

Gender Issues in Genesis

Chapters 1 to 3

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Introduction and Purpose

Are men and women created equal? Has God intended that men be in authority over women and husbands over their wives? What is woman's legitimate role in Christian society, in the Church? Are the scriptures unfairly gender biased? For most of Christian history, the answers to these questions presupposed male dominion. However, in today's society of gender egalitarianism and affirmative feminism, these questions must be examined closely and one must beware of a casual stance. The purpose of this paper is to examine the Creation Accounts and The Fall in concert with the rest of scripture in order to illuminate relational issues between the sexes with respect to God's created order, and how the fall into sin and redemption in Christ, has affected these. As this is a controversial and much addressed topic in the church today, it is not the purpose of this paper to exhaustively examine the full scope of opinions on these matters, but to look at only the theologically prevalent ones coming out of Genesis 1 to 3 that defer to the supreme authority of scripture. Positions that undertake to subvert the biblical text will not be examined.

First Creation Account

The first chapter of Genesis clearly portrays God creating in such a way that mankind is the crowning achievement of creation. The climax is the creation of man. Mankind is the supreme living creature and the pinnacle of God's creation. The words of creation "and God said..." are repeated in poetic fashion as creation unfolds and culminates in "Then God said '*Let us make man in our image...*'" (Gen 1:26) Now God announces to the Heavenly Court that He is about to do something that requires a special reflection. It continues:

"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea.....and over all the creatures..." "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26,27)

It must be noted that God created the bipolarity of the sexes from the beginning. The notion of an ideal androgynous man being later split into two sexes cannot be sustained from the text¹. The plural ('he created them') is intentionally contrasted with the singular ('him'). The sexual distinction is there from the beginning and is a part of being human.

Most importantly we see that this first account ascribes absolute equality to the sexes. There is not even a hint of superiority or inferiority between male and female. Both are “equally immediate to the Creator and His act”² and share equally in the Image of God. Unfortunately, feminist proponents of the allegation that male domination is biblically supported fail to dwell on this obvious fact. Of the two creation accounts, the first clearly portrays the sexes as being created equal. It is also clear that one of the primary purposes of sexuality is procreation. “Be fruitful and increase in number” is given as a divine blessing and is necessary before the subduing and ruling over the earth can occur. However, as we shall see in the second account, this is not the sole purpose of sexuality. The relational role of the sexes to God and each other is about to unfold. So we see that this first account is a broad brush picture of creation. God is the central character and his personality comes through in his act of creating. God creates. He sees that it is good. He deliberates as he is about to create man. He creates man, male and female. God blesses them. God gives them their royal decree. “be fruitful...fill the earth...subdue it ...rule over... God rests on, and blesses, the seventh day, making it holy. . . What the first account fails to do however is describe the full nature of the relationship between God and man (male & female) and the full nature of the covenant responsibilities given to man. This requires a second account. The second account fills in the detail in the broad brush picture of the first. And it is in the second account that the interpretive difficulties begin in the relationship of the sexes.

The Second Account - Adam & Eve

Genesis 2: 4-25 provides us with a detailed account of the creation of Adam and Eve. From this account various conclusions have been drawn regarding God’s creation intent for the relationship of the sexes.

Prior to addressing these, an outline of the chapter may be helpful:

Outline

Gen: 2: 4-6	Background - no plants, no rain - no man
7	Formed the man, breathed life, man a living being
8-9	planted garden, two trees in middle
10-14	rivers
15-17	man assigned to work garden , commandment given, consequences of disobedience
18	pronouncement: not good that man is alone, God deliberates on creation of helper
19-20	animals named - no suitable helper
21-22	Adam put to sleep, creation of woman
23	Adam’s reaction, naming

¹ Davidson p. 7

² Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (New York, 1964) p. 7.

- 24 For this reason “man will leave..be united...one flesh”
 25 both naked & not ashamed

Synopsis

The story is clearly about the creation of the man and woman. The man is the central character, and the climax comes when God pronounces “:It is not good for the man to be alone” In stark contrast to the “...and God saw that it was good” statements in chapter 1, this statement jolts the reader into attention. Blocher comments “Scripture could not better underline the degree to which solitude contradicts the calling of humanity”³. In contrast to the first account where “male and female he created them”, we now see a timeline and order in the creation of the sexes. Man is created first, is given a job, a commandment, and then the pronouncement is made about solitude being “not good”. God deliberates and creates woman. The man has no part in the creation, he is put to sleep. The woman is derived from him and he recognizes in her his completeness.

