

The Genesis of Equality, Part 1

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The painful and seemingly unending division among evangelicals over the relationship of the sexes is bedeviled by disputes about the interpretation of key biblical texts, most notably 1 Tim 2:9–15.¹ However, how this Pauline text is understood depends more than anything else on how Gen 1–3 is understood. For complementarians² what makes Paul’s prohibition on women teaching and exercising authority in church universally and transculturally binding is the premise that in creation, before the Fall, God gave the man authority over the woman. The importance for complementarians of the belief that woman was subordinated to man before the Fall cannot be overestimated. In stressing the vital nature of this argument for complementarians, Daniel Doriani notes that “nineteen of the twenty two authors” in the definitive collection of essays, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, argue for the subordination of women “on the basis of creation, or the order or creation. . . .”³

Egalitarian evangelicals entirely agree with complementarians that no text in all of scripture is more important than Gen 1–3 in working out the God-given ideal for the man-woman relationship. The two groups simply disagree on how these chapters are to be interpreted.

Genesis 1

Gen 1 is rightly seen as a prologue to the whole Bible. It is put first because what it teaches is of first importance.⁴ It tells us that everything is created by God, that what God creates is good and that the apex of God’s creative work is humankind, man and woman standing side by side—one species, two sexes. In Gen 1:27 we read,

So God created humankind (*’adam*⁵),
in the image of God he created *them*;
male and female he created them.

The pre-eminence of humankind is suggested by them being created last as the apex of God’s creative work, by the fact that only man and woman are said to be made in “the image and likeness of God” (1:26), and because God gives to them dominion over the earth and all living creatures (1:28).

Exactly what is meant by saying that man and woman are made in “the image (*tselem*) and likeness (*demuth*) of God” has aroused much debate. It is an especially bold assertion

Thus what we have in this primary and definitive scriptural comment on the sexes is the strongest imaginable affirmation of the equal status of man and woman (“in the image of God he created them”), of male-female differentiation (“male and female he created them”) and of their conjoint authority over creation (“let them have dominion”).

in light of OT prohibition on making images. Images were proscribed because to make an image of God identified the Creator with creation (Exod 20:1–4). The most widely supported view is that to say man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God indicates that they have been given dominion or lordship over the world. Together they have been created to exercise God’s rule as his vice-regents. This interpretation is suggested not only by ancient Middle

Eastern parallels where an image of the king represents his dominion, but also because immediately after stating that man and woman are made in the image and likeness of God, God gives them dominion (*radah*) over all living creatures (1:26), commanding them to rule (*kabash*) over all the earth (1:28). Note that rather than being differentiated in authority, Gen 1 gives to man and woman the same authority. One does not rule over the other. They rule conjointly. One leading complementarian comes to the same conclusion: By placing his image on the man and the woman and by setting them in a

particular environment, therefore, God assigns to them the mandate of *representative rule*. This rule is the *joint function* of the man and the woman.⁶

In addition to the command to subdue and rule the earth, man and woman are together commanded to “be fruitful and multiply.” No mention is made of any separation of roles in being “fruitful.” Ruling and procreating are roles or functions given to men and women alike in God’s good creation.

Thus what we have in this primary and definitive scriptural comment on the sexes is the strongest imaginable affirmation of the equal status of man and woman (“in the image of God he created them”), of male-female differentiation (“male and female he created them”) and of their conjoint authority over creation (“let them have dominion”). Their equality cannot be taken simply to be a spiritual equality, an “equality before God.” The man and the woman are depicted as standing side by side, head erect in the world God has created, and it is over this world they are conjointly to rule. Indeed, Gen 1:27–28 speaks of the equality of man and woman in *being* and in *function*.

Another well-known complementarian writes, “male-female equality does not constitute undifferentiated sameness. There is a profound and beautiful distinction” between the sexes.⁷ All evangelical egalitarians would completely agree.

Male and female equality and differentiation are both creation givens. It thus follows that both equality and differentiation are to be honored, maintained and seen as God's good gifts.

