

ASPECTS OF A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF
WOMANHOOD

by

DOROTHY JEAN KELLEY PATTERSON

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DEDICATION

To those who cleared the way for me:

my parents
Charles and Doris Kelley
 and
 my parents-in-love
Thomas Armour and Honey Patterson

To those who have walked with me:

my sisters and brothers
Kathy Kelley
Charlene and Russell Kaemmerling
Rhonda and Chuck Kelley
Eileen and Steve Turrentine

To those who walk after me:

my nieces and nephews
Angie, Ben, and Kate Wheeler
Beth, Perry, Kelley, and Claire Kaemmerling
Sarah Turrentine

To my children:

Armour Paige Patterson
Carmen Leigh and Mark Anthony Howell

To my adorable granddaughter:

Abigail Leigh Howell

These children are the crowns I have been privileged to polish to lay at the feet of the blessed Jesus whom we all serve as a family.

To my husband:

Paige Patterson

Paige is my mentor, friend, lover and the one from whom I have learned the most about life and love and theology. In the human realm, he is the one I want most to please and the one I most enjoy serving on this earth, and together our hearts are knit in a commitment to serve Him who is above and over all, The Lord Christ.

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Preface

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Introduction

The overriding question to be answered in these pages of research is this: Does the Bible contain a paradigm for womanhood, one presented from the beginning of the human family with an unfolding of the divinely-appointed creative design for the woman and with the revelation of a meaningful purpose for her life and work; or must each generation ferret out for themselves an appropriate prototype palatable to contemporary standards? Samuel Terrien phrased the question in this way: "Is there a biblical view of womanhood that is organically predicated upon biblical faith?" Since the exegesis of Scripture is not merely isolated verses or pericopes, to find that "biblical view" the serious interpreter must face the challenge of going beyond trends to the heart of the text (Terrien 1973:322).

This researcher purposes to demonstrate that the design and purpose for womanhood is presented in Holy Scripture, beginning with the account of the creation of the woman and continuing throughout the warp and woof of the biblical text without contradiction and with consistency so far as character traits for women are commended or denounced. In addition, the biblical model, while allowing for diversity and uniqueness, is nevertheless entirely consistent in its presentation of the Creator's plan for the nature and purposes of womanhood.

This ideal composite consists of different, though not contradictory or antithetical, elements and rests in complementarity to the rest of God's creation. Espoused by Hebrew society, the pattern is identifiable throughout the biblical documents as well as in

Patristic and Pseudepigrapha literature, though the pursuit of patterns in these sources is not included in the scope of this work. The focus of this research is to identify the plan that sets forth the divine design and to follow its development in selected texts throughout Scripture.

In chapter 1, "Womanhood: A Biblical Pattern or a Cultural Norm?," patterns for womanhood are examined in both Old and New Testaments as well as, in a limited way, in other ancient writings. Special attention is given to women in Judaism, including allusions to rabbinic thought. Discussion then focuses on the interaction of theology and gender with some investigation of the influence of feminism on society in general and on the church in particular. The role of Scripture is examined. The nature of feminist theology and the role of hermeneutics, especially the methods of interpretation used in feminist theology, are addressed; and the role of language about God, especially the use of literary figures, i.e., the metaphor and the simile, is considered.

Chapter 2, entitled "The Gender Paradox — Equal But Different," sets the stage for the unfolding of a pattern for biblical womanhood with an examination of the creation account and especially a consideration of the relationship between the man and the woman. The chapter's thesis is that, on the one hand, both the man and the woman were created "in the image of God" with equal worth and the same access to Him. In creation, the woman fulfilled a "function of creative complementarity," so that without her the man, by divine design, is incomplete. The woman's creation is described with a Hebrew verb meaning "build," which suggests a reliable and

permanent architectural design as well as aesthetic purpose, such as would mark the planning and constructing of a building. This event is in contrast to the creation of the man, who was molded from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7, 22).¹ Careful research into the text of Scripture seems to bring into focus such a model.

On the other hand, both the man and the woman are a unique design with a particular role assignment. Together the man and the woman are equipped to accomplish the continuing of the generations and the exercising of dominion over the earth and its resources. This complementarian position affirms equality of personhood, while maintaining that the divine order calls for a reciprocity exhibited in male servant leadership and female submission, both of which are modeled in Jesus Himself. Presenting the Creator's unique design and purpose for the woman affirms that both the woman and the man are in the image of God. Each is responsible for establishing a relationship to God through a personal salvific experience.

Chapter 3, "A Consistent but Multifaceted Pattern for Biblical Womanhood," presents parallel passages from both Testaments in an effort to illustrate common ground in the discussion of the most basic traits that are to adorn the woman who would pattern her life and character after God's ideal. Both Proverbs 31:10-31 and 1 Peter 3:1-7 are examined with special attention to implications found in the concepts of a "fear of the Lord" and a "gentle and quiet spirit." Also, an extended discussion of biblical submission is included.

¹See section 2.4, pp. 130-136, for a more detailed discussion of the creation of the woman.

“Women and Ministries Within the Kingdom” is the subject of chapter 4. Four passages containing guidelines for women, located within what is widely accepted as the Pauline corpus, are considered problematic by many: 1 Corinthians 11:3-10; 14:33-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; and Titus 2:3-5. Although each passage is examined individually, the researcher also seeks to reconcile these texts. This chapter is closely related to chapter 2, in which the theological underpinnings were laid and to which the apostle Paul appeals for support in his own commentary on the directives issued.

This researcher has tried to select the texts for discussion according to the importance of the respective passage to the issues at hand and with a view to interacting with other texts that might be considered confusing and difficult to interpret. Every effort has been made not to turn away from a passage just because it does not seem to affirm the researcher’s position. Challenging passages that cannot be discussed extensively are at least addressed in a cursory fashion (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:3-4; Gal. 3:28).

The primary purpose of this research is not to produce a polemical treatise against feminism. Rather than seeking to dismantle or weaken the feministic theology of womanhood, this researcher desires to present a positive word concerning biblical womanhood. However, some interaction with feminist theologians and evangelical egalitarians is necessary in order to move forward with the task of fashioning a biblical theology of womanhood.

Even feministic scholars are agreed that the Bible has “so strongly influenced the Western religious and cultural imagination that anyone seeking perspective on central matters such as the

status of women has to confront the biblical materials.” Carmody notes that the Bible “imagines” the ideal woman with virtues as diverse as the domestically desirable trait of being a competent home manager (Proverbs 31) to a frank sensuality in sexual identity (Song of Songs) (Carmody 1988:ix).

In identifying and describing what the Bible records that God expects from and commends in the woman He designed and created, this researcher accepts the canon of Holy Scripture as truth without mixture of error. Although the premise of this research is enhanced by a high view of Scripture, the paradigm advocated remains discernible in biblical documents as they now exist, regardless of one’s perspective on the nature of inspiration. Especially is the researcher seeking to examine texts in a systematic way with the hope that something neglected, overlooked, or short-circuited might be discovered and thus placed under the magnifying glass for scrutiny. Yet in so doing the faithful examination of traditional interpretations of the past must be coupled with discerning consideration of innovative interpretations being discussed in the present and with open-ended vision for what may be uncovered through field archaeology, academic research, and continued intellectual discussion within the theological community in the future.

Though page limitations do not allow for the intricacies of textual criticism or for the extended discussion of internal Old Testament or New Testament questions of authorship and authenticity of the text, the writer does present limited lexical

No one is totally objective in the sense of being able to remove herself completely from her own personal identity and the influences of her respective environment. Personal convictions do enter the arena of academic investigation as they do every sphere of life and work. Still, every effort has been made to prevent the domination of these personal convictions over a scholarly exegesis of the biblical text and interaction with commentators holding various views on the subject under discussion.

Key Terms:

⁶⁵³ Biblical womanhood; complementarity; creation; ⁶⁵³ egalitarianism; headship; heirarchy; male/female relationships; patriarchy; women; women in the church; women in ministry.

Woman (African Theology)

Chapter 1

Womanhood: A Biblical Pattern or a Cultural Norm?

1.1 The Question of Male and Female

Within the last century a movement has arisen that questions the assumptions that have issued from traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity and the functions springing from natures that are distinctively male or female. As a result of the feminist movement, the biologist, the anthropologist, the psychologist, the sociologist, and now the theologian are grappling with a question that seems to find itself at the center of daily living and thought (whether scientific, philosophical, sociological, political, or religious): Who are men and women and what, if any, male-female differences are to be exhibited within the life of a society? (Goldberg 1973:23-24).

John Stott has suggested "double listening" in resolving the difficulties of this challenging question. He testifies of trying to listen carefully to what both secular and biblical feminists are saying through reading their books and hearing their concerns. On the other hand, he also acknowledges the necessity for listening to what Scripture is saying.

But it should save us both from denying the teaching of Scripture in a determination at all costs to be modern, and from affirming it in a way that ignores the modern challenges and is insensitive to the people most deeply affected by them (Stott 1990:254).

1.1.1 Womanhood in the Old Testament

Women in Israelite society were almost exclusively in the home. Their primary role was to manage the household and to perform the duties of wives and mothers (see Prov. 31:10-31). They did have a measure of anonymity in life, and they were subordinate to their husbands. Beauty is associated with women in the Bible but without detail as to what makes them beautiful (Gen. 12:11; 26:7; 29:17; 2 Sam. 11:2; Song 4:2-3). Inner beauty, however, is elevated over an attractive countenance (Prov. 31:30; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:3-4). Women were not only expected to be sexual partners to meet their husbands' needs, but they were also expected to be recipients of fulfillment by having their own needs met (Song 1:2; 2:3-6, 8-10; 8:1-4). The New Testament also affirms that husbands and wives are to enjoy sexual intimacy (1 Cor. 7:3, 5) (Packer 1980:423-425).

Without doubt, in the Old Testament the husband was the patriarch of his family or clan; yet among the patriarchs one does not see a pattern for despising or mistreating the female members of the family. The wife became part of her husband's family. Yet, as Clark well said, "He governed the family as the head of it, not as the conqueror of it" (Clark 1980:28).

Women were considered an integral part of the community and held a unique position of communality with men, as well as being protected by the same covenant as men were. Marriage was the ideal (Gen. 2:24); sexual intimacy between husband and wife was celebrated (Song of Songs); a good wife was praised and honored (Prov. 31:10-31); godly women were admired and greatly used (e.g.,

Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Naomi, Ruth, Esther); widows were to be protected (Stott 1990:260).

A woman's legal position in Israel was weaker than a man's. Though a husband could divorce his wife for "some uncleanness in her," the wife could not divorce her husband for any reason (Deut. 24:1-4). Wives could be required to take a jealousy test, if they were suspected of unfaithfulness to their husbands, but husbands were not expected to be accountable (Num. 5:11-31).

Indeed, women of ancient times did not live in a world in which everything was perfect or fair. However, they were protected in some basic rights, and they asserted themselves to seek justice in others. James Baker has written a monumental work unlocking complex ancient laws governing a woman's life. Rather than portraying these women only as victims of injustice, he shows how they often changed restrictions into opportunities. He finds amazing consistency between the Bible and contemporaneous, external legal codes of societies in the ancient world.

Women exerted considerable influence in their communities and were often adept at working the law to their advantage (Baker 1992:ix-xi).

Baker's work stands in contradistinction to theories advanced by men like Leonard Swidler, who commented

Had a male hero married after his glorious feat he would have continued in high honor in the society. But a female hero would immediately have been placed under the dominance of her husband — just as in the famous description of the perfect wife in Proverbs who worked from dawn to dusk all year, with the result that she should be given 'a share in what her hands

have worked for, and let her works tell her praise at the city gates,' but 'her husband is respected at the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land' (Prov. 31:31, 23) (Swidler 1979:114).

Swidler overlooks the fact that the Proverbs woman of strength has been a paradigm for biblical womanhood throughout the generations. Is this fact in itself worth nothing when compared to reward and fame? He also ignores women like Deborah. Though identified as the wife of Lapidoth and a mother in Israel, she obviously held a prominent position and attained honor in her own right (Judg. 4:1-9).

In any case, the Bible clearly identifies women who took an active part within the society of the ancient world. Deborah, a prophetess, was a judge; Esther, a queen, used her skills in diplomacy to save the Jews from extinction; Lydia, a tradeswoman, presided over a thriving business. Just because the placement of women in civil and business pursuits is the exception rather than the rule does not lessen the valuable role of women in society as a whole, which in the ancient world as well as the modern era, to a large extent, stands or falls according to its infrastructure, i.e., the family, over which the wife and mother presides.

On the other hand, children were to respect both mother and father equally (Ex. 20:12), even though they were the special charge of their mother (Ex. 21:15; Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 20:20). The names of mothers appeared regularly in biographies of successive kings (2 Chr. 24:7; 27:6). To disobey or curse either parent was punishable by stoning (Deut. 21:18-21). If a man and a woman were caught in the act of adultery, both were to be stoned (Deut. 22:22).

Even in a male-dominated society, Hebrew laws offered protection for women. Though usually only men owned property, daughters could receive the inheritance if there were no sons in the family (Num. 27:8-11). However, often the importance of the dowry to women is overlooked. Since theoretically the bride remained the owner of her dowry, some have suggested that this gift from her family represented the daughter's share of her father's estate. In this case she received her "inheritance" upon marriage while her brothers had to wait to receive their shares until the death of their father (Patterson 1995:563). Widows, too, had special privileges (Deut. 24:19-22; 26:12). If a husband added a second wife, he was not allowed to ignore the basic needs of his first wife (Ex. 21:10). Even a woman taken captive in war had rights (Deut. 21:14), and a man found guilty of raping a woman was stoned to death (Deut. 22:23-27).

Although the husband exercised his spiritual leadership by presenting the sacrifices and offerings for the family (Lev. 1:2), only women offered a sacrifice after the birth of a child (Lev. 12:6). Women also participated in worship, though they were not required, as were the men, to appear before the Lord (Deut. 29:10; Neh. 8:2; Joel 2:16). This optional participation may have been because of their responsibilities as wives and mothers (1 Sam. 1:3-5, 21-22). (Packer 1980:420-422).