Over the centuries, the preponderance of commentators have espoused that Genesis proves God’s intention for a hierarchical relationship of the sexes where woman is subordinate to man. The Patriarchal society encountered in the testament among God’s people confirms this view. Many recent commentators have challenged this interpretation of Genesis 2. Phyllis Tribe⁴ argues that that name Adam is not a proper name but refers to all of mankind, both male and female. Hence both sexes received the assignment and commands in Gen 2:15-16. She then describes the creation of Eve as the “culmination of creation”. This radical departure from the essential nature of the narrative surely does violence to the text itself. How can Adam be described as being put to sleep as Eve is created from his rib if Adam means both male and female? Some of her arguments are picked up by others and can be classified under a number of issues.

Issues

Mary Evans⁵ outlines four main arguments that emerge that have been used to teach subordination:”

- a) Woman is created after the man and is therefore secondary to him
- b) Woman is taken “from the man” and is therefore secondary to him.
- c) Woman is named by the man and is therefore subordinate to him.
- d) Woman is created to be a ‘helper’ for man and as such is subordinate to him.”⁶

³ Blocher, *In the Beginning*, P. 96

⁴ Tribe, Phyllis *Depatriarchalizing the Biblical Interpretation*

⁵ Evans, Mary *Women in the Bible* P. 14

⁶ Evans, *Women in the Bible* P. 16

Davidson adds a fifth, that woman is created from man's rib indicating her dependence on him for life. Do these facts truly support the hierarchical view? Davidson concludes that the Hebrew *inclsio* or 'ring construction' place equal importance on the creation of the man and woman, but further concludes that the climax is the creation of woman: "She is the crowning work of creation"⁷. Surely this is overstated. In the second account, the man has been created, is given a job, a commandment, a functioning relationship with God, and involved in a search through the animal kingdom prior to the woman even being conceived. To conclude that this has no significance in the order of creation is surely to dismiss much of the lesson. I do agree with him that the movement in the narrative is from incompleteness to completeness. Man is alone. This aloneness is not good, hence the creation of woman. To this point we now move.

Order

I believe that the creation temporal order of creation does not imply superiority for the male as some might assume, but it does imply primacy in order and role. Evans argues that temporal priority means nothing, and that if it did, the animals would be superior to man. I agree that absolute temporal priority in a narrative is not significant, but one cannot dismiss the flow of the narrative in determining its primary lessons. Blocher goes further and suggests that the theme of order is vital and alludes to the Apostle Paul's teaching.

"The God of the second tablet is no more a God of disorder than the God of the first tablet. The face to face partnership of man and woman is not a mere reciprocity, equally readable from right to left and left to right. The apostle Paul drew from the narrative the lesson that man is the head of the woman (1Cor 11:3) and the woman must not be entrusted with the authority of the teaching office in the churches were Timothy is working (1 Tim 2:12). We must not give in, through sheer pressure, to the temptation to conceal this fact: this is the teaching of holy scripture, whether or not our age likes it."⁸

The issue is, what does order imply? What does headship imply? One should not assume superiority or inferiority. The use such language does not do justice to the relationship. We already have the lesson from the first creation account of absolute equality of male and female. We will look at these themes shortly.

Derivation

As to woman being created from man's rib and hence owing her existence to the man, we must remember that it is God who does the creating, first of man from dust and secondly from man's rib while

⁷ Davidson, P 15

⁸ Blocher P. 103

he sleeps. This derivation in itself does not imply subordination, but together with the order of creation and the stated purpose for which woman was created does indicate that the woman was created for the man and not the man for the woman. Paul refers to this when he gives his discourse in 1 Cor. 11:7b-9 on man being

“in the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man”

Blocher asserts that “That argument is not a dubious one, and it gives meaning to the order of creation.”⁹ It becomes clear that an order governs the relationship of the sexes, yet this order neither implies superiority nor subordination but does primacy in God’s intended order and role for the man. While each person is in himself or herself equally accountable to God, there is a sense in which the male in a family unit, represents that unit to God and represents the authority of God to the family unit.