Likewise, egalitarians would agree with complementarians that although the term "complementary" is not found in the text of Gen 1 the idea is unmistakably present. Man and woman *complete* what it means to be human. The writer of course assumes that every reader knows that man or woman alone cannot procreate. Each needs the other to fulfil or "complete" this divine mandate. Their complementarity, however, is more than biological. The fact that the two sexes are made joint rulers over God's world may imply each makes a distinctive contribution to this task; they complement each other in serving God. What together they bring to this task is more than the sum of the parts; it is synergistic.

On the interpretation of Gen 1, evangelical egalitarians and complementarians are basically in agreement. The opening chapter of the Bible speaks of the equality of the sexes, their differentiation as man and woman and their complementarity. We are agreed that there is nothing in this chapter that speaks of the subordination of women. On the interpretation of chs. 2 and 3, however, evangelical egalitarians and complementarians come to opposing conclusions.

Hermeneutical guidelines for Genesis 2 and 3

Gen 2:4–24 gives a different account of creation than Gen 1. How this second creation story is to be rightly understood is hotly disputed. Walter Brueggemann says,

No text in Genesis (or likely in the whole Bible) has been more used, interpreted and misunderstood than this text. It has received from the dogmatic tradition such an overlay of messages that the first and perhaps most important task of interpretation is to distinguish between the statement of the text and the superstructure laid upon it.⁸

With this warning ringing in our ears, we must ask, how can this text be approached to hear what the text is actually saying? I suggest the following hermeneutical guidelines.

1. Gen 2 and 3 are to be understood as complementing ch. 1. Thus no interpretation of anything in chs. 2–3 should be taken to contradict or correct anything clearly taught in ch. 1. To put it positively, ch. 1 should be taken as the best guide to how chs. 2–3 are interpreted.

2. The text of Gen 2 and 3 and the traditional interpretation of details in these chapters are not to be equated. All evangelicals can agree on the authority of the text itself. What is disputed in this chapter is the interpretation of the text. To hear the text rightly we must strive not to go beyond what the text says.

3. NT quotations or allusions to Gen 1–3 do not prescribe the interpretation of these chapters⁹ any more than what Paul says on the image of God, for example, prescribes how the image of God should be understood in Gen 1:26–27.¹⁰ The Genesis text, and other OT texts quoted in the NT, must be interpreted in terms of what they actually say and how they would have been understood by the authors and the original readers in their own historical setting. Notwithstanding, here is no reason to dispute

any reference Paul makes in these chapters from Genesis. For example, the Apostle says in his first epistle to Timothy, "Adam was formed first then Eve" (2:13), and then adds, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (2:14). In these words Paul reflects what is said in Genesis.¹¹ *Why* Paul alluded to these details in the second creation story and *what* they are supposed to imply in his interchange with the Christians in Ephesus is not a question the exegete can discover simply by studying Gen 2 and 3. Their force and application

are to be discovered by a close study of 1 Timothy. It would seem that Paul appeals to these details in the creation story to rebuke the women in Ephesus who were putting themselves first when they had been "deceived" by the false teachers Timothy had been sent to oppose.¹² 1 Cor 11:8 also raises no difficulties. Gen 2 does have woman being made "from" man and "for" man, as Paul notes. However, on mentioning this fact Paul then adds, "Nevertheless (*plēn*)¹³ in the LORD [that is, in the new creation] woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman" (11:11–12).

4. And lastly, in seeking to hear what Gen 2 and 3 actually say, the term "role" must be absolutely excluded. In sociology this term refers to characteristic behavior that can change. If this is how the word is being used by complementarians, as a novice to this debate might assume, then it suggests that human beings are called simply to play the role of being a man or woman, that sexual identity is not God-given. The novice would not know that complementarians in fact use the word "role" in a way endorsed by no dictionary to speak of permanent power relations. These "roles" are allocated by birth as a man or a woman. Why, we might ask, speak of "differing roles" when referring to differing authority? The term "role" should not be used in interpreting Gen 1–3 for at least three reasons. First, because both creation stories are given to make the point that God has made us men and women; sexual differentiation is not a role open to change.¹⁴ Second, because the way complementarians use this word obscures what is really being said. Instead of saying plainly that God has subordinated women to men we are told God has given differing roles to men and women. And third, because

using a word that has specialized meaning in the theatre and in sociology, but no specific meaning in biblical scholarship, is bound to corrupt the work of exegesis. I agree with the complementarian OT scholar who has said, “in the cause of truth we should give up talking about the roles of the sexes.”¹⁵