Archer has projected an analysis of what the ancients considered the unique characteristics of the "ideal wife" and of women in general. Her sources are selected portions of Scripture as

well as other ancient sources. Since this project is devoted to a view of biblical womanhood, passages to which Archer alluded from Scripture, rather than from Patristic or Pseudepigraphal literature, are noted. However, her work is an excellent and comprehensive overview of womanhood in the ancient world.

The ideal wife in the Bible is portrayed as submissive and retiring (Titus 2:4-5) with demure behavior, even in her manner of dress (1 Tim. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:3-4). Some ancient writers describe her as “splendid and beautiful” in her face with lovely eyes, pleasant nose Silence is noted as a great virtue (Prov. 21:9), and “innocence and modesty” are interwoven throughout her countenance. She serves, cherishes, and supports her husband.

Womanhood in general does not always garner praiseworthy attributes, but on occasion this is more the result of miscommunication than a deliberate verbal assault. For example, Archer begins with reference to “the Creation myth,” which she suggests affirms “divinely ordained inferiority” (1 Cor. 11:7-9). Her evaluation seems to be based on the criterion for praise as being identified with one who has authority, judging by her quote from Josephus, “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man Authority has been given by God to the man.”

The primary meaning of “inferior” in the unabridged dictionary indicates position “lower down or nearer what is regarded as the bottom or base . . . of lower degree or rank.” The meaning Archer seems to assign to “inferior,” i.e., “of less importance, value, or merit,” is included in the meanings given but is illustrated in the dictionary

in this way — “the child . . . considers himself inferior to the adult” (Gove 1971:1158). This gives an interesting nuance of meaning to the word that is quite appropriate to consider in this discussion, i.e., that the word “inferior” may simply point to subordinationism and hierarchicalism in role/function. Since both of these terms suggest a rigid structured authority, the ideas of equality and mutual interdependence are largely lost. This researcher proposes to show, however, that personal value and worth are not at issue, but rather assignment of function.¹

Archer continues to make sweeping statements: the divine plan regarding creation of woman “backfires,” describing the woman in language used in the Midrash, i.e., as a “coquette” (Is. 3:16), an “eavesdropper” (Gen. 18:10), “jealous” (Gen. 30:1), “light-fingered” (Gen. 31:19), “a gad-about” (Gen. 34:1). She also suggests that the woman was responsible for bringing sin and death into the world, that she is “a constant pollution to man” (Job 14:1, 4; 15:14), that she is associated with evil, that the ultimate punishment for misdeeds a man could suffer would be “the absorption of female traits” (Jer. 50:35, 37; 51:29, 30) (Archer 1990:302-308).

1.1.2 Womanhood in the New Testament

Jesus must have encountered a negative assessment of women in His culture; yet He offered women new roles and equal status in His kingdom. Jesus was always “. . . attempting to reform, not reject the patriarchal framework of his culture . . .” (Witherington

¹Note especially sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, pp. 119-130, for discussion on the interplay of worth and function, especially as in the concept of “helper.”

1984:129). He allowed women to be the first to bear witness of His resurrection (Matt. 28:8-10). Charles Ryrie suggested that women may have been honored with this privilege because “they were being faithful to womanly duties . . . bringing spices for the body . . . caring for physical needs in the time of death as they had so often done during the time of Jesus’ life” (Ryrie 1970:37). There is abundant evidence that women were among the multitudes who followed Jesus (Matt. 14:21) and that He used things of interest to women in His parables and illustrations (Luke 13:18-21; 15:8-10)

In the New Testament, the birth and infancy narratives note a remarkable number of women. In Matthew’s genealogy for Christ, he includes four women — Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba (Matt. 1:3, 5-6). By considering the lives of these particular women, one sees evidence of God’s unconditional acceptance of women, to whom He had extended His forgiveness and through whom He would send Messiah. The mention of women and the obvious recognition of a place for women went beyond what one would expect in the cultural setting of that day. Jesus spoke to women (John 4); He taught women, individually and privately as well as when they were a part of the multitudes who listened to His teaching (Luke 10:38-42); a company of women traveled with Him (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus featured women as central characters in parables (Matt. 13:33; 25:1-13; Luke 18:1-5); He commended women (Matt. 9:20-22; Luke 21:1-4). He safeguarded the rights of women, especially in His teachings on marriage and divorce (Matt. 5:27-32; 19:3-9) (Elwell 1984:1177). For Jesus to

expend time and energy in teaching women indicates that He saw in them not only intellectual acumen but also spiritual sensitivity.

Charles Ryrie notes that Jesus treated men and women as equal in *spiritual privilege*, but as different in *spiritual activity*. There was no woman among the twelve disciples nor among the seventy he sent out (Luke 10:1ff); the Lord's Supper was instituted within a group of men (Matt. 26:26-29). This selectiveness on the part of Jesus by no means minimized the spiritual activities in which women engaged, not the least of which were their ministries to Jesus Himself — with hospitality and the giving of their money and possessions to undergird His work. Ryrie expressed it well:

He ministered to men; but the women ministered to Him . . . whenever ministry is spoken of as being rendered directly to Jesus, it is the ministry of either angels or of women (Ryrie 1970:31-38).

Though Jesus apparently limited the sphere of activity for women, He elevated the domestic responsibilities they used in ministering to Him to a new importance.

1.1.3 Reflections on Womanhood

From the Ancients

Aristotle, the first philosopher to project the “sex-polarity” position, maintained that the man and the woman were different in significant ways. He described the man as naturally superior to the woman in the sense that reason did not develop to its full human potential in the woman and consequently left her without authority over “her irrational soul” (Allen 1997:111-120).

Philo praised Sarah as a noteworthy wife, basing his accolades on information found in Scripture:

She showed her wifely love by numberless proofs, by sharing with him the severance from his kinsfolk, by bearing without hesitation the departure from her homeland, and the continual and unceasing wanderings on a foreign soil and privation in famine Everywhere and always she was at his side . . . resolved to share alike the good and the ill. She did not, like some other women, run away from mishaps and lie ready to pounce on pieces of good luck, but accepted her portion of both with alacrity as the fit and proper test of a wedded wife (Archer 1990:302-303).

Charles Ryrie evaluated the writings of the Apostolic Fathers on the subject of women with three general observations: (1) They commented on the church's responsibility to care for its widows more frequently than anything else. (2) References to deaconesses do not appear, even when speaking of praying widows. (3) The work of Christian women in the keeping of their homes and proper training of their children was praised (Ryrie 1970:100-101).

Although Clement and Origen of Alexandria wrote much about women in general, they had very little to say about the role they were to play in the official life of the church. Clement, motivated by a desire to challenge new converts with the highest standards, was especially eager to give detailed instructions for living the Christian life, and in so doing he addressed relationships between men and women in Stromata.

Women are therefore to philosophize equally with men, though the males are best at everything (Clement 1951:IV, VIII).

We do not say that woman's nature is the same as man's, as she is woman. For undoubtedly it stands to reason that some difference should exist between each of them in virtue of which one is male and the other female. Pregnancy and parturition, accordingly, we say belong to woman, as she is woman, and not as she is a human being. But if there were no difference between man and woman, both would do and suffer the same things As then there is sameness, as far as respects the soul, she will attain to the same virtue; but as there is difference as respects the peculiar construction of the body, she is destined for childbearing and housekeeping (Clement 1951:IV VIII).

Clement does present his bias in having referred to men as "best," but in the same forum he recognized the unique contributions of women and acknowledged that men and women were equal in the realm of spiritual things. He devotes an entire chapter of Stromata to showing that women as well as men may share in perfection (Clement 1951:IV XIX).

Sometimes what appears to be assigning inferiority to women is merely to suggest the differences between women and men, i.e., in the physical area. Clement was very clear in presenting his ideas about the role a woman was to play in her home, in which he declared she should give her greatest energies, and in relationship to her husband, to whom she should be in subordination. He expressed no difference in spiritual responsibilities, but he did see a clear division in sphere of activity or function. Although he did seem to consider the woman's position inferior to the man's, he considered that to be so as a result of the different responsibilities assigned to

her. Without hesitation, he reiterated the headship of the husband in the home in Paedagogus.²

Nor is it a reproach to a wife — housekeeper and helpmeet — to occupy herself in cooking, so that it may be palatable to her husband. And if she shake up the couch, reach drink to her husband when thirsty, set food on the table as neatly as possible, and so give herself exercise tending to sound health, the Instructor will approve of a woman like this (Clement 1951:III X).

Such is certainly in keeping with the spirit of the Proverbs “woman of strength” (Prov. 31:10-31).

Perhaps Donald Kinder has found one factor that makes the Church Fathers difficult to interpret on this issue.

One wonders how, in fact, women can be men’s equals when Clement maintains that they are so unequal in authority and in the allotted roles of the household (Kinder 1989-90:213).

Kinder reveals his own presupposition when he indicates that a woman’s worth is tied to her “authority” and the man’s recognition of that worth to his equity in household chores. He also notes that for Clement the obvious difference between the sexes within marriage lies in the decision on who is going to lead, and according to Clement the husband is the divinely appointed head. The wife is to be subordinate to him (Kinder 1989-90:215). The questions then seem to remain the same.

Origin said much less about women than Clement. He does assign to women a position of subordination but does not explain

²Note earlier discussion on the usage of the term “inferior” in section 1.1.1, especially pp. 20-21.

what he means thereby. He goes further to suggest that virginity and celibacy were to be preferred over marriage (Origin XIV 16, 25). He has been chastised for reducing Phoebe to “Paul’s assistant” in acknowledging her ministry (Keane 1988:5), which most readers would have taken to be a compliment.

Elizabeth Clark notes that Chrysostom thought that a woman was more suited to assume the “humbler responsibilities of life” because of her inferior status (Clark 1983:36). Chrysostom argues this point in his homily “The Kind of Women Who Ought to Be Taken As Wives” in Patrologia Graeca (51:230)

A woman is not able to hurl a spear or shoot an arrow, but she can grasp the distaff, weave at the loom; she correctly disposes of all such tasks that pertain to the household. She cannot express her opinion in a legislative assembly, but she can express it at home, and often she is more shrewd about household matters than her husband. She cannot handle state business well, but she can raise children correctly, and children are our principal wealth She takes care of all other matters of this sort, that are neither fitting for her husband’s concern nor would they be satisfactorily accomplished should he ever lay his hand to them — even if he struggled valiantly! (Clark 1983:36-37).

Chrysostom also clearly recognized the subordination of the woman, but not for her hurt — rather for her good:

Woman was not made for this, O man, to be prostituted as common. O ye subverters of all decency, who use men, as if they were women, and lead out women to war, as if they were men! This is the work of the devil, to subvert and confound all things, to overleap the boundaries that have been appointed from the beginning, and remove those which God has set to nature. For God assigned to woman the care of the house only, to man the conduct of public affairs (Schaff 1969:539).

Tertullian was described as a “woman-hater” because he assigned the difference between men and women to be one of superiority vs. inferiority. However, one must note that his prejudice is tied to the woman’s part in the “original sin” in his comments in De Cultu Feminarum (I, 1):

And do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway; you are the unsealer of that tree; you are the first deserted of the divine law; you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack On account of your desert — that is, death — even the Son of God had to die (Ryrie 1970:116).

Elizabeth Carnelley affirms the intense criticism feminists assign to Tertullian for his views on women. Elisabeth Fiorenza describes Tertullian as having “a theology that evidences a deep misogynist contempt and fear of women” (Fiorenza 1983:55). On the other hand, Carnelley reminds her readers that sexism and feminism, though very much a part of contemporary society, were not an issue during the first three centuries. She suggests that it is anachronistic to expect feministic views from Tertullian and intolerant to label him as “misogynist” because he is not a feminist. Rather she encourages a look at his writings in the context of concerns and prejudices of his day. For example, Tertullian was most certainly affected by the early church’s deep suspicion of sexuality, and he freely gave advice on sexual matters to men and women (Carnelley 1989:31-32).

Some would maintain that “the thoughts of the church fathers concerning women were marked by contradiction, ambivalence and

tension” (Albrecht 1989:6-7). Nevertheless, whatever their statements, and some may be unfair and prejudiced toward women, one must not ignore the fact that the Church Fathers were united in acknowledging the home as the place for women. Within the home there is much evidence that special emphasis was given to protect a woman and to elevate the importance of this role. Another common denominator was the assignment of subordination to the woman, but it was through this subordination that the woman received honor and responsibility in her sphere, i.e., the home (Ryrie 1970:145).

Elizabeth Clark notes that despite making derogatory statements about women and restricting their sphere of activity, the Church Fathers also wrote letters of praise about women who were important in their respective lives.

Here women are upheld as glorious exemplars of Christian devotion, so outstanding in their faith, their generosity, and their intellectual powers that they deserve to be ranked above most Christian men (Clark 1983:204).

Both Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas wrote that the male is active and the female passive. However, with Plato this passivity was better described as “receptivity,” a quality very different than passivity or inactivity (Allen 1997:92-93). Whereas passivity could be described as a condition in which an object or a person is simply acted upon without offering any resistance or response; receptivity is better understood as an act of transcendence in which one being opens to another, breaking the walls of personal self-centeredness in order to communicate with and receive from another. This

receptivity, when found in the woman, is illustrated in procreation: The woman receives the seed, and she gives back a new life.

1.1.4 Womanhood in Rabbinic Thought

One must be cautious in assigning more importance than reasonable to rabbinic thought. After all, the rabbis seemed to view the women of the Bible as they viewed the women of their own society, in light of their own preconceived notions about female limitations. Frequently the Jewish attitude toward women, outside the canon of Scripture, was discriminatory, and quotations demeaning women are cited from Jewish writings. Many rabbis even ignored women, not speaking to them and certainly not teaching them. However, the depreciation of women that appears in rabbinic literature is the product of the legalism of some Jewish rabbis and appeared in their commentary on Scripture and thus cannot be attributed to biblical principles (Elwell 1984:1177).

The Torah strictly forbids erasing the differences between species (e.g., grafting plant species together, weaving flax and wool together, mixing dairy with meat). It also underscores maintaining differences between men and women. "In general, Judaism emphasizes maintaining the differences that God created, rather than diminishing them" (Aiken 1992:27).