Naming

The issue of woman being named by the man and hence subordinate to him must be considered. Does naming imply superiority, authority or dominion? Phyllis Trible¹⁰ concedes that naming is an act of authority, but argues that Gen. 2: 23 is not an instance of naming (in the Hebrew) and that it cannot be used to justify male authority. Ramsay¹¹, in commenting on her argument claims that her conclusion is correct but for the wrong reasons. Ramsay points out that Gen 2:23 is actually an instance of name-giving, but that name giving does not always imply authority over the person or thing named. He points out that often a name is given at the point of relinquishing control over something (as in Jacob’s naming of a well as he gives it over to someone else (Gen 26:17-21). Ramsay concludes that name giving rather indicates the quality of *discernment* of the name giver toward what is named. This approach seems to sit well and fits Adam’s cry of recognition toward the woman in Gen. 2: 23. In any case, the naming in and of itself lends little support to arguments on either side of the male hierarchical issue.

Helper

Finally, we have the issue of woman being created as helper to the man. Even Trible concedes that the English translation “helper” suggests an assistant, subordinate, an inferior but insists that the Hebrew

⁹ Blocher P. 104

¹⁰ Trible, Phyllis, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*

¹¹ Ramsay, George W. *Is Name Giving an Act of Dominion in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere* P. 26

'ezer' does not imply inferior rank and that the second 'kengdo' 'corresponding to him' implies equal rank. David Clines¹² in commenting on Tribble's widely accepted view concludes:

"I conclude, from reviewing all the occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, is that though superiors may help inferiors, strong may help weak, gods may help humans, in the act of helping they are being 'inferior'. That is to say, they are subjecting themselves to a secondary, subordinate position. Their help may be necessary or crucial, but they are *assisting* some task that is already somebody else's responsibility. They are not actually *doing* the task themselves for there is different language for that."¹³

I would agree that the idea of helper gives a connotation of one who assists in a task that is not their prime responsibility. In that sense, it is the male's primary responsibility to fill the earth, subdue it, rule over the animals and have dominion. These commands are given before woman comes on the scene. Adam's search through the animal world for a suitable helper confirms this. However, the man is not complete, and one might be hard pressed to imagine how he could "fill the earth" alone. However, at this point we have been let in on the ending for we have been told already "male and female he created them". The woman is coming, and the story of her creation delineates her role. Clines concludes that procreation is the primary way in which Eve helps Adam.

"From this viewpoint, the Lord says that 'it is not good that the man should be alone', not because Adam is lonely or has no lively intellectual conversation when he comes in from the garden at night but because he will have no chance at all of filling the earth so long as there is only one of him"¹⁴

We must conclude that the Genesis 2 narrative, confers on the man the primary responsibility for carrying out the prescribed tasks. However, it is not good for man to be alone, and so the creation of Eve as a helper "for him" cements the man's positional authority in the relationship.

Positional Authority

This is not inequality. Both are equal, but the man is given positional authority. As Blocher asserts "In the relationship of the sexes, the privilege of authority, which represents God, rests on the side of the male."

Blocher continues to make a vital point:

"...There is a kind of subtle balance. In all earthly relationships, the man represents God more obviously than does the woman: in active transcendence, in keeping an objective distance, in leadership and in work. But we realize at once that it is the woman who best represents humanity in its relationship with God: in the face to face-to-face relationship

¹² Clines, David J.A. *What does Eve Do To Help* P. 30

¹³ *ibid* P. 31

¹⁴ *ibid* P. 35

with the Lord, every human being, male or female, must accept a feminine position, existing from him and for him, receiving and bearing the seed of his word, receiving and bearing the name he gives.”¹⁵

C.S. Lewis articulated this same theme in his essay *Priestesses in the Church?*¹⁶ :

“I am crushingly aware how inadequate most of us (men) are, in our actual and historical individualities to fill the place prepared for us. But it is an old saying in the army that you salute the uniform and not the wearer. Only one wearing the masculine uniform can (provisionally, and till the *parousia*) represent the Lord to the Church: for we are all, corporately and individually, feminine to Him.”