What Genesis 2 and 3 actually say and teach

In Gen 1, God’s creative work takes place in orderly succession, culminating with the creation of man and woman. In contrast, Gen 2–3 is a narrative, a story unfolding in seven scenes. In Gen 1 we find the repeated refrain that everything God made was “good” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). What God created was perfect and complete—“very good” (1:31). The narrative of chs. 2–3, rather than emphasizing perfection, begins by allowing that God has to perfect his creation which was at first incomplete. Consider Gen 2:5, “Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground...” (NIV). The unfolding narrative tells how God step by step put all this right. God creates the solitary Adam to till the ground and plants a garden, giving to it vegetation, trees and rivers. But something is still missing; the narrator has God himself tell the reader what this is. “It is not good that Adam should be alone” (2:18). To meet this deficiency God first creates the animals which Adam names. However, none of the animals prove suitable as a partner for him.

“Partner” is a good translation of the Hebrew *‘ezer kenegdo*. The first word of this phrase is commonly translated “helper.” A helper can be a superior, an equal or a subordinate. Many instances of *‘ezer* in the Bible refer to God as helper, a superior coming to the aid of a subordinate. In Gen 2:18–20, the qualifying word *kenegdo* makes clear what the author intended. Adam needs a helper who is his equal and complementary counterpart. One complementarian scholar agrees, noting Adam’s need for a helper “matching him.”¹⁶ The narrator is thus implying that God is the helper superior to Adam; the animals are helpers inferior to Adam; woman is the helper equal with Adam.

To meet Adam’s need for a true partner, God takes the initiative by creating the woman. The making of the woman by God from Adam’s rib, more precisely from his “side” (*tsela*), affirms that the woman, like Adam, is directly created by God. On seeing the woman, Adam jubilantly exclaims in Hebrew poetic form, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman (*’ishah*), for she was taken out of man (*’ish*)” (2:23). The words “flesh of my flesh” reflect biblical ideas of kinship, shared status. Adam recognizes another human being like himself, a person made of the “same stuff” as he is. He does not name her, but jubilantly exclaims that she is *’ishah*/woman having been taken from *’ish* /man and thus his counterpart. These are the customary words in Hebrew to differentiate man and woman; neither term is a personal name. Adam names the woman

“Eve” after the Fall (Gen 3:20). What Adam says on seeing the woman implies the substantial equality of the sexes and their God-given differentiation as man and woman, not the subordination of the woman.

In a similar word play in Gen 2:7, Adam/*’adam* is said to be made from the earth/*’adamah*, and in this case the one who comes from the earth is to rule over the earth. Derivation does not imply subordination. As a postscript the narrator adds a comment about marriage: “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh” (2:24). The notion of complementarity cannot be missed. From the two, something new is created, a partnership, a complementary union in which the man adds to the woman’s life and the woman adds to the man’s life, and procreation is made possible.

Only at this point in the story is *’adam* man in distinction to woman, and only at this point do man and woman stand side by side in reciprocal and complementary relationship. There is no hint here of any hierarchical ordering of the sexes. How their co-equal relationship was lost is next explained.

In Gen 3 we discover that in the Garden is a force opposed to God, yet created by God, and that sin and punishment are possibilities.¹⁷ The narrator begins this scene by introducing someone new to the drama, “the serpent [who is] more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God has made” (3:1). It speaks to the woman, first getting her to doubt what God had commanded, “You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” and then to disbelieve what God had said, “For the day that you eat of it you shall die” (2:17). She succumbs to the temptation and eats of the fruit of the tree and “gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate” (3:6). Together and in partnership they disobey God’s command.