Aiken sets forth the roles for women in Judaism and then contrasts those roles with their value in modern secular society. For example, in American society, women are considered powerless, but one must consider how power is defined in that setting, i.e., as being visible and external in the sense of a prestigious position, unusual

political clout, or high military rank. Aiken suggests that there are ways to effect change in society other than what is visible or external. She cites the power of personal influence and suggests that the person who often makes the greatest impact on a life is an individual's mother.

Judaism believes that men and women should have equal rights to influence others, but that women generally should not exercise this from positions of authority. The positions of legal and external authority are generally reserved for men, whereas the power that is exercised from home and in personal domains is primarily wielded by women (Aiken 1992:28-29).

In Judaism, men comprised the quorum required, and they fulfilled the required religious duties. Women did not even sit with the men. However, women may well have been freed from public religious obligations in order to perform the religious rituals in the home. "In other words, roles are sharply differentiated" (Young 1994:114). The implication is that the difference is not that one role is better than another but rather that each is important for its respective contribution.

Although women are not obligated to marry or have children, Judaism recognizes the likelihood that they will probably choose to do both. In order to facilitate these choices, the Torah does not obligate them to observe certain time-bound commandments. This is because married women's primary responsibilities, especially if they have children, are to their families and to their homes What women are required to do is so critically important in guaranteeing the eternity of the Jewish people that it overrides the requirement to do certain time-bound commandments (Aiken 1992:35-36).

Bronner suggests: "The sages, by viewing the text against the grain of their own ideology, formulated hermeneutics congruent with

the preoccupations of their times.” Then she proceeds to use the same type of standard in her own view of Scripture: “The Bible is a laconic, elliptical, and at times ambiguous text; thus it is open to a variety of interpretations of any one verse.” The tension then was between social preconceptions about women arising within the contemporary scene on the one hand and principles recorded in written tradition on the other. Bronner recognizes that rabbinic literature is not necessarily “an accurate mirror of most women’s lives of that time.” Whether accurate or not, the literature produced by revered rabbis became part of the Jewish canon, making an impact for centuries to come (Bronner 1994:xiv-xv).

1.2 How Do Theology and Gender Relate?

This researcher will attempt to show that the apostle Paul relates theology and gender in his directives concerning the ministries of women within the kingdom. Chapter 4 examines the apostle’s teachings and attempts to show that the creation order in Genesis, by testimony of Paul himself, becomes the underpinning for church order in the Pauline epistles (1 Tim. 2:13-14).

Molly Marshall states strongly that “one’s gender profoundly shapes one’s experience in the world and one’s experience of God.” She couples this presupposition with another: “. . . Understanding gender differentiation in stereotypical ways distorts our vision of God and of humanity” (Marshall 1992:1).

Marshall suggests two perspectives: the “essentialist” perspective, which notes significant differences between men and women (e.g., in temperament, intellectual characteristics, and body

structure), or the “minimalist” perspective in which some differences, though acknowledged, are explained and minimized as originating with cultural or social factors (e.g., in reproduction). She identifies herself as a “minimalist” (Marshall 1992:2-3).

This researcher, however, would not consider identification with either position as defined, since the distinct differences do not seem to be primarily attributable to temperament or culture. Certainly, body structure would be one “essential” difference on a level separate from mere temperament or intellect; but role or function, including the bearing and nurturing of a child or the reproducing of life, would also seem to be much more than a minimal consideration or merely the result of cultural or social factors. Also, the conclusions of Marshall in her discussion of the interaction between theology and gender are strangely lacking in references to biblical foundations. Michael Novak proposes that natural differences between males and females, in both the biological-neurological and in the cultural-symbolic dimension, are sufficient reason for the most basic differentiation according to gender within functions and roles (Novak 1993:25).

Also associated with this question is the matter of how differences, if any, are to be perceived. The human penchant is to evaluate those differences in subjective terms, i.e., superiority vs. inferiority. Goldberg cautions that any general judgment in this vein finds meaning only in the context of an individual’s personal value system, which explains why the matter has awakened such sensitive emotional responses. He illustrates by suggesting that if a woman

believes that authority and leadership are preferable to the conceiving and nurturing of life, she will be doomed to perpetual disappointment. Judging something or some role to be good or bad according to one's own subjective appraisal, without truth-based moorings, would seem to bring more frustration than fulfillment (Goldberg 1973:25-28).

1.2.1 The Encroachment of Feminism in Its Varied Expressions

According to early feminists like Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir, society has wrongly named and defined women. They thus concluded that the role assigned to women in society is responsible for their unhappiness, suggesting that women need to take control of their own lives, which includes "naming themselves and controlling their own destiny" (Kassian 1992:22-23).

In dialogue with W. Sasser, Carol Meyers acknowledges that women often have "hidden power and influence." She distinguishes between authority and power, and she refers to research affirming that male dominance is often mythical, since women do now and always have exercised control and made decisions in many important areas of domestic life. Meyers also notes that although women have always worked, their most important contribution to the survival of their households was their reproductivity. Just the physical aspects of their motherhood — pregnancy, breastfeeding, and nurturing infants — were not only important but also time-consuming (Sasser 1994:6).

Feminists within Christianity, whether consciously or subconsciously, often seem to set their sights on the course being pursued by feminists in secular society, i.e., to de-differentiate male/female roles. This thought pattern includes the recognition of women as having the same status as men and thus the opportunity to do everything, and all in the same way, men can. Biblical patterns became a lesser consideration as women forged ahead to name and define themselves and their roles. In interpreting Scripture, the feminists seek what Francis Schaeffer defined as "monolithic equality," i.e., freedom without boundaries (Kassian 1992:25-33, 261).

Kassian notes that in presenting their case against the Church, radical feminists like Mary Daly and Simone de Beauvoir charge the Church of being guilty of

- (1) causing women's legal oppression and deceiving women into enforced passivity.
- (2) teaching women's inferiority in its doctrine.
- (3) harming women through its moral teaching.
- (4) excluding women from Church leadership roles (Kassian 1992:36).

To counteract this injustice, Daly suggested a "radical openness to the facts of contemporary experience" (Daly 1968:184). Since Daly felt the experiences of women, including her own, affirmed that the Bible contained misogynistic dogma and thus was outdated and irrelevant, she proposed that women in the church had just as much right to propose theological understandings in their own contemporary setting as did Paul in his day. Thus, Daly challenged

women to place their own experience at the center of the theological process and to act as prophets, naming themselves and guiding the church, including their own roles in the church, in a new direction appropriate to the modern age (Daly 1968:185).

Evangelicals joined in the movement critical of the church and its treatment of women. Some accused the Church Fathers of wrongly defining women. R. A. Schmidt suggested that women “possessed second-class citizenship in the Kingdom of God” and needed to be liberated so that they could name themselves and be free to do everything men could do (Schmidt 1971:13-14).

Also in the early 70s some feminists began touting their own brand of liberation theology, finding socialism to be the highest value and even the theological crux of the Bible. Letty Russell wrote that “liberation was the ultimate pursuit and goal of history,” an on-going process of intervening in behalf of others. Women were called to heal the wounds of victims, remove whatever might restrict freedom, and reshape the future according to their own experience (Russell 1974:27, 32).

Rosemary Radford Ruether declared sex discrimination as a root for all oppression and sought to create a new theology based on a “messianic gospel of liberation.” She suggested the liberation of women as a lens through which to interpret the Bible and introduced a woman-centered analysis of theology with women and their experience at the center of the theological process (Ruether 1972:16-22).

Though radical feminists introduced and promoted feminist theory, these theories were softened over the years and eventually accepted by less radical feminists. Even conservative evangelical Christians have not been unaffected by feminism, as some have found support for it in the Bible and thus merely added feminism as an adjunct to their faith. This latter group did not go to the extreme of changing doctrine and redefining salvation as did Russell and Ruether, but these “biblical feminists” have challenged the traditional interpretation of the Bible in the area of hierarchical gender roles within the home and church (Kassian 1992:205).

Most theologians throughout history have supported equality. However, biblical feminists rejected the traditional view of equality, which allowed for subordination, and defined true egalitarianism as characterized by “role interchangeability” (Scanzoni 1974:15). With this secular definition of equality, they called for the Bible to be “properly interpreted” in the sense of “supporting the central tenets of feminism” (Mollenkott 1977:90). This researcher has tried to present interpretations by biblical feminists/egalitarians — Scanzoni and Hardesty, Mollenkott, Bilezikian, Evans, Jewett — alongside evangelical complementarians to show that their diverse conclusions evolve from different approaches to the text.

In other words, for the diverse group who would classify themselves as feminist theologians, the common denominator for interpretation of Scripture seems to be the lens of contemporary experience and sociological data: “This is a new way to do theology, with the newspaper in hand” (Novak 1986:23). The experience of

women, which began as the standard for naming themselves and defining the world, then became the new norm for theology and biblical interpretation among feminist theologians.

1.2.2 The Nature of Feminist Theology

In an attempt to present feminist theology as fairly as is possible for one who has rejected its tenets, this researcher would like to go on record in expressing commendation to feminist theology for some contributions, even while criticizing the system for the problems many evangelicals believe have been created in its wake. On the positive side of the balance sheet would be the accomplishment of bringing to the forefront some misconceptions that have floated about the world of religion in general and often among evangelicals in particular — namely, that God favors men, that women are inherently inferior, and that women are limited in their usefulness.

Feminist theologians have also addressed the matter of gender in their discussions of God, reminding the church that God is not male or female and that He, in fact, transcends such gender distinction. As a concomitant to that fact, feminists have illustrated how thoroughly a human understanding of God is permeated with anthropomorphic language — often to the point of keeping one from seeing His complete transcendence, which lies beyond human understanding.

Not to be missed is the new importance feminists have assigned to the attitude of Jesus toward women. This emphasis has given new challenges to women who seek ministries within the kingdom. In light of all the injustices done to women throughout the

world from generation to generation, the human compassions of men and women needed to be awakened for those women who have been hurt and are now hurting because of injustices and tyranny.

Finally, one should be encouraged by a new interest among women to learn and to wrestle with the challenges of theology, including the doctrine of Christology, which is at the very heart of the Christian faith. All of these factors have been influenced in some way by feminist theology, and thus all theologians, as well as students who would deign to learn theology, have a debt to pay those who would bring such matters to the forefront for contemplation and discussion.

On the other hand, the impact of feminist theology does not end with positive contributions. Many problems have been introduced, and some harm has been done by its most ardent proponents. First, feminist theology has created its own set of misconceptions: e.g., that equality means sameness without allowance for differences; that the Fall destroyed, rather than merely distorting, God's plan; that God's plan for the relationship between the man and the woman, as presented in Scripture, has been marred by contradiction.

Concerning the gender issue, many helpful anthropomorphisms have been thrown out, and an understanding of "the image of God" has been clouded. The language of faith, through which God has revealed Himself by His own choice of imagery, has often been summarily dismissed, or at the very least revised, to accommodate the contemporary scene. Some have even tried to pit Jesus against Scripture and the apostle Paul against himself in reinterpreting

passages when the traditional understanding seemed unpalatable to the modern interpreter.

An effort has been made to move the focus of the Christian life away from simple obedience and a sense of accountability and responsibility to self-determination and personal rights. Some feminist theologians have been guilty of rewriting history, revising language, and redefining theology — even to the point of assigning new meanings to old doctrines. To accomplish the latter task, they have ignored the reports of ancient church councils, glossed over the 2,000 years of recorded church history, and even — in the case of some — rejected portions of Scripture as irrelevant. Again, from the perspective of this researcher, every feminist theologian has not been guilty of creating all of these problems, but each of these problems has surfaced in some feminist writings. Just as one should commend the good found in or resulting from any ideology, one must argue against the bad in order to defend the faith.

Feminist theology cannot be squeezed into a set and uniform mold any more than any other theological system. Of course, personal presuppositions and other factors influence every individual in the fashioning of a theological framework. However, there are general characteristics prevalent in feminist theology, especially that theology espoused by the more radical feminists.

Some of those tenets, though not exhaustively and certainly not dogmatically, are set forth here merely as a point of reference for subsequent discussion:

- (1) A selective criterion for the place of Scripture. Instead of accepting all Scripture as inspired, many feminists identify some passages as male-biased and culture-bound and therefore invalid for those offended thereby.
- (2) An anthropocentric and experience-based hermeneutic.³
- (3) The suggestion that the Old Testament milieu is oppressive to women because of its patriarchal framework or even the presupposition that God is against women and thus insensitive to their needs.
- (4) The distortion of other disciplines, e.g., selective acceptance of literature, inclusive changes in language, subjective rewriting of history, reinterpretation of the content of theology.
- (5) The particular rejection of the historical Jesus.
- (6) A preoccupation with one focus — i.e., the oppression of and injustices to women.

Again, the above criterion is not meant to be a stereotyped description of every proponent with any hint of feminism. Certainly most biblical feminists would not embrace all of the above. Nevertheless, in varying degrees, these characteristics have entered the spectrum of feminist theology. The composite does suggest that feminist theology ultimately leads to what many fear is a slippery slope away from a genuine evangelical faith.

³Hermeneutics will be discussed at length in section 1.4, pp. 56-81.

1.2.3 The Effect of Feminism on the Church

Feminism has attacked the very heart of the home and family. For example, some feminists tend to confuse relationships within the family that have in fact been designed and mandated by God Himself. In addition, feminism has indeed made its mark on the church — with some positive contributions to theology proper on the one hand and with the creation of grave problems within the arena of theological discussion on the other. These matters also affect the health of the church.

The prophet Ezekiel notes several factors, which from the perspective of this researcher illustrate the damage of an ideology like feminism. First, the creative purposes of God have been prostituted as Ezekiel reminded Israel that “the daughters of your people . . . prophesy out of their own hearts” (Ezek. 13:17), i.e., what has been described as “naming oneself.” In the second chapter of this project, the researcher proposes to show that God designed the man and the woman, named the man and through the man named the woman, and then gave to each role assignments.

