God's family, is that of children. Or in other words, brother and sister.

According to Paul, when male and female experience the fullness of life with Christ in the new creation, they will be fully restored to glory and completely free from sin. They will live as coheirs with Christ and relate to one another as children of God, brothers and sisters.[225]

223 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 150.

224 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 149.

225 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 150-152.

UNDERSTANDING BODIES IN THE NEW CREATION

Another question remains: what does this mean for male and female bodies in the new creation? It is commonly held that males and females will not procreate in the new heavens and the new earth.[226] Does this mean that we no longer need to be male and female?

Certainly, male and female have the functional ability and mandate from God to procreate (Genesis 1:27-28). But is procreation the only purpose of male and female? While gender is not less than that, it is certainly is not the only word the biblical story speaks. If it was, then why would God create humanity male and female only to be eradicated in the resurrected state? If God made male and female good when all was perfect, then why would he change that when all is restored to that perfection?

The pattern of Scripture does not do away with gender, but it continues to reveal its significance. In both John's writing in Revelation and Paul's eschatological writings, female and male are not eradicated, but both are purposefully used and find their fulfillment in the new creation. God created humanity male and female, and so it should not be assumed that male and female would cease to exist more than we would assume Jesus' resurrected body is not a male's body.

The biblical story even speaks to those who find themselves unable to fit into male or female, and whether their story involves gender dysphoria, intersex, or another, they do not find an easily identifiable home. In the heart of the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah shares an eschatological message (Isaiah 56:3-5):

> [3] *No foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord*
> *should say,*
> *"The Lord will exclude me from his people,"*
> *and the eunuch should not say,*
> *"Look, I am a dried-up tree."*
> [4] *For the Lord says this:*
> *"For the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,*
> *and choose what pleases me,*
> *and hold firmly to my covenant,*
> [5] *I will give them, in my house and within my walls,*
> *a memorial and a name*
> *better than sons and daughters.*
> *I will give each of them an everlasting name*
> *that will never be cut off.*

God has a future and a purpose for those who feel like they do not fit in. Three things are true. First, it is clear that procreation is not the sole purpose of gender expression. Instead, from the beginning of Genesis, God makes clear that productivity in the creation mandate is far more than procreation. God has a special place for those who live into singleness or do not bear children.

226 McKnight, *The Heaven Promise*, 162-170.

Second, Isaiah highlights the family of God. The relationships that continue into new creation is that of being children of God (as Paul says), or as Isaiah says, "sons and daughters." Third, those who do not find themselves easily identifying with those words are not left out of the promises of God. Instead, God has a promise: they will be given a better name and a better heritage. These people will be children in the family of God forever.

Nothing about gender goes to waste in God's plan. Male and female find their fulfillment as brothers and sisters, and those who do not see themselves as fitting in as brothers and sisters are given a better name and, equally and perhaps even more gloriously, remain in the family of God as children forever.

CONCLUSION: THE DESTINY OF MALE AND FEMALE

From the beginning of the biblical story, male and female have a destiny. In Genesis 1:27-28, God makes it clear that male and female are both made in the image of God. God blessed both male and female, and he gave them dominion over the earth together. When we take into consideration the vision of the new creation that the biblical story offers, the eschatological future of male and female is powerful: they exercise authority and power and dominion as being made in the image of God, while being eternally found in Christ.[227]

Male and female experience the fullness of Christ's own destiny, which celebrates and does not suppress or remove their gendered bodies. Both male and female have a typological and symbolic significance that points people to Christ and his church now. Aimee Byrd says it this way:

> *Something both visible and invisible is represented in our beings. Our bodies are theological.... [Timothy Tennant, For The Body] "To put it simply a theology of the body means that we understand the body as not merely a biological category but supremely as a theological category, designed for God's revelatory and saving purposes."*

Gender not only serves humanity biologically, it simultaneously serves us theologically. Gender points us beyond ourselves to the work of Christ and the church. The reconciliation of all things to God through Christ orients gender, guides its expression, and communicates its significance and value for our bodies today.

227 Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 152.

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