Immediately following their mutual disobedience and sin they hear “the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden” (3:8). Both of them hide. Both know they have disobeyed the creator of the Garden. When God asks Adam why he has eaten of the tree (3:11), Adam blames “the woman whom you gave to be with me.” When God addresses Eve she says, “the serpent tricked me.” Confronted with their sin, both the man and the woman try to pass the blame to someone else, but God does not accept this. He holds them both personally responsible. No excuse can minimize their solemn, personal and direct answerability to God which is the burden of both man and woman. They are not only equal as fellow human beings but also equal in responsibility for their sin.

God’s word of reproach is given to the three principal actors, now in the order serpent, woman, man. The judgment on the serpent opens with a curse formula (3:14), unlike the words addressed to the man and the woman (3:16–19). God does not curse them but announces the dire consequences of their disobedience. The man will “labor” and work in the fields and not feel he has achieved much (3:17). The woman

will “labor” in childbirth. This will cause her pain, yet she will desire¹⁸ intimacy with her husband who will want to rule over her (3:16). *Note carefully: this is the first and only time in Gen 1–3 the subordination of women is mentioned, and it is presented as a consequence of sin. It is not good; it is not the creation ideal.*

The traditional interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3

The conclusion that Gen 2:4–3:12 does not subordinate women to men before the Fall is now endorsed by almost all scholarly commentators.¹⁹ This is a sharp break from how Gen 2 and 3 were almost universally interpreted until the mid-twentieth century. In times past when patriarchy prevailed, Gen 2 and 3 were interpreted as a corrective to Gen 1, adding something not mentioned in the first account of creation. It was argued that the first creation story spoke of the equality of the sexes before God, a spiritual equality, and the second creation narrative spoke of woman’s subordination in God’s good creation before the Fall. Many mute details in Gen 2 and 3 were taken to indicate that before the Fall the man was set over the woman. In cultural contexts where the subordination of women was taken for granted, these arguments were self-evident and irrefutable. In contrast, in cultural contexts where the substantial equality of the sexes is normative, most commentators do not consider such arguments worth mentioning. The most common of these antiquated arguments are:²⁰

1. Adam is put in charge of the Garden. Adam indeed appears first in the Garden, but the whole narrative is about how Adam alone is “help-less.” The story reaches its climax when the man and woman stand side by side. To conclude that Adam was in authority over the woman because God spoke first to him after the Fall (3:9) is unconvincing. In the dramatic telling of the story in seven scenes the order in which the actors appear or are addressed changes constantly. If who appears first or second in each scene is highly significant, then some weighty point would need to be discovered in each instance; this cannot be done.

2. Woman was created second; therefore she is second in rank, subordinate. In Gen 1 humankind is created last yet is supreme, and in Gen 2 man is created after the earth yet rules over it. Chronological order does not imply subordination. John Calvin, with characteristic sharpness of mind, says the “argument that woman is subject because she was created second, does not seem very strong for John the Baptist went before Christ in time and yet was far inferior to him.”²¹

3. It was Adam who named the animals and the woman, and naming implies dominance or authority. It is unlikely that naming signifies authority,²² but even if it did, the woman did not exist when Adam named the animals. Adam names the woman after the Fall (Gen 3:20). What is more, this understanding of naming would make

Gen 2 directly contradict Gen 1:26–28 where God gives dominion over the animals to man and woman alike.

4. Woman was made for man, not man for woman. Yes, woman was made “for” Adam because he was “help-less,” inadequate on his own. And yes, Paul says this in making his argument that women should cover their heads when they lead in prayer and prophecy in church. However, he then says, almost as if correcting himself, “For just as woman came from man [in the Gen 2 narrative] so [now] man comes through woman” (1 Cor 11:12).

5. Woman was created as man’s helper, and helpers are subordinates. As noted previously, a helper can be a superior, an equal or a subordinate. The Hebrew of Gen 2:18–20 implies an equal helper and thus is best translated “partner.”

6. The Serpent tempted the woman because she was more prone to sin and error. An opposite and equally biased inference would be that the Serpent reasoned that if it could tempt the woman to sin the man would be a pushover. It took a superhuman being to lead the woman into sin; the man only needed another human being to suggest the idea.