Second, Ezekiel warned the people of his day that they had made for themselves “male images” (Ezek. 16:17) to supplant what God had given. Feminists have indeed set out to name their world, creating their own images of what they want the world to be. The prophet Isaiah also made reference to women who rebelled and sought to name themselves, “We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; Only let us be called by your name, To take away our reproach” (Is. 4:1; see also 3:12). Chapter 3 of this volume presents

selective passages from Old and New Testaments illustrating a definitive word from God concerning biblical womanhood and what that entails.

Third, Ezekiel warned his listeners that they had “sacrificed” their sons and daughters “to be devoured . . . causing them to pass through the fire” (Ezek. 16:20), and he noted the influence of a mother upon her daughter (Ezek. 16:44-45). The prophet Isaiah alluded to the chaos that accompanies out-of-control children (Is. 3:4-5, 12; 30:9). Feminists have generally tended to denigrate maternity, and many have supported abortion in varying degrees. The devotion of one’s primary time and energy to the rearing of children and keeping of the home have often become less important than personal pursuits. Though no chapter in this work deals exclusively with the woman’s maternity, the discussion of 1 Timothy 2:15 in chapter 4 includes comments on Paul’s reference to childbirth.

Since there is a conscious effort on the part of this researcher to support the positions expressed within this volume directly from the text of Scripture, the woman’s encounter with the serpent, i.e., Satan, and especially the progression of her responses leading to disobedience become worthy of consideration. Since the temptation encounter involves a woman, the application of this passage for women is certainly appropriate for consideration.

Feminism has encouraged women to ask questions, and some believe that this questioning has opened women themselves to spiritual vulnerability. While it is certainly appropriate for women to

ask questions, it is never appropriate for men or women to question the wisdom or mandates coming from God. When women consider the merits of feminism, they often eventually get around to asking the question: "Has God indeed said . . ." (Gen. 3:1) or in paraphrase, "Did God really say that?" This amounts ultimately to questioning one's faith in God and in the authority and accuracy of His Word.

Second, radical feminists devalued the importance of the home and family, and even biblical feminists have questioned the value of some passages of Scripture in relation to others. When those questions of relevance are raised, feminists seem to have an amazing affinity for assigning greater importance to the passages that are palatable to the contemporary political and sociological climate. In Satan's encounter with the woman, he straightforwardly contradicted what God had already said and denied its veracity (Gen. 3:4). Denying God's Word is an easy and natural sequel to questioning that Word.

Third, the woman was invited to name and define God, thus becoming "like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). Surpassing God presents some imaginary good above and beyond what God Himself offers. This progression seemed to open the door for considering whether or not to obey the divine directives God had already given directly to the man and indirectly to the woman. Chapters 2 and 4 of this treatise suggest the linking of the creation order presented in Genesis with the church order as described in 1 Timothy, which this researcher considers a necessary foundation for understanding the relationship of men and women in the home and in the church.

The final step for the woman and the man is disobedience — in which the choice is made to go one's own way instead of going God's way — completing the cycle from questioning God to disobeying Him (Gen. 3:6). Ultimately every act of disobedience is a choice to go one's own way instead of God's (Prov. 14:12).

1.3 What Is the Role of Scripture?

John Stott refers to the “double authorship of Scripture” as naturally affecting its reading. As the Word of God, the Bible cannot be read as any other book; but as the word of men, Scripture must also be read as every other book in the sense that one must think about its meaning, note its cultural context, grammatical structure, and vocabulary (Lundy 1991:1).

In addressing the impact that the feminist movement has had both within and outside the church, Fee comments on interpreting passages of Scripture pertinent to the issue of women and worship in the church. He both affirms and cautions those who seek to interpret challenging texts. He commends the pressure on scholars to look again at these passages with unusual care, a discipline that yields “a wealth of helpful information and possibilities for understanding”; yet he warns against allowing “the prior conclusions both for and against women's equality to determine how one is going to understand the text” (Fee 1987:493).

Gordon Fee is typical of egalitarian scholars whose innuendos suggest a weakness in the link between the Holy Spirit and the inspired authors of Scripture. For example, Fee refers to “the ‘logic’ of Paul's argument” in a questioning way. He addresses what he

describes as “notorious exegetical difficulties” and speaks of Paul’s response to the Corinthians as based on an “assumed” understanding between them and him. In another place, Fee suggests that “Paul’s argument moved slightly afield.” He also comments that “Paul expects them [the Corinthians] to see things his way.” Fee also speaks in general of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as “a very early marginal gloss” at one point and as “obvious contradiction to 11:2-16” at another. He suggests that anyone who maintains the authenticity of these verses must “offer an *adequate* answer as to how this arrangement came into existence if Paul wrote them originally as our vv. 34-35” (Fee 1987:492, 524-525, 699-700, 702).

In light of textual evidence, one must wonder from Fee’s observation that “the exegesis of the text itself” is not authentic and thus “not binding for Christians” (Fee 1987:708), if he has been guilty of allowing his own presuppositions to dictate his conclusions:

Taken together these data are more than sufficient reasons for considering these verses inauthentic. Nonetheless, since they are missing from no known manuscripts and are found in the majority of witnesses at this point, there have been several attempts to make sense of them in the context, none of which, however, is free of difficulties (Fee 1987:702).

One must also wonder what, if any, authority Fee assigns to the designated canon of Scripture. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are recognized as canonical and thus conforming to the standard of divine inspiration and authority by the apostolic church, by Christian churches, and by rabbinical gatherings of Judaism throughout the centuries. The twenty-seven books of the New

Testament were designated as canon by the Synod of Carthage, subsequent church councils, and churches through the generations as well. However, the canon of Scripture is not an ecclesiastical creation since its contents predated the usage of a particular term to describe the books so designated. Church councils merely affirmed what was already clearly the consensus of the churches as a result of centuries of usage. The most important criterion for inclusion in the canon of Scripture is inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Fee must address head-on then the matter of inspiration of the autographs and his own acceptance or rejection of what has been for centuries the canon of Holy Scripture.

Thomas Oden, in an unpublished lecture, commented that

Preaching at the end of the first millennium focused primarily on the text of Scripture as understood by the earlier esteemed ecumenical tradition of comment, largely focusing on those writers that best reflected classic Christian consensual thinking. Preaching at the end of the second millennium has reversed that pattern. The preached Word in our time has remained largely bereft of previously influential patristic resources (Oden 1997).

Oden defines orthodoxy as

. . . Thinking within the boundaries of the ancient church consensus about the canonically received apostolic preaching so as to contextually apply that tradition to ever emergent cultural situations (Oden 1997).

He further notes that nothing, not even the oral tradition, in orthodox hermeneutics ever combatively pitted tradition against the written tradition of apostolic writings, i.e., Holy Scripture. Only what remained consistent with the written Word was received as a gift of

the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit. The canon was considered the most crucial criterion for all exegesis of Holy Scripture and the classic orthodox interpretation resulting therefrom (Oden 1997).

Oden illustrates this observation with a reference to the heated rhetoric and polemic of women's oppression in which classic Christian teaching has been misplaced and misapplied so that those who seek to talk about cohesion "within the classic Christian tradition" are undermined and marginalized. The result is a "fad contemporaneity" that seeks to broaden "modernity-fixated contemporary cross-culturalism" into a more "historically aware orthodoxy" (Oden 1997).

Therefore, Oden calls for "the faith once delivered to the saints" to be "rightly guarded, reasonably vindicated, and wisely advocated." His way to achieve this goal is to seek a word from God "within the framework of the consensus fidelium that is attentive to two millennia of classic Christian exegesis" (Oden 1997).

1.3.1 The Translatability of the Bible

Kroeger rightly notes that "translation is not an exact science" and that "competent scholars may render a given text by a variety of expressions." However, she opens Pandora's box when she concludes, on that basis, that each translation is correct "in its own way" (Kroeger 1992:87). There often are several viable translations and/or interpretations for a text, but never can one translation or interpretation of a passage be in contradiction to another so that two antithetical translations or interpretations are to be recognized as accurate.

Underlying the interpretation of the text, however, is one's view of Scripture. Stendahl would phrase the question as a reference to the "translatability" or relevance of the Bible to modern questions. In other words, are the directives of Scripture "timeless truth" of fundamental significance or truth "conditioned by time"? Some would go so far as to couch the question as one concerning the freedom of the church "to order its life according to its understanding of the Scriptures and the faith" (Stendahl 1966:iv, 13). The keystone in the latter question revolves around the meaning of the word "understanding." Does that suggest pulling out of the text what Scripture plainly says, or does that imply that one "translates" what Scripture says into an application palatable and relevant to contemporary society?

Truth is absolute only "in and through what is relative," according to Stendahl. The Holy Spirit's job is to make "the word of man in the Bible into God's absolute word" for individuals now and for generations to come (Stendahl 1966:16). Unfortunately, such reasoning does not allow for transmission of absolute truth to the writers of Scripture through the Holy Spirit (1 Tim. 3:15), in which case the Spirit would then have contradicted Himself in order to accommodate succeeding generations.

Some feminists see contradiction in the teachings of Paul concerning women on any or all of three levels: Paul contradicts Genesis 1; he contradicts Jesus; he contradicts himself. The problem with this approach is its selectivity. If Paul cannot be trusted as accurate on any part of his teaching on women, when he did believe

that his teaching about women was divinely inspired (1 Cor. 14:37), can he be trusted in what he teaches elsewhere? Whether or not Paul was influenced by his rabbinical training is not really of significance since the issue is whether the words the apostle wrote are God's words. If they are, nothing else really matters (Lundy 1991:24).

1.3.2 Truth and Individual Autonomy

Consistency would call for those who accept the authority of Scripture as God's Word also to acknowledge that Scripture is truth as it has been recorded, canonized, and transmitted through the generations (Clark 1980:15). When truth is considered relative rather than absolute, individual autonomy becomes the criterion for all judgments.

. . . The exegete interprets the biblical texts not only as to their historical meaning, but he pronounces judgment on how these texts are to be applied to a contemporary problem not envisaged by the early church (Stendahl 1966:8).

The application of Scripture is always appropriate. However, in applying Scripture to contemporary issues, one must be sensitive to the integrity of the passage as it was first delivered. In a subsequent chapter of this treatise there is a discussion on the distinction between timeless principles and the timely manifestation of those principles, all of which is inextricably interwoven with one's view of Scripture and its authority in life and practice.⁴

Jesus evidently considered the words of Scripture to be the words of God (Matt. 4:4; 5:17-19) and accepted the authority of the

⁴See section 4.4, pp. 251-257, for a more extended discussion of these contrasting elements.

Old Testament as did the apostles. The Bible's divine origin guarantees its absolute trustworthiness (2 Tim. 3:16). To consider God hamstrung by human nature or sabotaged by contemporary culture is unthinkable since the psalmist declares that the Lord's plans stand forever, even "to all generations" (Ps. 33:10-11; see also 135:6). One must, however, distinguish between the particularity (as in a particular culture) and the generality (as in the transcultural or that which passes from culture to culture). On the other hand, confusing and challenging passages will arise, and these must be examined in light of what is plainly taught about the same subject in another passage so that the clear statement illuminates what is unclear. As in the study of any other document, one should look for the author's meaning to arise from what the author actually says (Lundy 1991:9-14).

Mary Kassian describes "biblical feminist theology" as being "at odds with the Bible." She notes that some of their interpretations view the biblical teaching on marriage as "quaint anachronisms" and warns against the conscious and intentional acquiescence to the spirit of the age found in much of feminist theology. She further notes that this accommodation is not always done by frontal assault but may also slip into vogue by silence and ambivalence.

Kassian cites as one example the feminist interpretation of Galatians 3:28, in which feminists change the meaning of the text to make it compatible with their understanding of what the verse should mean in light of their assumption that "equality of persons

before God requires interchangeable roles” even though such is nowhere stated in Scripture (Kassian 1990:158-159).⁵

1.3.3 The Role of Scripture in Feminist Theology

Børresen also describes the feminist view as starting with human experience and moving from there to construct a morally appropriate understanding of God. The question then becomes this: What is the authority of Scripture within feminist hermeneutics? Børresen rightly notes that the feminist view of hermeneutics demands either the discarding of the authority of the Bible altogether or “the right to reinterpret Biblical ideas in a way that appropriates, not only changes in past tradition, but also new insights today as well” (Børresen 1995:286-287). She states her position even more clearly in these words:

Feminist hermeneutics cannot be controlled by either a Protestant concept of *sola Scriptura*, which has proved impossible to carry out in practice, or by a developmentalist idea of infallible Scripture and tradition. Rather we should be clear that all human constructs of thought are relative and fallible. We should attempt to gain clear and non-apologetic understanding of what ideas meant in their Scriptural context and in their various contexts in different periods of tradition. But we must also claim the authority to be new tradition-makers. This will not make our constructs infallible. But it will free us from false apologetics toward the past (Børresen 1995:288).

For feminists, the dialogue between Scripture and contemporary concerns is a two-way relationship. Whereas Scripture

⁵ See section 4.8, pp. 293-296, for added discussion on Galatians 3:28.

questions the interpreter and her values, she must also challenge Scripture; and sometimes she will “find it wanting” (Erickson 1991:188-189).

God is free to make exceptions to His own rules. However, one must be cautious about automatically excusing behavior in question as merely an exception. In the latter case, one might consider Sapphira who came to the apostle independently, rather than with her husband, and thus received the same question as did her husband. She responded as he did and suffered the same grave consequences. Her demise did not come because she was “submissive” to her husband, which some would call “questionable,” but because she herself was disobedient (Acts 5:9-10).

A lack of respect for the apostles, as well as for their authority, seems inappropriate.⁶ Reta Halteman Finger describes the apostle Paul as guilty of “opportunism.”

Because of his singleminded goal of reaching the ends of the earth, he depended on the established system of domestic hierarchy which was clearly unequal and which discriminated against women and both male and female slaves (Finger 1993:46).