There is no question that positional authority rests with the male. This does not imply superiority, for those in authority are often fully aware of the immense burden they carry. Our Lord’s wrestling in Gethsemane with the task that he was given illustrates the incredible burden of authority. Yet it was Christ who adopted the position of a humble servant, sacrificing himself. This is also true of the Trinity. Jesus said “the Father is in me and I am in the Father”(John 10:38), yet there was no question as to who holds positional authority. So it is with husband and wife. Both are one flesh, yet the male has positional authority. As the apostle Paul pointed out

“ Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and that the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” (I Cor. 11:3)

Clearly this implies positional authority. Evans, Scanozi and Hardesty¹⁷ argue that this headship does not imply authority but conveys the meaning of life-giving source as in Col 2:19 where Christ is the head “from whom the whole body...growths with a growth that is from God”.¹⁸ However, this use of “head” cannot apply to Paul’s description of husband as head of the wife. In what way can the husband be seen as being the life-giving source of his wife, apart from providing her with food? But then if the wife were to provide her husband with food, has she then become *his* life giving source? Surely, this language must mean positional authority. Is there any question that Christ is in positional authority over his bride , the church? So in the same way is the husband to his wife. Paul also commands wives to submit to their husbands *as to the Lord*:

¹⁵ Blocher P. 104

¹⁶ C.S. Lewis *God in the Dock* P. 93.

¹⁷ Scanzoni, Letha & Hardesty, Nancy, *All we’re Meant To Be* P. 31

¹⁸ Evans, P.65

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, his body of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy....(Ephesians 5: 21-26)

So also husbands are to mirror Christ's self giving as an act of love for the sake of their wives. With authority comes grave responsibility. What human husband can live up to this example? And indeed what would the church lose of this typology if we were to make the sexes positionally interchangeable.

Institution of Marriage

The final verses Genesis 2 announce the institution of the marriage bond. Following Adam's pronouncement of completeness and naming of woman, the narrator comments:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame.”
(Gen 2:24-25)

The positional authority of the man is confirmed as he is given the responsibility of leaving and forming a new household. This is sharp contrast to the actual patriarchal practice where it is the woman who physically leaves her household to join her husband's. Clearly the juxtaposition is to underline the responsibility of the male in forming a marriage partnership. Jesus pointed to this verse in articulating his teaching on divorce. It was only because of hardness of heart that Moses allowed divorce, for in the beginning, i.e. man's pre-fall state, it was not so. (Matt. 19: 5-6). The union of one flesh indicates the intended permanence of marriage. To separate was to tear apart the one flesh. Jesus indicates again that it is God that does the joining hence no man should rip apart what God has joined (Matt. 19:6). Also the order, leaving before being united is significant. The phraseology refers to the sexual union and implies the future law that is the condemnation of sexual union outside of marriage. The oneness of marriage is stressed. The two individual sexual beings now become one. As two chemical elements combine in a chemical reaction to become a new compound with unique properties, so the union of marriage creates a new entity. Both partners are described as naked, yet not ashamed. Blocher¹⁹ comments, quoting Barth :

“Here nakedness means ‘not to be concealed from one another, but to be revealed and know without any cover’: the man and woman had thus no need... to flee or excuse themselves...They were thus free and in their exercise of freedom good’ ”

¹⁹ Blocher P. 109

It is interesting to note again at this point the frequent use of the marriage metaphor in describing God's relationship to his people and Christ's relationship to the church as husband to wife. Hosea says it with force with his symbolic marriage. Other prophets enrich the theme, ex. Isaiah 62:4, Jeremiah 31:32, Ezekiel 16:8. Christ is hailed by John the Baptist as the bridegroom (John 3:29). The covenantal nature of human marriage and God's marriage to his people is a frequent theme in scripture. While this union represents essential unity, it also retains the positional authority of God to his people, and the husband to the wife.