Speaking specifically of these tendentious interpretations of mute details in Gen 2 and 3, Brueggemann says, “such exegesis betrays the text and is a good example of the ways our values and presuppositions control our exegesis.”²³ Despite the fact that the vast majority of contemporary scholarly commentators reject all of these insupportable impositions on the text, most complementarians support all or most of them, often adding one or two more.²⁴ They have to do this; they have no other option because their whole case for the permanent subordination of women is grounded on the premise that in creation, before the Fall, God gave the man authority over the woman, that the subordination of women is the creation ideal and thus continues even after the advent of Jesus Christ.

Before moving on, a crucial observation must be made: If women’s subordination is predicated on the subordination of the first woman before the Fall, then all women are subordinated to all men. Women’s subordination cannot be limited solely to marriage and the church. It is prescriptive for all of creation. It speaks of how the created world should be ordered. This was well-nigh universally believed until recent times. Christian men long opposed women rulers, women having the vote, women entering politics or various professions, and women’s access to higher education, because men believed God created woman as a class to be the subordinate sex.²⁵ The complementarian argument that women’s creation-based subordination only applies to marriage and the church is entirely novel and counter to their own most fundamental theological premise, that the subordination of women is grounded in creation.

The Roman Catholic interpretation of Genesis 1–3

Most complementarians reject outright any criticisms of their interpretation of Gen 1–3 or of the other two or three New Testament texts to which they appeal. In reply to their evangelical critics who give another interpretation of these texts, they accuse them of denying the authority of scripture, warning them that they are on the path that leads to theological liberalism.²⁶ What this counter charge implies needs to be made clear: Evangelicals who give another interpretation of the disputed texts are not simply opposing the complementarian position, they are opposing scripture itself. What *we* teach reflects the mind of God; what *you* teach does not! The consequence of this complementarian doctrinaire dismissal of the exegetical conclusions of fellow evangelicals is that the debate is now completely stalemated. Evangelical egalitarian interpretations of the key texts, no matter how cogent or well supported, are ruled out of court without any need to consider them. In an attempt to get my debating opponents to listen, I now bring a third voice to this crucial matter of the interpretation of Gen 1–3.

In his binding encyclical of 1988, *Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, Pope John Paul II, following the advice of the best of Roman Catholic biblical scholarship, ruled that Genesis teaches the “essential equality” of the two sexes, “their fundamental equality” in marriage, and that the subordination of women is entirely a consequence of the Fall to be opposed.²⁷ On this last matter he says, “the overcoming of this evil inheritance is, generation after generation, the task of every human being, whether woman or man.”²⁸ By endorsing the scholarly contemporary interpretation of Gen 1–3, the Pope broke completely with the interpretation of Gen 2 and 3 that prevailed for centuries. His interpretation of Gen 1 to 3 is now binding on 450 million Roman Catholics. No Roman Catholic commentator can argue otherwise without acknowledging that he or she is contradicting the official teaching of the Catholic Church. What should also be noted before moving on is that this Roman Catholic interpretation of Gen 1–3 is virtually the same as that held by most Protestant exegetes and by all evangelical egalitarians.

Again, like evangelical egalitarians, the Pope not only emphatically endorses the “essential equality” of the sexes, but also their indelible, creation-given differentiation and complementarity. He speaks of “the creator’s decision that human beings should always and only exist as woman or man.”²⁹ In his exposition of Gen 2 he says the creation of the woman supplies what is lacking in the solitary Adam, a partner “in common humanity,” yet woman and not man.³⁰ Then referring to the penultimate verse in Gen 2, the Pope writes, “the biblical account speaks of God instituting marriage as an indispensable condition for the transmission of life to a new generation.”³¹ In marriage there is a “unity of the two,” a reflection of the trinitarian communion of love that is God. “In the unity of the two, man and woman are called from the

beginning not only to ‘exist side by side,’ or ‘together,’ but they are also called to exist mutually ‘one for the other.’”³²