Dallas Roark attributed standards of world culture to the Old Covenant *or* pagan practices, implying a change in how women were viewed from the Old Testament to the New Testament (Roark 1993:15-20). Such a concept without careful definition could be interpreted as suggesting that God’s plan in the Old Testament was

⁶See also discussion of Keener’s comments on Paul in section 1.4.4, especially pp. 73-74.

not as advanced and humane as in the New Testament era. Certainly the pagan nations exerted their influence on Israel, and the entry of sin brought new challenges to relationships, including the relationship between husband and wife. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the subordination affirmed in divinely given role assignments was in itself bad or evil. On the contrary, biblical subordinationism offers a woman provision, protection, and servant leadership (Gen. 2:15-17).⁷

Aida Spencer reviewed the volume Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and noted her clear exhibition of discontent with Christianity and with the Bible:

. . . Like Cady Stanton's 'feminist' *Woman's Bible* its basis is not simply the equal social, economic, and political rights of women and men but it reflects a similar desire *not* to be submissive to the Bible text. Rather, interpreters appropriate authority over the text using some measuring rod of their own (Spencer 1997:115).

Careful study of the words, context, grammar, as well as historical and cultural factors must be coupled with the determination to take seriously exactly what the text says and to refrain from forcing or coercing the text to conform to personal or societal agendas. To add to the text more than is clearly there is also a distorting of Scripture. Scripture's silence is not a license for speculative theology. The exegetical work must be the foundation for formulating theology and for practical application. One's respect for

⁷See section 2.1, pp. 94-95, for additional comment.

the text must be coupled with a reverent approach for studying the text.

1.3.4 Section Conclusion: Scripture As a Bridge Between the Past and the Present

Peter Denton suggests that “there is no New Testament document which is not situation-specific.” However, he augments this statement with a reminder that it is precisely “the particularity of the texts” that fuels them with powerful application for the present context, since present situations are “equally particular.”

Denton dismisses what he calls a “false dichotomy” between situation-specific and timeless texts and suggests a model to bridge the gap between the first century and the present era. To that end, he proposes adapting the principle of “dynamic equivalency,” which is often used in translating the Bible, as a medium for bringing a difficult passage written to a first-century congregation into a meaningful application to a congregation in this century.

The usefulness of the principle of ‘dynamic equivalency’ lies in its ability to preserve the particularity on both sides, a fact that is made possible through the ‘dynamic’ shift from one language to another. But the equivalency is maintained in one very important way: the expression in one language *functions* in a way very similar to the expression in the other language. It is this *functional* equivalency, which allows for some dynamism in the particular expression, which is both necessary and promising for the interpretation of New Testament texts which regulate the relationships between men and women (Denton 1989:15-16).

Denton then builds a bridge from a timeless principle presented to a specific situation whose essential elements of truth are then passed

from generation to generation by means of a *functional* equivalency, enabling divine truth to be practically applied anew in every era.

From the perspective of this researcher, *complete equivalence*, i.e., the most complete representation of the earliest manuscripts, is essential for a translation that is both accurate and readable. This method is in contradistinction to *dynamic equivalence*, i.e., a more recent tool for translating, which tends to allow paraphrasing rather than a more literal rendering as an appeal to the contemporary reader. However, Denton's adaptation of *dynamic* or *functional equivalency* to the process of application does seem to add a helpful dimension to the understanding of Scripture. In this way the text of Scripture itself remains in translation as close as possible to the original intent of the author, even using the very words of the author in the most objective and accurate transmission possible from one language to another. On the other hand, interpretation is by its very nature subjective, looking for ways to communicate with an individual in his contemporary setting, and functional equivalency does add a dimension or bridge from what the author actually said to the way what he said is to be applied in a contemporary situation.

1.4 The Question of Hermeneutics

Debates within the church eventually come to hermeneutics — not just what the text meant when it was written but also what it means, and some would add, "if anything," to interpreters in the present day. As a result of the upheaval in this field, modern theories on interpretation are myriad and so complicated and comprehensive that hermeneutics in a sense has become both

philosophy and theology. Many theologians have rejected acceptance of anything as absolute truth so that the meaning of the text merely evolves as an appropriate concomitant to its contemporary setting. Some have even suggested that “fidelity to the first century” appears as a modern heresy.

Because of the influence of various critical methodologies in the twentieth century, a pessimism prevails as to whether or not one can ferret out the historical background of the New Testament documents and understand its impact on the interpretation of those documents. Some are concerned that without “contextualization” of the author, i.e., placing him in the modern setting according to his political situation, family structure, social mores, psychological dynamics, and literary style, one cannot understand the teachings of any biblical writer. Gerald Cowen comments, “Subjectivism and relativism have led to a skepticism among scholars that might be described as a kind of agnosticism” (Cowen 1997:1).

In this scenario, authorial intention is dismissed, as modern interpreters argue that it would be impossible to know today what Paul thought in the first century. Either the author’s intention is irrelevant, or at least it is impossible to know. On the other hand, Hirsch notes the urgency of positing “the author’s typical outlook, the typical associations and expectations which form in part the context of his utterance,” noting that this is the most effective means to test the relative coherence of a reading. He describes as essential the process of verification through “a deliberate reconstruction of the

author's subjective stance to the extent that this stance is relevant to the text at hand" (Hirsch 1967:238).

It is a task for the historian of culture to explain why there has been in the past four decades a heavy and largely victorious assault on the sensible belief that a text means what its author meant (Hirsch 1967:1).

The theory of authorial irrelevance, though purported by many to be beneficial to literary criticism and scholarship, defies logic in the sense of banishing an author in order to analyze his text. Supposedly the focus of discussion shifts from the author to his work in order to ferret out the independent meaning of the reading and thereby miss its significance to the author's life. What cannot be ignored is that going back to "what the text says" must conclude that the text had to represent "somebody's meaning," i.e., either the author who wrote it or the critic who interprets it. In theology, the shift to an emphasis on exegesis does not necessitate the abandonment of the historical setting. It merely means putting that and other factors into the proper perspective. One must also be cautious about allowing skepticism to overrule the possibility of "objectively valid interpretation" (Hirsch 1967:2-3).

1.4.1 The Focus of Hermeneutics:

The Text or the Reader

The shifting of focus from the text itself, which is the method used through the generations up to the last century, to the reader of the text, which is the lens for many modern interpreters, is the primary change in hermeneutical method. Cowen described this as a "backwards-working hermeneutic":

Biblical texts, according to this approach, have no objective meaning, but are experienced and interpreted by each individual reader and applied to each different situation. What this approach does is require the reader to do the job of the writer (Cowen 1997:4).

The most fundamental questions of hermeneutical method are often ignored, in which case discussions are often so clouded that those taking different sides do not even hear what is being said. Totally opposite conclusions may be drawn citing the same Bible, and those holding each antithetical position claim to be right. This polarization can degenerate into mutual suspicion and even competing accusations. Sometimes it is overlooked that these opposing conclusions

. . . might have been honestly reached by people of equal integrity and equal commitment to the authority of Scripture, who are divided not by incompatible theological starting-points, but by differing perceptions of the nature of the hermeneutical enterprise . . ." (France 1995:11).

This dilemma brings back to the arena the fundamental question: How does one find responsible application for biblical principles for contemporary society in an authoritative text first delivered to an ancient people? Then another question follows: Does a God offering equal opportunity for service have to offer equal access to all service in the kingdom?

Evangelicals are said to be united by the conviction that "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, being of divine origin, have 'supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct'" (France 1995:13). Thus, the doctrine of the authority of Scripture should not

be in question. The answer to the aforementioned questions then seems simple: Understand the text itself properly, and its application to modern issues should automatically be within reach. Though undoubtedly one may find some issues in contemporary life on which Scripture is silent in the sense of a specific quotable response of application, the general principles derived from Scripture, when carefully appropriated, should provide answers for any situation. This perspicuity of Scripture allows an interpreter to understand enough to discern God's will and submit to its authority in the matter. "Taken as a whole, Scripture will not mislead those who search for God's truth and direction for living" (France 1995:14).

For example, some have tried to suggest that slavery was accepted and uncondemned and thus embraced by the writers of the Old and New Testaments, even though it was never affirmed or encouraged, and they assert that the emancipation of slaves was the product of the secular liberal establishment. Yet one must look beyond the instructions given to believers for bearing the burdens of a cultural setting with Christlike responses to the more fundamental ethical principles found in Scripture. These biblical principles, though not explicitly applied to slavery, if generally acknowledged and appropriated, must eventually lead to its abolition (France 1995:16-17).

To return to the hermeneutical approach, one must find what the text actually meant when it was transmitted and how it was appropriated in the apostolic church in both ecclesiastical practice and theological underpinnings. Then one is ready to move to the

question as to whether what was appropriate and necessary in the New Testament era must apply equally and in the same way in the very different culture of the modern day. If one agrees that Paul forbade women to hold positions of authority over men in the early church, does that same principle apply to contemporary churches? (France 1995:22-23).

1.4.2 Some Trends in Modern Hermeneutics

One serious question for all believers is to determine what will be the final standard of what is right or true in *orthodoxy*, i.e., right doctrine, and in *orthopraxy*, i.e., right action. For this discussion, the question is narrowed to ask: How does the Bible fit into this equation? For evangelicals, there is inevitably a tension between respect for Holy Scripture, often born out of a Christian heritage through the generations, and the influence of their own experiences. Especially is this true when the two seem to be in conflict (Cottrell 1992:177).

Cottrell presents trends he perceives in the modern approach to hermeneutics. First, many hold that what a text *means* for today, may be determined by the interpreter within the context of the reader so that its *plenary* sense or its *significance* becomes more important than what the text *meant* when it was written. The latter meaning would have been determined by the author within his own context so that the *primary* sense or its *meaning* would be most important. The most critical issue is to determine which is more important — the context of the reader or the context of the writer —

in uncovering the actual meaning of Scripture for an individual today.

Relativism is another trend that is very much a part of the modern scene. Regarding Scripture, some would consider the perspective of a biblical author to be so immersed in his generation that the text could not be meaningful to another era. What is relative to one is not necessarily relative to the other. According to this view, even if the author intended one meaning and that meaning could be pulled out of the text, it may be so time-bound that the meaning is not acceptable as a norm for later generations (Cottrell 1992:196-201).

Krister Stendahl expressed it this way,

. . . Fidelity to the first century appears as a modern heresy, . . . a new kind of biblicism For it is highly doubtful that God wants us to play 'First-Century Semites' (Stendahl 1966:17-18).

Børresen, while affirming that the biblical writer's understanding and intention ought to be noted and respected, goes on to insist that "the meaning of a text cannot finally be limited to the author's understanding or intention." She explains her position by indicating that what an author writes is released from his control "to acquire new and unintended, or unenvisioned, meanings" (Børreson 1995:18-19).

Still a third trend in modern interpretation continues as a variation of the previous two, i.e., the assertion that no interpretation is objective and all is colored by personal feelings and

presuppositions. This conclusion leads to what is denominated as an "advocacy stance" (Cottrell 1992:201-203).

The distinctive hermeneutic described by Cottrell puts the weighty factors in interpretation in the context of the interpreter. If all examination of the text of Scripture is "relative and biased," it is perfectly acceptable for women to develop a method of interpretation that operates from the framework of their needs in which the experience of women becomes the norm and standard by which all else is investigated and understood. History may be rewritten; language may be revised; even Scripture itself may be remolded to fit what women perceive to be their needs (Cottrell 1992:203-207).

1.4.3 Some General Comments on the Hermeneutics Within Feminist Theology

The practitioner of feminist hermeneutics prefers those methods of interpretation that are propelled by an egalitarian ideology in which there is social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. And for modern-day egalitarians equality seems to mean "the same as." Feminist theologians maintain that Western tradition, as well as Scripture itself, has been shaped by patriarchal values and concerns. The critical evaluation of Scripture through their varied hermeneutical methodologies determines how this perceived bias should be reinterpreted (Mills 1990:299).

Feminist theologians, such as Athalya Brenner, in researching the roles of women in the society of ancient Israel alongside the roles they play in the biblical narratives, approach the patriarchal setting from a negative point of view. Though acknowledging that women in

biblical literature may have been respected as individuals, Brenner insists that they were viewed as second-class participants in history — second in importance, inferior in social standing, and deficient in civil rights (Brenner 1994:136). She follows the feministic hermeneutic in assuming that the material in Scripture, for the most part, reflects male attitudes, though she is willing to attempt to examine the biblical narratives without labeling them *a priori* as biased or hostile because of what she perceives to be the male perspective (Brenner 1994:9).

Kassian presents the presuppositions of feminist theology as based on a view that the Bible was not a guidebook of timeless directives but rather a mere tool to assist its readers in understanding how God had worked in history. Feminists felt complete liberty to discard any passages of Scripture that did not agree with their envisioned agenda for sexual equality. To make such a drastic step away from biblical authority, they either dismissed the text as being outdated and thus irrelevant or they accused the author of the text as being misogynistic and thus not worthy of a hearing.

The hermeneutic used in this process of interpretation involved “creative actualization” through which one would read into, embellish, or augment the biblical text in order to bring it into conformity (Kassian 1992:90, 114). Again the ultimate methodology was to assign more value to a woman’s personal interpretation of God than to God’s self-revelation as recorded and honored for being Holy Scripture throughout the generations.

Scholars who embrace feminist theology by arguing that Paul was inconsistent or even wrong are much more straightforward exegetically and more convincing intellectually than those who try to revise or dismiss Paul's teachings (Köstenberger 1995:107). For example, Paul Jewett speaks of "limitations" in Paul's view of "the wife's subjection to her husband in all things."

However, one may find it easier in terms of both logic and generally accepted exegesis to accept the orthodox teachings of Paul, acknowledged by many to be the premier missionary-theologian of the first century, than to indulge in what some believe to be convoluted and speculative revision as suggested by Jewett. Especially is this true in light of the rather condescending admission from Jewett himself that Paul with "remarkable insights for a former Jewish rabbi . . . grasped the essential truth that the revelation of God in Christ radically affects one's view of the man/woman relationship" (Jewett 1975:142).

Apparently Jewett is willing to accord to Paul "remarkable" insight whenever the apostle agrees with Jewett's own opinions, while dismissing and even denigrating the apostle's perspectives whenever they happen to collide with Jewett's own presuppositions. Jewett, as any man or woman, is free to do this, but one must question the scholarship that uses one's own interpretations as the standard.