The Fall

Temptation & Disobedience

In the account of the fall, the serpent is described as being more crafty than any of the wild animals. In his craftiness he approaches the woman. What can be made of this? We can only speculate that perhaps the serpent approached the woman because he believed that she might be more receptive than Adam. Blocher picks up on this point saying that

“in her nature as a derived being, taken from the man and created for him, receiving from him her name and waiting for him to leave father and mother in order to join herself to her naturally found herself in a receptive attitude.”²⁰

However, this is pure speculation. The serpent might have had similar conversations with Adam which are not reported. We only know that the woman engages the serpent in conversation. Is Adam present at this point. Gen 3: 6 b describes the woman as giving the fruit “to her husband who was with her.”, but we have no insight as to whether he was with her all along, and within earshot, or joined her at the end to eat the fruit. It is clear from the conversation, however, that the woman knew about God's prohibition regarding eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. It is also evident that the commandment had been added to “and you must not touch it” either by herself or by Adam's instruction to her (we cannot know which). Beverly Stratton²¹ commends the woman's interpretative and insight skills as she processes the serpent's remarks. She comments on Lillie Blake's commentary in *The Woman's Bible* that her conduct is superior to that of Adam, who remains silent. While we can fault Adam for casually taking and eating of the fruit that his wife gave him, how can we fault him for remaining silent throughout the conversation with the serpent if we know not if he was there? In any case, we can say that the prohibition was given directly to Adam by God and only indirectly to the woman. Adam must bear responsibility for not communicating

²⁰ Bocher, P. 145

forcefully enough to her the nature of God' command and the consequences of disobedience. Can we suppose that the outcome would have been any different had Adam engaged the serpent in conversation? Likely not. Adam received the command first hand, yet that did not stop him from eating. Others have pointed out that the woman should not have engaged the serpent at all, that Adam as head of the first community should have been responsible for theological negotiations. She had assumed a role that God had not given her.²² Eve sinned thoughtfully and Adam carelessly, but both disobeyed and are equally guilty of disobedience, lack of faith, and hence active revolt against God. Immediately, the eyes of both of them are opened and they realize that they are naked leading to immediate impulse and action to cover themselves. As they hear God walking in the Garden, covering turns to hiding.

The immediate effect of sin is to bring about estrangement from God. As Blocher puts it:

“By rejecting the divine reference that united them, each claims for himself and herself the position of ultimate reference. Each wishes to make the other his or her creature, an object to dominate. Each finds in the other a rival god with an independence that threatens their own.”

Estrangement between each other shatters the former unity and freedom from shame. Now their awareness of each other brings about a desire to cover and to hide.²³

Contact with God

As God walks in the garden He calls for the man. Adam confesses to being afraid, because of his nakedness. Eve is silent. God clearly holds the man accountable for the situation and questions him first. Adam blames God and the woman. God put the woman there with him. She gave him the fruit and he ate. Immediately we are aware of the battle of the sexes beginning. Enmity and accusation replace divine joy. As E. J. Young²⁴ puts it: “Sin is secretive and breaks a pure and open fellowship...for sin is essentially divisive”.

God then turns to question the woman who blames the serpent for deceiving her and admitting that she ate. God then turns to pronounce the sentence on each in turn; the serpent, the woman and then the man.

²¹ Stratton, Beverly J. *Out of Eden* P. 93

²² Scanzoni & Hardesty, *All we're Meant To Be* P. 31

²³ Blocher P. 174

²⁴ Scanzoni & Hardesty P. 34

Sentencing

The serpent is addressed first, and in pronouncing a curse on him God announces the enmity that will exist between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring. A permanent hostility is to exist between man and evil, even though man commits evil, he has a natural abhorrence of it. A prophetic hope is uttered as God indicates that an offspring of the woman will crush the serpent's head (a mortal blow) while the serpent will strike his heel (he will be wounded). It is interesting that from a seed of the woman only, the first transgressor, will come the way of defeat for the serpent. Next the sentence is pronounced on the woman, and it is here we need to focus in identifying gender issues as a result of the fall.

“To the woman he said ‘I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing: with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.’ ”
(Gen 3:16)

Of critical importance is whether this pronouncement is descriptive or prescriptive. If descriptive, then it merely describes what will be the natural state of affairs as a result of sin. If prescriptive, then this becomes the divinely ordained order and role. It is easy to see how pain in childbearing will be a consequence of sin. One does not have to read much farther in Genesis to see the breaking of a mother's heart by murder within a family. The pain referred to will not only accompany birth, but the entire process of raising children. While this aspect is addressed to the woman, we can see how the man will also share this pain, as the woman will too share the painful toil now required to grow food. It is difficult to attribute this aspect of the sentence as something God would desire. And hence a descriptive interpretation seems called for. Scanzoni & Hardesty agree “God speaks not in wrath but in gentle reproof. He speaks of what will be, not what should be: his words are *descriptive*, not *proscriptive*.”²⁵ The blessedness of children will now be bittersweet. It will continue, but not without burden. In the same way her relationship to her husband will continue, but will be marred by disruption. It will continue, but with difficulty. Woman's desire will be for her husband., and he will rule over her. Again, this must be taken as describing the now flawed relationship. One would be hard pressed to use this as justification for male domineering over the female.