The hermeneutical guidelines the Pope lays down are important to note. He first of all rules that in interpreting Gen 1–3, “no essential contradiction between the two texts” (Gen 1 and 2–3) can be allowed. And second, to ensure this is the case, Gen 2:18–24 should be interpreted in “the light” of Gen 1 which unambiguously speaks of the “essential equality” of the sexes and of their “shared dominion.” When read on this basis, he says, Gen 2:18–25 “helps us to understand better what we find in the concise passage of Genesis 1:27–28.” We see “even more profoundly the fundamental truth” that man and woman are essentially equal before the Fall.³³

What Roman Catholics have now concluded to be the right interpretation of Gen 1–3 is tremendously important for all Christians. It means that on this question, most scholarly commentators, all evangelical egalitarians and all Roman Catholics are basically of one mind. Gen 1–3 speaks of the essential and substantial equality of the sexes, their indelible differentiation, and their complementarity, seeing the subordination of women as entirely a consequence of the Fall.

Unfortunately, when Pope John Paul II addresses the ordination of women to the priesthood he lacks consistency. In response to the pressing calls to open up this issue he published in 1994 another encyclical, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis: On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone*.³⁴ He rules that only men can be priests. The reasons he gives are, 1. ordaining men only to the priesthood is the constant tradition of the church; 2. Jesus appointed men only to be numbered among the twelve apostles; 3. the twelve apostles formed a “ministerial priesthood,” as did those whom they “chose [to be] fellow workers who would succeed them in their ministry.”³⁵ He asserts that appointing men only to the priesthood on this basis in no way denigrates women or indicates their subordinate status.³⁶ Most people believe it does both these things. It would seem that the Pope wants to endorse on the basis of Gen 1–3 the essential and substantive equality of the sexes in the home and the world, but when it comes to the church he cannot allow women to be priests, the highest honor in the Roman Catholic Church.

What the Pope and complementarians teach on women in leadership in the church is to be contrasted not compared. First, they categorically differ on what is to be denied to women. The Pope excludes women from being priests because he cannot allow women to preside at the Eucharist, the most important aspect of Catholic worship. Complementarians exclude women from being pastors because they cannot allow them to preach or teach in church, what is most important in church worship for them. And second, they categorically differ on why women must be denied these things. For the Pope, women cannot be priests and thus preside at the Eucharist because he holds that the twelve male apostles were the first priests. For complementarians, women cannot be

pastors and thus preach or teach in church because women are the subordinate sex; they should not lead a congregation. For the Pope, women are not subordinated to men, the two sexes are essential equals; for complementarians, the pastor is not a priest and the Lord's Supper is not a sacrificial offering to God. The question these observations raise is this: Is the opposition to women in church leadership predicated on an agreed undisclosed premise—namely that women should be excluded from doing what is thought to be most important in church gatherings—and then theological reasons for such exclusions are found in Catholic and Protestant theology which sound plausible?

Conclusion

The information outlined above indicates that Gen 1–3 speaks of the substantial and essential equality of the two sexes, the subordination of women being entirely a consequence of the Fall. The evidence is compelling and the support far reaching. This is a devastating finding for contemporary complementarians who ground their entire case for the permanent subordination of women on the premise that before the Fall woman was subordinated to man. According to their interpretation of Gen 2–3 the hierarchical ordering of the sexes is the creation-given ideal that is universally and transculturally binding on all Christians. If this conclusion is exegetically mistaken and untrue then the complementarian position is an impressive edifice without any biblical or theological foundation. It is bound to collapse.

Notes

1. I thank Denise Cooper-Clark, Paul Collier, Lindsay Wilson and Richard Hess for reading this essay and making helpful suggestions. Part 2 of this article, to be published in the next edition of *Priscilla Papers*, examines the key terms “equality,” “difference,” “role” and “complementarity.”

2. In this essay, I speak of those who argue for the creation-given subordination of women as “complementarians” because since 1990 this has been their self-designation. This term, however, is problematic, for who would deny that the sexes complement each other? Evangelical egalitarians certainly endorse the complementarity of the sexes. Indeed, the definitive collection of evangelical egalitarian essays, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, is subtitled, “Complementarity without Hierarchy” (Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca M. Groothuis, eds. [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005]).