One of the most dangerous principles in the interpretation of Scripture is a "selective hermeneutic" in which some standard external to the biblical material itself becomes the final authority for

judging what is appropriate in matters of faith and practice. Such conclusions bring dangerous implications; and the norm for the church in subsequent eras becomes the New Testament's trajectory in contemporary society rather than its position gleaned from careful, historical exegesis and study of the inspired biblical material itself (Witherington 1990:245-246).

Lundy suggests that even cultural conditioning is done selectively. For example, wherever the Bible presents the unity and commonality of the sexes, that is considered a word from God and thus binding; but when the Bible affirms different roles and functions for men and women in marriage and in the church, the teaching is dismissed as merely a first-century cultural manifestation and thus is no longer valid for this generation. By coincidence, modern society is also advocating sexual equality without distinction of role assignments, which Lundy suggests is contemporary "cultural conditioning." Modern views may indeed be free from first-century conditioning, but are they free from twentieth-century bias? The question also arises as to whether such a position suggests that some parts of the Bible, i.e., parts that talk about equality, are binding; but other parts, i.e., parts that talk about differences in roles, are not binding (Lundy 1991:20-22).

Considering the Bible as the chief obstacle to women's equality and major hindrance to the realization of women's rights has been common among radical feminists. One approach to the Bible reconsiders the biblical tradition, keeping in mind that those described as "the writers and redactors and interpreters" have a

“patriarchal bias” and wear “sexist blinders.” From this perspective, “women are in a bad situation and have little hope of claiming whole personhood as long as the Judeo-Christian faith molds our understanding of God/man/woman” (Daly 1994:137).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton described the Bible “with its fables, allegories and endless contradictions” as “the great block in the way of civilization” and as a tool to perpetuate woman’s bondage” (Stanton 1992:119). Stanton determined “to neutralize” the Bible by producing “a woman-authored ‘woman’s Bible’ that would show the world what the Bible is really like.” In creating the volume, twenty women each bought two copies of the Bible, cut out verses they thought pertained to women, pasted them on pieces of paper, and then wrote their interpretations from a woman’s perspective on each (Hill 1996:27). Stanton assumed the position of putting herself over Scripture as she determined to revise the texts referring to women. Stanton believed the Bible contained both good and bad teaching. She seemed to consider herself equipped to distinguish between the two (Cottrell 1992:26-37).

1.4.4 Some Specific Hermeneutical Methods in Feminist Theology

A method popular with some radical feminist theologians, the “hermeneutic of suspicion,” maintains that history, and even the biblical text, since both have been composed by men, cannot be trusted. The dominance of male influence, from the view of feminist theologians, precludes a balanced transmission so that one must “read between the lines” for historical truth. This hermeneutical

approach introduces an imaginative reconstruction of historical reality as the standard for faith and practice to replace the revelation of God recorded in Holy Scripture.

Materialist and feminist exegesis, whatever else may be said about them, do not even claim to be an understanding of the text itself in the manner in which it was originally intended. At best they may be seen as an expression of the view that the Bible's message is in and of itself inexplicable, or else that it is meaningless for life in today's world. In this sense, they are no longer interested in ascertaining the truth, but only in whatever will serve their own particular agendas (Fitzmyer 1994:52-53).

Carol Meyers, Religion Professor at Duke University, in an interview with W. Sasser, challenges the traditional understanding of biblical texts dealing with women. She is asking whether or not the traditional interpretations of the Bible are time-locked so that they reflect biblical principles as they functioned in antiquity when they were formulated, i.e., inspired and recorded, or if they are timeless principles applicable to each succeeding generation:

Like most scholars, I do not believe the texts are the direct word of God I believe it is a record of the religious beliefs developed by a society struggling to understand God and the world (Sasser 1994:3).

Contemporary culture has failed to instill in its constituency the value system or the correct and meaningful way of defining reality, which is, in fact, necessary if the society is to survive. For example, the rise of abortion, or taking life within the womb, coupled with an increasing acceptance of homosexuality, the practice of which on a large scale would end a society, have come on the scene only after

the Judeo-Christian values upon which western civilization was founded have begun to fade.

Acceptance of tradition in the sense of a value system passed from generation to generation does not refuse change. For example, a woman who feels that she finds no meaning in areas traditionally satisfying to women does not have to explain or justify her frustrations. The value of the woman who devotes her life to career pursuits rather than to home and family is not the subject of debate. Making the choice of career over homemaking does not demand the rewriting of physiology, anthropology, psychology, and religion in order to rationalize that choice. "One who has found a well of pure meaning will have no need to drown everyone in it." One should concentrate energies on celebrating the uniqueness of life contributions, not by reacting and allowing rage to define those reactions (Goldberg 1973:223-225).

"Reader-response criticism," another hermeneutic popular among feminist theologians and evaluated by Ellen Charry, requires one to work actively to fill in gaps and ambiguities allegedly found in the text. By linking parts of the text together, one can transform the message of the text into something kindred to one's own personal experience. The science of interpretation is moved from the academy to the community as meaning found in the experience of the interpreter is unhindered by objective standards (Charry 1991:65-70).

A variation of this methodology is "privileged reading," in which the interpretation of the literature is limited to the community

and especially the “traumatized” within the community. This method is touted to be therapeutic in helping one to discover oneself, including personal and family history, in order to determine meaning and direction in life. Privileged reading is political, seeking to advance the traumatized group’s welfare. However, the loss of objectivity leads to the deadend of absolute relativism, in which normative structures are established by the experience of trauma and translated into alternatives for mainline religions. Such self-discovery counsel rejects all external authority, including Scripture (Charry 1991:71-78).

Both “reader response” and “privileged reading” interpretation fall within the genre of progressive hermeneutics. While one certainly wants to progress in the understanding of Scripture, there is real danger in going beyond centuries of disciplined exegesis of the text of Scripture and of considered commentary on Scripture. Also, this researcher cannot move beyond the obvious unity between creation and redemption.⁸ To progress so that redemption is placed over and above creation erases that unity. Culture fashioned and changing from generation to generation cannot destroy what punctilary creation by divine fiat established at the beginning of civilization. In considering biblical principles, one must not define such in language shackled by contemporary understandings; rather one must look to how the principles were presented and understood within the setting of the inspired author.

⁸Note the interaction between Grenz and Köstenberger in section 4.10.1, especially pp. 303-304, on the relationship between creation and redemption.

For example, hierarchy in the New Testament is not based on power or tyranny but rather on love and servant leadership.

We must develop a biblical understanding of masculine headship which is fully consistent with the created equality of Genesis 1, the outpouring of the Spirit on both sexes at Pentecost (Acts 2:17 ff) and their unity in Christ and in his new community (Galatians 3:28) (Stott 1990:270).

Paradoxes do occur in every area of life. One need not deny sexual equality or masculine headship since Scripture seems to affirm both. Rather one must seek to define each with care and integrity, giving priority to the way Scripture defines each. For example, biblical headship, through its clear link to responsibility, definitely suggests a degree of leadership reflecting more than authority. Paul illustrates this in Ephesians 5, in which the essence of Christ's headship over the church is His sacrificial love for her. Stott defines it as more "care" than "control" and more "responsibility" than "authority." Expressed another way—headship is a biblical term describing the "way in which women need men" and the means by which "men may serve women" or expressed another way—"the God-given means by which womanhood is respected, protected, and enabled to blossom" (Stott 1990:270-273).

Though "equality" and "partnership" are appropriate biblical principles describing the relationship between men and women, they lose their identification with sound doctrine if they are used to deny the reciprocal masculine headship of servant leadership (Stott 1990:274). Principles arising out of Scripture are worthy of respectful obedience, but principles elevated over and beyond

Scripture, even if arising out of the relevance of cultural transposition, reflect spiritual anarchy. “. . . As we learn new truths, we must take care not to forget enduring truths” (Kersten 1994:25).

Practitioners of the “reader response” hermeneutic and “privileged reading” hermeneutic recognize that anyone approaching the Bible or any other volume of literature does so out of a context of his own background. This is both inevitable and entirely appropriate. The problem arises whenever, in the process of recognizing the inevitability of one’s cultural baggage, one’s response is not an attempt to divest oneself of as much of this as possible but rather to embrace the limitation and even exalt it so that it becomes the *sine qua non* of hermeneutical methodology.

Even though every New Testament epistle was written to address particular problems in specific churches, their inclusion in the canon of Scripture would be one factor to indicate that the epistles continue to be relevant to churches and individuals in this generation. For example, Paul’s teaching on headship “remains stubbornly there . . . rooted in divine revelation, not human opinion, and in divine creation, not human culture . . . preserved as having permanent and universal authority” (Stott 1990:269-270).

Sandra Schneiders dismisses authorial intent for a “hermeneutic of transformation culminating in appropriation,” in which the interpreter does not attempt to identify with the intentions of the author but, from her own perspective, responds to the invitation of the text to the world of discipleship. She considers the author’s intention as a limitation, and she, as the interpreter,

must *transcend* the historical setting from which the author's intention emanated.

The hermeneutics of transformation, that is, the remaking of generations of Christian slaves by appropriation of the Second Testament through an entrance into the world of the text, has created an effective history, a tradition, through which the text is drawn forward from its past into our present. This tradition is simultaneously purified by and purifying of the text (Schneiders 1989:8).

"Purifying" the text of Scripture would seem to cross the line for what is appropriate on the part of sinful human beings (Ps. 19:7-11).

Craig Keener in his discussion on women in family and church relationships focuses on insights into ancient culture. The interpreter's question is to distinguish between what is cultural and thus situation-specific and what is transcultural and accordingly timeless. Keener proposes to show that Paul was simply adapting most of his teaching on women to his own culture, thereby rejecting universal transcultural principles. Keener maintains that Paul was an egalitarian whose outlook in his teachings on women was the result of his accommodation to the culture (Keener 1992:10-18).

S. M. Baugh evaluates Keener's hermeneutical method, which he denominates as "enculturation." Baugh notes that Keener seems to begin with a fundamental commitment to egalitarianism, which is a concept also described by Keener as "mutual submission." On this basis Keener regards any qualification of this concept of mutuality as the Bible's accommodation to its ancient culture, making ideas like submission and headship no longer relevant for this generation. This process Baugh identifies as the "enculturation hermeneutic," which is

used by Keener as his principal support in interpreting the passages concerning role relationships between men and women.

Baugh rejects this method on the basis that it opens the door to condone anything and everything one desires. He cites as an example the principle of monogamy in marriage. If “enculturation” is applied to marriage, one could suggest that monogamy was merely an accommodation to the New Testament culture since in the Old Testament Jacob, David, Solomon, and many others were polygamous. Immediately an alternative biblical model for contemporary marriages arises. Lest one dismiss this example as fanciful, consider the same methodology applied to remove opposition in issues like homosexuality or adultery or in the subjection of children to their parents. Baugh describes the “enculturation hermeneutic” as a symptom of the relativism of this age (Baugh [s a]:14-15).

David Thompson advocates a “trajectory hermeneutic” in his support of egalitarianism:

Paul’s culture-specific pastoral care safeguarded the culturally distinctive roles of men and women Paul’s inspired instruction was . . . faithful to the tradition . . . but also in tension with it and short of the conclusion to which it would ultimately lead Sensing the direction of the canonical dialogue and prayerfully struggling with it, God’s people conclude that they will most faithfully honor his Word by accepting the target already anticipated in Scripture and toward which the Scriptural trajectory was heading rather than the last entry in the Biblical conversation the canonical conversation at this point closed without final resolution. But the trajectory was clearly set toward egalitarian relationships (Thompson 1996:338-339).

The target, in Thompson's view, is egalitarianism, which becomes the standard in place of the specific teaching concerning headship and submission recorded in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. Though Thompson argues that his position is derived from Scripture, he suggests that the New Testament writers themselves followed "trajectories" of thought that might even go beyond the New Testament's teachings.⁹

Wayne Grudem responds to Thompson by noting that such procedure ultimately denies the final authority of Scripture and is replaced by whatever position one thinks the biblical authors would have adopted if they had waited for a more enlightened time to write their respective books. Thompson seems to claim that doctrinal views taught by the New Testament authors can be improved or even corrected with more knowledge. The standard then becomes Scripture plus something else (Grudem 1996:8-9).

Thompson also claims that there may be unusual times when it would be appropriate, with caution, to differ with a New Testament author's explanation of an Old Testament passage.

We should take caution in immediately assuming that Paul's reading of Genesis 2 must, without further inquiry, be ours (Thompson 1996:347).

Grudem responds that in this case, "Thompson's interpretation of Genesis 2 becomes the judge by which Paul's interpretation is pushed aside." If Paul's words are inspired of God, and thus infallible, then

⁹See David Thompson's complete article "Women, Men, Slaves and the Bible: Hermeneutical Inquiries" for a more complete explanation of his hermeneutic.

he was protected from mistakes in his interpretation of the Old Testament. Of course, Genesis 2 is problematic for egalitarians like Thompson because in this passage male headship in marriage is presented as part of the way God created men and women before sin entered the world (Gen. 2:15-18) (Grudem 1996:9-10).

Thompson also claims that one misinterprets Scripture when trying to solve problems by interpreting individual verses of Scripture.

. . . Attempts either to support or to deny egalitarian relationships between men and women solely on the basis of the interpretation of individual biblical texts in their contexts lead inevitably to eisegesis — to reading the interpreter's agenda into the text (Thompson 1996:327).

Grudem cautions against requiring “a whole hermeneutical framework” to answer contemporary problems from Scripture. One dare not short-circuit the wisdom of any single verse to speak clearly and directly to any question or situation. “The ability of the Bible to speak with authority through specific verses to controversial situations in the church would be lost” (Grudem 1996:10-11).

Closely related to the latter claim is Thompson's suggestion that broad themes can overrule specific verses.

Foundational theological claims in Scripture . . . could well imply conclusions ultimately at odds with specific legal, narrative, and pastoral instructions, and could take priority over them on given issues (Thompson 1996:349).

Grudem does not question the wisdom of looking at individual verses in view of developing broad themes, but he does caution against using broad themes to overrule specific verses since such a practice

ultimately undermines biblical authority by implying that some individual verses may be incorrect (Grudem 1996:11).