The exact meaning of the woman's desire is subject to dispute. On surface reading, one would interpret this as possibly sexual desire, but also desire in the sense of being drawn toward. Women will have a natural desire and yearning for a mate, a husband. Yet at the same time, that husband will take advantage

²⁵ *ibid* P. 34

of this desire and rule over his wife. Susan Foh challenges this interpretation and argues that the woman's desire is actually a desire for control.²⁶ Foh's comparison of the use of the Hebrew phraseology parallels the desire that sin has for Cain in Gen 4:7b. Just as Cain must master sin, so must the man master the woman's desire. This would be descriptive of the struggle for control in a marriage relationship which would also be a result of the fall. While her argument seems convincing and her logic is sound, it is hard to see this meaning applying in the context of a sentence being pronounced by a Judge. As Blocher points out "According to her (Foh), the Judge foretells the woman's sinful behavior and exhorts the man to overcome it. Does that match up to the pronouncement of a verdict? Obviously not!"²⁷ . We could adopt elements from both arguments and conclude that this desire in part sexual, part a yearning and longing for her husband and part desire to control and to set the agenda of their married life. In any case, the husband will respond by ruling, and this will in itself prove painful to the relationship.

God's sentence to Adam, in contrast to that of the woman, points out the exact reasoning for the sentence "Because you listened to your wife, and ate from the tree which I commanded you 'You must not eat of it.... " God reminds Adam that he was the recipient of the command. Because of this, the consequence is harsh. The ground is cursed because of him. His toil will be painful and unproductive. Food will be eaten, by the sweat of his brow, until he returns to the ground, for he is dust and will return to dust. In pronouncing the sentence to Adam, the woman is obviously a partaker of the same sentence, although not the primary one. Adam retains positional authority and responsibility for the family unit and its need for food, but the task will now be arduous and painful. The marriage relationship too will be bittersweet, as he will observe and share his wife's pain in childbearing and rule over her, but not without duress.

Adam then, in a surprising burst of optimism and hope, names his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all living. In naming her, he discerns her character and destiny and becomes prophetic. God then proceeds to clothe them with garments of skin, that they might function together without the shame of nakedness that their sin brought upon them.

Summary

In defining and describing the relationship and role of sexes with God and each other, scripture has much to say. It is clear from the Genesis narratives that men and women are absolutely equal before God and in partaking of His image. Henceforth the answer to the issue of low self esteem for both the male and the

²⁶ Foh, Susan, *What is the Woman's Desire?*

²⁷ Blocher P. 180

female is the reminder that both are created in the Image of God. It is also clear that the man was created first, received God's commandments, participated in naming the created order and *then* the woman was created for the man and not the man for the woman. The rest of scripture, particularly the Apostle Paul's teaching, confirms the view that the male is given positional authority in the family and that he represents God to the family and represents the family to God. The relationship of Christ to His church mirrors this. Christ is the bridegroom and the Head of the church, which has its unity in Him while at the same time is in submission to Him and His authority. Christ in turn loves the church - His bride and has laid down his life for her. In the same way husbands are to love their wives even as wives respect their husbands. Both are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. As the male best represents God to the family, so it is the female that best models the relationship of the church (and every believer) to the Lord. *We are all, in a sense feminine to Him.* Both the male and female positions represent important truths in describing our relationship to God. We must resist the popular political correctness of the day, which sees male and female as interchangeable before God. In one sense they are "as there is neither male and female....but all are one in Christ" (Gal 3:28), but in another sense God has given positional authority to the male and has different expectations from both sexes in light of His created order. We must not dispense with these lightly, but rather each of us needs to learn what it is to be both the representative of God to the world around us, and the bride of God in our relationship with Him.

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