3. Daniel Doriani, “A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* (ed. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, H. S. Baldwin; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 258, n. 180, in reference to John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991).

4. The discipline of Canonical Criticism supports this conclusion. How the Bible's story is told is part of divine revelation. See R. Schultz, “What is ‘Canonical’ about Canonical Biblical Theology?” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. S. J. Hafemann; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 83–99; B. S. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in Canonical Context* (London: SCM, 1992).

5. No longer can the Hebrew word *adam* in Gen 1:26 and 27 be accurately translated into English as “man” because the English word

“man” has become identified with the male sex. In Gen 1 to 3 *adam* is used in three ways: of humanity which is either male or female, of the solitary “man” of Gen 3:7–20 who is depicted as incomplete and “help-less” apart from woman, and as the personal name of the husband of Eve, a name implied in Gen 3 and made explicit in Gen 4:25. Nothing should be made of the fact that the Hebrew *adam* is a masculine noun; grammatical gender is not prescriptive of sexual identity and Hebrew has no other word for humanity. See R. Hess, “Splitting the Adam: The Usage of *ADAM* in Genesis i–v,” in *Studies in the Pentateuch* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup XLI; Leiden: Brill, 1990), 1–15.

6. Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage and the Family* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 34. Italics added.

7. Raymond Ortland, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood*, 99.

8. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teachers and Preachers* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 41.

9. For more on the appropriation of Gen 1–3 in the NT see V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (NICOT 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 182–85.

10. Modern scholarly commentators are basically agreed that how Paul may understand what it means to be made in the image of God does not prescribe the historical meaning of Gen 1:27–28. Paul speaks of the image of God at least six times. Once he speaks of men bearing the image of God and women the glory of God (1 Cor 11:7). This could be, and has been, taken to mean women do not bear the image of God, which would contradict Gen 1:26–27. In 2 Cor 3:18 and Col 3:10 he speaks of Christians being renewed in the image of God, whereas in Genesis even after the Fall humankind is still considered to be made in God's image (Gen 9:6). Twice Paul speaks of Christ as the image of God (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15), something Gen 1 does not envisage. Paul often gives an interpretation of an OT passage counter to the historical meaning of the original (e.g., 1 Cor 10:1–6, Gal 4:21–31, Eph 4:8). Consider also that one OT text can be interpreted by NT writers in more than one way; Abraham's faith is a classic example (Rom 4:1–24, Gal 3:1–18, Heb 11:8–12, Jas 2:18–25).

11. Although the Genesis text arguably presents Adam as also deceived.

12. The exceptional verb *authenthein* in 1 Tim 2:10 speaks of usurped authority and thus bears the force of putting yourself first. See Philip Payne, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 385–94. On this passage, see Payne, *Man and Woman*, 291–360.

13. This Greek word signifies a break with what has just been said to give another perspective that is central to an argument. See Payne, *Man and Woman*, 189.

14. I am of course not suggesting that how our sexual identities are expressed at differing times and in differing cultures cannot change or differ. In the second part of this essay I will consider in more detail the inappropriateness of the term “role” to speak of male-female differences.

15. Werner Neurer, *Man and Woman in Christ in Christian Perspective* (trans. Gordon Wenham; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), 30.

16. Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–5* (WBC 1; Dallas: Word, 1987), 68.

17. This reminds us of the eschatological nature of salvation history. The perfecting of creation lies in the consummation of the new creation on the last day. We do not look back to the first creation to find God's perfected world, but to the future when there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

18. Much ink has been spilt by complementarians arguing that woman's desire after the Fall is to rule over her husband. Based on linguistic parallels, I am skeptical of this argument. Like Wenham,

Genesis, 82, I see it as only a possibility, not able to be proven. However, even if accepted it is not an interpretation inimical to egalitarians. They believe the creation ideal before the Fall is an equal relationship. If after the Fall the woman desires to rule over the man, that is as much a reflection of sin as is the man ruling over the woman.