Finally, Thompson goes so far as to suggest that a passage, in moving against its culture, can overrule things specifically taught within the passage.

In its context of patriarchal society and assumed male domination, Genesis 1 — 3 must be seen *as moving strikingly in the direction of the liberation of women and the minimization of male domination* (Thompson 1996:333).

Grudem responds by affirming that

We must instead affirm both Genesis 1 and 2 as a real historical portrayal of the ideal relationship between man and woman in a world where there is no sin, and therefore as a pattern for marriage for all time (Grudem 1996:12).¹⁰

Grudem rightly cautions the interpreter to be wary of exchanging the authority of what Scripture says for the authority of their own ideas about improvements on New Testament teachings rendered after the New Testament was written. The bottom line is to determine what one accepts as final authority (Grudem 1996:12).

Raymond Ortlund suggests that one ought to approach any new, and perhaps even novel, interpretation of a biblical passage with care. New and valid insights are possible, and there may be correction needed for an error that crept into the church. However, no other book throughout the centuries has been the object of such sustained study by devout and gifted scholars as has the Bible. One must be doubly cautious when a particular interpretative drift

¹⁰See Appendix 1 — A for the chart, "Role Relationships Between Men and Women."

parallels what is happening in secular society. "Either this is a very impressive historical coincidence, or our thinking is being influenced from the wrong source" (Ortlund 1990:3).

1.4.5 Section Conclusion: Biblical Interpretation by Feminist Theologians

Daniel Lundy has evaluated the basis for biblical interpretation used by biblical feminists through framing seven arguments. Argument 1 suggests that the view of women held by the apostles came from their first-century culture and thus would not be appropriate for far-removed, succeeding generations. This view is problematic for these reasons: (1) Its implication that modern ideas about the role of women are superior to the teachings of the apostles themselves; (2) The option that modern views could share the criticism of "cultural conditioning" in reverse, since modern-day interpreters can be influenced by their culture in the same way first-century authors could have been influenced by their culture; (3) The possibility that to accept equality on one hand and reject role differences on the other would suggest that some parts of the Bible are more authoritative than others (Lundy 1994:4).

Argument 2 implies that the Bible contains human error in the sense that some of what the apostles taught as truths are rendered to be their own views, which they then accommodated to their own culture. This argument, of course, quickly boils down to who will judge what is actually true and how that judgment will be made. Either all Scripture is true, or some individual has a *human* plan to decipher what is true and what is untrue (Lundy 1994:4).

Argument 3 is closely related to Argument 2: There are contradictions in the Bible. If this were true, God would be in contradiction to Himself since the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of Scripture. If God directed these authors, surely He would say exactly what He wanted to say through them (Lundy 1994:5).

Argument 4 suggests that Paul's view of women comes from his rabbinical training. Of course, Paul was a rabbi before his Damascus Road conversion. However, if Paul believed the words of Scripture to be God's words, he surely would not accommodate those words to any human standard (Lundy 1994:5).

Argument 5 implies that Paul's teaching is colored by and should be applied to specific local situations without any applicability to later situations since those first-century situations no longer exist. Argument 6 affirms that oneness in Christ abolishes gender differences. Jesus did indeed treat women with dignity and affirmed the use of their giftedness in the kingdom. However, Jesus did not choose even one woman to be counted among His twelve apostles. A better interpretation of the broad context of Scripture seems to be that Jesus' approach to women was marked by an affirmation of the equality of men and women with some role distinctions (Lundy 1994:6).

Argument 7 notes that spiritual gifts and the priesthood of believers involve both men and women. Concerning the latter, clearly all believers have access to God without any need for an intermediary. All believers can serve God, but there are no clear statements that every believer can hold any office in the church. The

bestowal of spiritual gifts does not carry *carte blanche* for spiritual autonomy in the use of those gifts. Rather the gifts come from the Holy Spirit and thus are to be used within the boundaries stated in Scripture. To suggest skirting those boundaries because of the Holy Spirit's direction would place the Spirit in contradiction with Himself — an untenable possibility (Lundy 1994:7-8).

Every individual who reads, interprets what he reads; and the Bible is no exception to that rule. Though each individual comes to interpretation with influences from the tradition that molds her faith, she can acknowledge this bias and be aware of its influence and the presuppositions it brings to the table of discussion.

Hermeneutical principles are tools that enable those who would interpret Scripture to do so more accurately and effectively. In the process of this project, selected texts in Scripture will be examined in order to systematize a theology of biblical womanhood. Though a myriad of principles are in the marketplace of ideas and though some of these have been introduced in this chapter, and especially in section 1.4.4, in these few paragraphs those specific hermeneutical tools that will be used in exegeting and interpreting passages in the succeeding chapters will be set forth.

First and most important is the principle of **divine illumination** given by the Lord Himself when He promised to send the Holy Spirit to “teach” believers all things (John 14:26). Without the unique divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, no one can comprehend God's revelation of Himself (1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1-2). No interpreter of Scripture will find clear and helpful insights in the

Word of God without prayerful dependence upon the Author of the Bible.

Second is the principle of **contextual interpretation**, which maintains that no verse should be interpreted without consideration for both its immediate and extended context.

Third is the patient search for **clarity**. There are difficult and even some apparently ambiguous verses in Scripture. Each must be examined in the light of the many verses that are perfectly clear and consistent. One must accept that the Bible is uniquely the work of God even though it came through human authors. Therefore, it is precisely what God intended to transmit to His creation.

Finally, the principle of the **grammatical-historical method** enables one to understand precisely what the words mean, especially as they are used by the respective authors. The historical situation must also be a part of careful investigation.

1.5 Language about God

That God is beyond sexual distinctions is not debatable with most theologians. Gender language is used to describe God because there is no other way to speak about persons except masculine and feminine language. Though God is beyond sexual distinctions, He is a personal God. However, He did choose to reveal Himself with gender language (Volf 1996:170).

Miroslav Volf describes God as modeling “common humanity” rather than “gender specificity”: “One can learn from God the Father no more about what it means to be a human father than one can learn about what it means to be a human mother” (Volf 1996:171-

172). This statement seems to contradict the very specific language God Himself chose for His self-revelation. One would do well to consider the difference between a metaphor of representation and a simile of description. Since God Himself created male and female and thus the gender differences, it seems anachronistic to suggest that “any femininity or masculinity we may find in God was projected onto God” (Volf 1996:175-176) unless, of course, one wishes to argue that the text came into being long after creation and thus upholds the male/female bias of the society of record.

1.5.1 The Use of Literary Tools

Feminists have introduced a diverse and complex god, but they offer no truth test for their knowledge of God other than their own personal experience. They also have no basis for value judgments other than their own reasoning. They frequently reach for the religious metaphor, which they would use as “a theological tool with which women can realize their individual religious potential to shape their own reality and idea of God” (Talbert-Wettler 1993:4)

Unfortunately, contemporary views of religious metaphors used by secular feminists are deeply rooted in existential and neo-pagan philosophy. Their presuppositions include the following: (1) The patriarchal system at the core of Christianity oppresses women; (2) The use of masculine symbolism for God gives men an unbalanced position of authority over women; (3) Christ, when portrayed as a male symbol, is inadequate for women’s religious needs; (4) Women must be liberated from male theology (Talbert-Wettler 1993:3-4). These presuppositions are in contradistinction to

the purpose of the biblical metaphor to communicate truths “through an analogical and propositional understanding of God’s nature” as well as to illustrate God’s loving concern for men and women through the use of easily understood everyday examples (Talbert-Wettler 1993:22).

There is a difference between the metaphor, which is used to name God (i.e., Father), transferring the representation of God into human language, and the simile, which is used to state resemblance (i.e., mother). The former is bold declaration, often establishing a fuller representation; the latter is more restricted, gentle likeness. In fact, a simile suggests a limited association with a particular sense rather than a broad general association. For example, similes comparing God to a mother merely illustrate a specific phase of the divine attitude or intent, which is defined within the context of the simile.

God is very rarely ever compared to a mother. He is never called Mother, or addressed as Mother, in either Testament (Frye 1989:51-54).

Volf claims that the content of gender identity is “rooted in the sexed body and negotiated in the social exchange between men and women within a given cultural context.” He proposes that there are no patterns for “biblical womanhood and manhood” because of the diversity of male and female characters and roles found throughout Scripture. Normative value is determined by cultural context within his scheme.

We should root each [femininity and masculinity] in the sexed body and let the social construction of gender play itself out guided by the vision of the identity of and relations between divine persons (Volf 1996:181-182).

This position dismisses subordinationism as culturally conditioned, interpreting key biblical statements on gender as strictly egalitarian (Gen. 1; 2; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; Eph. 5:21-33) (Volf 1996:182-183).

It seems more appropriate to acknowledge that all one knows about femininity or masculinity comes by revelation from the Creator Himself, since He designed both the man and the woman in all aspects of their being. One finds it difficult to explain passages like Proverbs 31:10-31 if its portrait of “the woman of strength” is not normative for biblical womanhood. It is also unlikely that the Creator would leave to the creation the responsibility for self-determination in this most basic sphere of defining their respective natures.

1.5.2 Naming By God or God-Naming

Krister Stendal, dean of Harvard Divinity School, even referred to the maleness of God as a “cultural and linguistic accident.” In proceeding to “name” God, feminists argued for an extension of female imagery of God to include reference to God as “Mother” as well as “Father,” which they felt “broadened” the concept of God and equalized the role and status of women. Yet to alter the language used by God to reveal Himself in order to conform to a feminist understanding of God is in essence to alter the biblical image of God and rename God, which is a serious matter indeed. To make God in

one's own image seems to be, on the part of mankind, an inveterate tendency (Yarbrough 1992:32).

Feminism, in fact, becomes the parameter to define the boundaries of biblical authority. Renaming God strips Him of His independent, personalized existence. Furthermore, for men and women to ignore the God-imagery of masculinity and femininity taught in Scripture is to lose the ability to view oneself in the proper manner and to forfeit the opportunity to interact properly with the Creator (Kassian 1992:140-147).

Since both the language in Scripture itself and the tradition of interpretation accompanying the text throughout the generations has been "quite pronounced in its selection of the masculine forms for God," one would conclude that "God's self-revelation in history has been deliberate and remains significant." Consider the anomaly in this equation:

Jesus never shrank from shocking the conventional wisdom, priestly classes, customs, traditions, or even common sense of His time. If today it shocks our own generation of 'enlightened' Westerners that Jesus did not choose women to become priests, why would He have been afraid to shock His generation by choosing women priests? (Novak 1993:27).

To understand the boundaries for human accommodation of God's chosen vehicle for unveiling Himself and revealing the Christian faith, one must determine how important the symbols He Himself chose are in giving knowledge and understanding about who God is and what He is like. When Jesus assumed His fleshly tabernacle in His earthly incarnation, He made a choice between

becoming male or female, with all the differentiation and limits involved in that choice. No halfway or neutered position was mentioned as a consideration.

God had sexual differentiation in His mind at the very foundation of the history of salvation Thus sex differentiation is not simply a trivial detail, to be discarded or altered without concern for consequences; it is essential to the story of human salvation One cannot, in short, yank the thread of sexual differentiation from the Christian faith without unraveling the whole. A weakening of the integrity of the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Church, Christian marriage and family life, and much else besides, must inevitably follow (Novak 1993:30).

The question remains: Can women and men know God through the ways He has chosen to reveal Himself, or must they be left to imagine intuitively or through their own experience who God is?

. . . The Bible has authority in my life because it makes sense of my experience and speaks to me about the meaning and purpose of my humanity in Jesus Christ" (Russell 1985:138).

Christianity is a religion for men and women, not for disembodied persons or for angels. Though being Jew or Gentile, a prisoner or a free man, a teacher or an engineer is the result of culture and/or circumstance, being male or female is a major and unavoidable aspect of personhood and is sealed by fiat in the divine economy before other choices are made (Novak 1993:32).

Elizabeth Achtemeier addresses the critical issue of God's choice to use primarily male imagery to reveal Himself:

As soon as God is called female, the images of birth, of suckling, of carrying in the womb, and, most importantly, the

identification of the deity with the life in all things become inevitable, and the Bible's careful and consistent distinction between Creator and creation is blurred and lost (Achte-meier 1986:109).

Achte-meier is thus judging the God-naming by feminists on the basis of the authority of biblical and doctrinal tradition.

On the other hand, feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether reverses that approach and judges Scripture by how well it supports feminist theology. Ruether's approach shackles the interpreter in presuming to measure the divine nature and inspired words of Holy Scripture with one's own limitations. Frye cites Origen's distinction: "God is indeed not revealed by the word that originates from us, but is revealed by his Word to us" (Frye 1989:46-47).

Women and men do not need revelations based upon their respective gender distinctions in order to know God. Novak commented,

Intelligent people ought to be able to follow basic laws of language without artificial crutches, and to judge from context how broad a range of applications is intended, without turning linguistic somersaults (Novak 1993:27).

Some feminists claim that the generic use of man and the consistency of employing male pronouns in reference to God and in language used within the church serve to reinforce what they see as stereotypes in inferiority and superiority. They are convinced that ultimately women are excluded "from full participation in the Christian experience" so that men are given superior and supreme

positions and women are relegated to the "position of other" (Kassian 1992:138).

The most potentially hazardous tampering with the biblical text and its language seems to be the changes from what is actually clearly stated to what the interpreter prefers the words to say: "When we change what the Bible does say to what we think it should say, it becomes a dummy for our own thought" (Frye 1989:48).

John Stott notes that to call God the Father "mother" and Jesus His "only child" is to ignore the historical reality of the Incarnation as well as to dismiss the example of Jesus, who addressed God as "Abba" or Father and identified Himself as "the Son" and who instructed His children to call God "our Father in heaven" (Stott 1990:258-259).

One is reminded that figurative language for God was not chosen because of its being stylistically inviting but rather because of its effectiveness in conveying God's disclosure of Himself. Within all of literature, there is a fundamental principle that figures should not be abandoned or symbols substituted or images altered because such would inevitably alter the meaning being conveyed by the author (Frye 1989:48).