19. In post 1980 commentaries see Brueggemann, *Genesis*; J. J. Scullion, *Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers and Preachers* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982); Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*; R. F. Youngblood, *The Book of Genesis* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); M. Maher, *Genesis* (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1982); C. Amos, *The Book of Genesis* (Peterborough, UK: Epworth, 2004); T. L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue* (Oxford: OUP, 2001); T. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis," in *NIB*; R. J. Clifford and R. E. M. O'Carroll, "Genesis," in *NIBC*; W. S. Towner, *Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); M. Kessler and K. Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis* (New York: Paulist, 2004); D. S. Briscoe, *The Communicator's Commentary on Genesis* (Waco: Word, 1987); D. W. Cotter, *Genesis* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2003); L. A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield: Academic, 2000); J. E. Hartley, *Genesis* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000); J. McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); B. T. Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009); J. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. T. Longman and D. E. Garland; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). For the same opinion before 1980 see J. A. Skinner, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930); U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (2 vols.; trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961); B. Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (London: G. Chapman, 1977); R. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973); G. Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John Marks; London: SCM, 1961); E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (AB 1; New York: Doubleday, 1969). In support of Gen 2-3 teaching the pre-Fall subordination of the woman, Wenham sees this suggested only in the naming of the animals and the "naming" of the woman 'ishah (*Genesis*, 68, 81)! He rejects that the Hebrew usually translated "helper" implies a subordinate helper. For a complete endorsement of the complementarian interpretation of Gen 1-3, utilizing the language of role differentiation, see K. A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26* (NAC 1; Nashville: Broadman, 1996), 209-22, and B. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

20. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 41-52, rebuts eleven such arguments. In *Created Woman* (Canberra: Acorn, 1985), I critically evaluate six of these arguments in some detail. In *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 145-54, I document the "traditional" case for women's subordination.

21. John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, and the *Epistles of Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (trans. T. A. Small; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 217.

22. See Richard Hess, "Equality without Innocence: Genesis 1-3," in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 79-95.

23. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 50.

24. In support of this assertion I only reference the most authoritative voices for the complementarian position: Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2004), 102-109, 293-96; Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2006), 35-42; Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 95-112; *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis*, 134-46, 202-205, 246, 259.

25. I document this pre-twentieth century almost universal belief in *The Trinity and Subordinationism*, 145-48.

26. For example, the title of Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism*.

27. Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women* (Homebush, NSW, Boston: St. Paul, 1988), 32-41.

28. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 41.

29. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 7.

30. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 23.

31. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*.

32. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 24-25.

33. John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 21-24.

34. John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis: On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone* (Homebush, NSW, 1994).

35. John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 5-6.

36. John Paul II, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 6.

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Genesis 1:27 is foundational for this discussion, not least because it is the place where "male and female" is first mentioned in Genesis. For clarity, here's the verse (I've used the Revised Standard Version, marking significant words in bold and including the Hebrew + Greek) This progression seems to be part of what the verse is seeking to say. If this distinction and progression were not significant at all in the verse--i.e. if the only important thing about this verse were that humanity is plural--then the second clause would be entirely redundant. Giles adopts a concept of "equality" which by its very nature excludes any notion of gender-based order. Equality of the Sexes A third insight into the theology of human sexuality stems from the equal pairing of male and female in parallel with ha-'adam in Gen 1:27. There is no hint of ontological or functional superiority or inferiority between male and female. Procreation is shown to be part of the divine design for human sexuality--as a special added blessing. This divine blessing/command is to be taken seriously and acted upon freely and responsibly in the power that attends God's blessing.²⁵ But sexuality cannot be. See especially Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI, 1978). While Genesis 1 teaches the equality of the sexes as God's image-bearers and vice-rulers on the earth, Genesis 2 adds another, complex dimension to Biblical manhood and womanhood. The paradox is this: God created male and female in His image equally, but He also made the male the head and the female the helper. The ranking within the Godhead is a part of the sublime beauty and logic of true deity. And if our Creator exists in this manner, should we be surprised and offended if His creaturely analog on earth exists in paradoxical form? But what does evangelical feminism have to say about Genesis 2?