Roland Frye has stated the matter succinctly:

The assumption that we can exchange certain biblical figures for others that, for whatever reason, may seem preferable is not only linguistically and literarily wrong, but also leads to conclusions that are false both historically and theologically (Frye 1989:45).

Language for God cannot be equated to naming in ordinary speech, in which that naming is subject to human choice, culture, or change.

Only God can name God because the Christian faith emanates from and is embodied in the distinctive language used by God in naming Himself. By the same token, to change that divinely orchestrated naming is to risk introducing beliefs about God that are not inherent in the Christian faith or incorporated within Holy Scripture (Frye 1989:45).

Millard Erickson gives warning about the dangers of depersonalizing the conception of God “by minimizing certain images in the revelation which give him particularity.” He suggests that although inclusiveness may help women to personalize God to a greater degree, any such gains in inclusiveness may be achieved at the expense of a loss of concreteness and thus an ultimate weakening of God’s self-revelation (Erickson 1994:117).

Elizabeth Achtemeier notes that some feminists express their most radical ideology in language *about God*:

By attempting to change the biblical language used of the deity, these feminists have in reality exchanged the true God for those deities which are ‘no gods,’ as Jeremiah put it (2:11) (Achtemeier 1993:17).

Molly Marshall acknowledges that language about God “is predominantly masculine in Scripture and in the history of the church.” For her, this “gender-specific language” has created “a considerable barrier to a proper theological understanding of the character of God” and even contributed to a distorted view of God, since He was characterized in Scripture through the language of primarily male experience (Marshall 1992:6). The fact that God chose to reveal Himself through this “gender-specific language” is ignored.

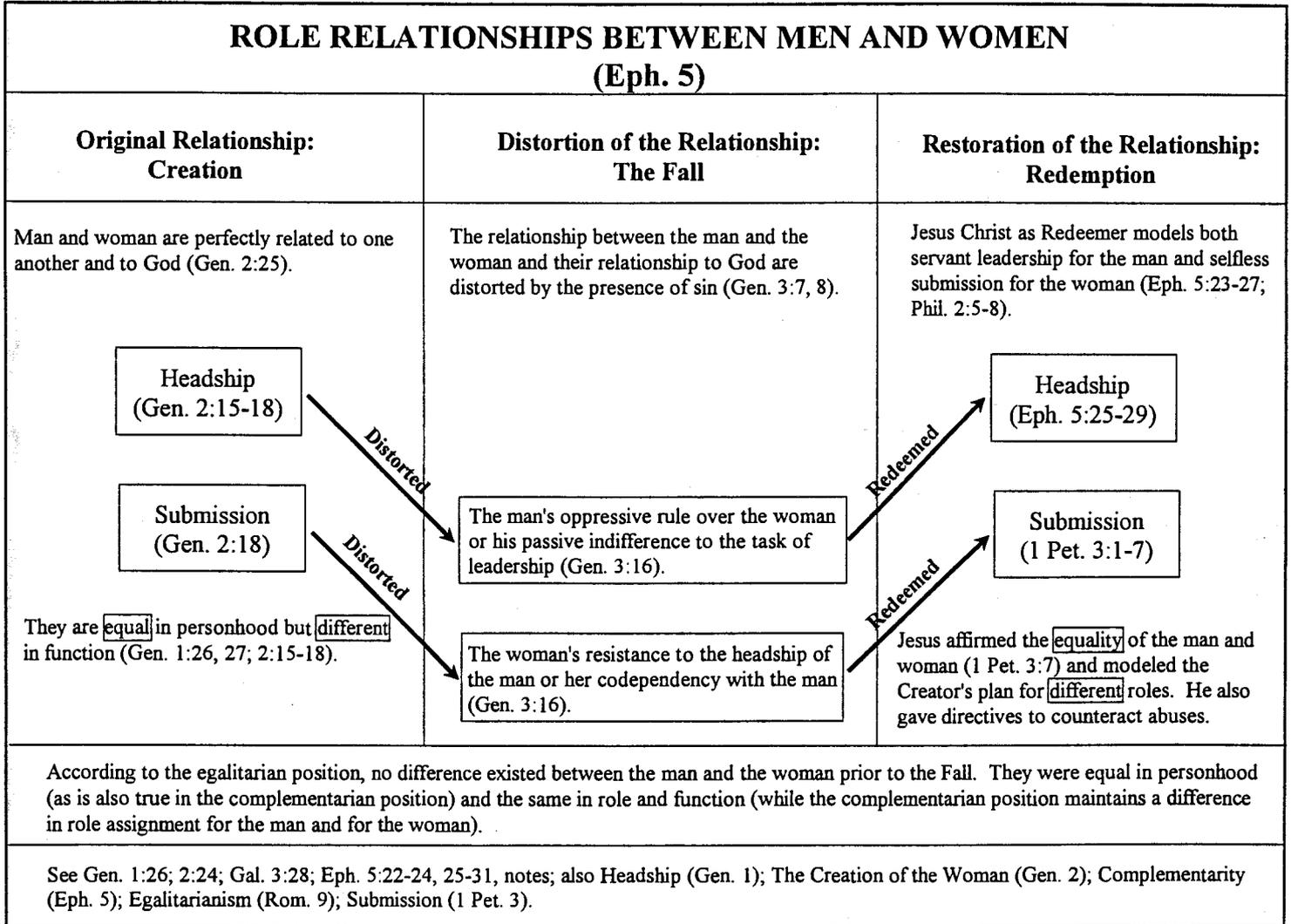
Though Marshall acknowledges that images of God found in Scripture were “inspired,” she hastens to add that they reflect the worldview and particular evaluation of “the circumscribed gender-appropriate behaviors in which it [Scripture] was written” (Marshall 1992:6).

Though Carol Meyers generally supports the use of inclusive language in modern translations of Scripture, she parts way with many feminist scholars and religious leaders on the license for wholesale reinterpretations. She expresses her position clearly in an interview with W. Sasser:

The Bible is a fixed canon and I don't believe one should change the text in order to suit one's political perspective Whenever the Bible can be interpreted in a more generic or general way, I think it should be. There is no neuter in biblical Hebrew. I believe, for example, that the use of masculine for God is often metaphorical, but nonetheless, grammatically, the language is always masculine (Sasser 1994:7).

While recognizing that reinterpretation of the original texts will continue, Meyers affirms the core beliefs that have guided and shaped the lives of the faithful throughout the generations. She cautions against allowing personal biases and prejudices to interfere with an objective study of the text: “As a critic of 2,000 years of male bias, I do not want to introduce a 1990s female bias” (Sasser 1994:7).

APPENDIX 1 — A



This chart was prepared by Dorothy Patterson for The Woman's Study Bible and is used by permission of Thomas Nelson Publishers.

APPENDIX 1 — B

Some Suggested Guidelines for the Interpretation
of Biblical Passages on Women

- (1) The spiritual privileges in the body of Christ come equally to men and women (Gen. 1:27; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7).
- (2) The unity of position and privilege does not mean uniformity of practice and function nor the obliteration of all differences between the sexes (Gen. 2:15-25; Eph. 5:21-23; Col. 3:18-19).
- (3) The assignment of headship to the husband and submission to the wife was made in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen. 2:15-25). The order of creation, i.e., the man before the woman, as well as the method, i.e., the woman out of the man, seem to substantiate and illustrate the divine assignment to each. Furthermore, the New Testament passages of instruction to husbands and wives are in complete harmony with the Old Testament historical account of the establishment of the first home (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).
- (4) Regulations concerning the activities of women "in the church" are set forth in the New Testament (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5). These regulations do not supersede but rather supplement the principles of equal privilege in Christianity (1 Cor. 11:3-16; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).
- (5) Underlying Paul's answers to these difficult passages (1 Cor. 11:3-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:9-15) concerning the role of women in the church is his deep concern for preservation of

the home as God established it in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:8-25). Though Paul ascribes a position or function to women that is different than that assigned to men, he does not regard their function in church affairs to be any less important (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5).

Chapter 2

The Gender Paradox — Equal but Different

The pericope about the origin of the woman to be examined (Gen. 2:18-25) rests within the broader context of the first four chapters of Genesis. These chapters are not in conflict with one another; nor is it universally agreed, even among scholars, that two different creation accounts are represented. Though Genesis 2 certainly harmonizes, and that without contradiction, with Genesis 1, the passages do not, nor should they be expected to, delineate in exactly the same way the events recorded.

Whereas Genesis 1 is a general, chronological account of the creation process, ending with mankind as the climax of the divine creative activity, with an emphasis upon the spiritual realm in which the man and woman share equally in the image of God; Genesis 2 pinpoints the beginning of human history with its more detailed account of the creation of mankind, revealing therein a functional distinction between the man and the woman, which, in turn, would establish the foundation for the ~~role~~ ^{in roles} differentiation between men and women in the home, church, and society. This distinction is set forth in the initial chapters of Genesis and reaffirmed in the New Testament.

2.1 A General Overview of the Creation Account

Within Genesis 2, verses 4-6 refer to the overall activity of the Creator; verses 7-14 describe the Garden of Eden, the place God prepared for the man and the woman; verses 15-17 give more specific instructions to the man concerning his functional responsibility in the task of dominion (“to tend,” i.e., the provision of

sustenance from the garden; and “keep,” i.e., the protection of the garden) and spiritual leadership (i.e., the responsibility for the divine directive concerning life and death); verses 18-25 describe the presentation of the woman to the man, record her function within the divine order, and establish the relationship that is to exist between the man and woman.

2.1.1 Questions Concerning the Unity of the Account

Some, as Phyllis Bird, reject the thesis that the first four chapters of Genesis are a unified whole. Bird rejects the unity of these chapters on the basis that she cannot “resolve the persisting tensions between the two originally independent accounts”; yet she indicates clearly the commonalty they share: “. . . Both accounts describe the species in its fundamental and essential nature but with differing terms and emphases that invite interpretation as complementary and progressive statements . . .” (Bird 1994:522).

Feminist theologians add their skepticism, claiming that the acceptance of a two thousand year tradition for a more literal reading of the text itself, together with the chronological order of reported events, produces a naive interpretation of the Bible, which, in turn, serves to foster anti-woman arguments. In addition, from their perspectives, these arguments are not inherent in the texts themselves but have been propagated through a long and complicated history of interpretation (Schungel-Straumann, 1993:53).

The critical approach of such scholars often calls for subjective opinion (e.g., conjecturing how the Hebrew text may have read originally) and speculation (e.g., using conjectures to support

predetermined critical positions or contemporary cultural ideologies) rather than seeking proof from valid, logical, clear statements of fact. Surface disagreements do occasionally appear in the text, but they are often easily resolved by the deeper, overall harmony that undergirds the text, the context, and the whole of Scripture. Frequently, even more challenging harmonizations come through archaeological investigation and from other sources uncovered in the passing of time.

Many of those who see striking differences between Genesis 1 and 2 do not necessarily assume that this means conflict or contradiction. Rather the remarkable similarity found within the diversity is noted as evidence of the “divine authority with which they confront” the reader (König 1988:24). Paul Jewett expresses it this way: “What was simply stated in the first creation account (Gen. 1:27) is now enlarged upon” — a reference to Genesis 2 (Jewett 1975:38).

An attack on the unity of the text with its immediate context would seem to make a fully coherent interpretation of that text almost impossible. If the Pentateuch is composed of a number of different documents written by different authors at different times, the redactor who supposedly finally pieced them together would seemingly, at first glance, need to have been an artist and genius; yet if he began the work (the first two chapters) with two contradictory accounts of creation, he must also have been careless and haphazard in his editorial work. One must also note with interest that few, if any, commentators considered the accounts of creation to be conflicting until the rise of modern scholarship in the nineteenth

century (Young 1976:58-59). Furthermore even some contemporary interpreters, such as Berkeley scholars Kikawada and Quinn, who certainly do not operate from an evangelical perspective, are now calling into question the documentary hypothesis as applied to Genesis 1 — 11 and, in fact, now propose a unitary reading for those chapters:

However imposing the consensus, the documentary hypothesis remains an hypothesis. Its formulation may well have represented the dawn of a new day for biblical scholarship, but days have their dawns and their dusks (Kikawada 1985:13).

2.1.2 The Unity of Genesis in the Study of the Relationship Between the Man and Woman

Neuer maintains that the assumption that Genesis 1 comes from a different source than do chapters 2, 3, and 4, a view commonly held by Old Testament scholars who are wed to higher criticism, has no real significance for the study of man and woman. He bases this position on the fact that a real theological difference or any contradiction between Genesis 1 and succeeding chapters in the book has not been established in a clear and convincing way. In fact, Neuer holds that scholars agree on the main points (Neuer 1991:59). This view is also affirmed by Hauke:

In both accounts of creation, that of the priestly text and that of the Yahwist, the sexual differentiation of mankind is willed by God Both sexes are formed, in equal measure, 'in the image of God,' and there is no mention of any evaluative gradation, in the sense, for example, that woman would be any less in the image of God than is man (Hauke 1988:198-199).

Neuer sees the importance of reading Genesis 1 — 4 in two ways: as an account of something that happened in the past and as a

statement on the relationship between the man and woman that is also appropriate and fully valid in the present. This fact is illustrated in a comparison of Genesis 2:23, in which Adam expressed his excitement about Eve's appearance on the scene, with Genesis 2:24, in which God's principle for marriage is expressed in a timeless fashion (Neuer 1991:60) — so much so that it is repeated in exactly the same way in the New Testament (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7; Eph. 5:31).

In any case, this writer accepts the account of creation as an actual historical event and the first two chapters of Genesis as two complementary accounts of the same event, which conclusion seems consistent with the way Scripture treats these events (Ex. 20:2-11; 31:17; Ps. 8; 104; Matt. 19:4-6; 2 Pet. 3:5; Heb. 4:4). Clark says,

Genesis 2 contains a presentation of the creation of man that covers the same ground as Genesis 1:26-31, but in a significantly different way. Genesis 2 relates the story of Adam and Eve in narrative form Some view it as primarily an account of the origin of the sexes, while Genesis 1 is an account of the origin of the species (Clark 1980:15).

Repeatedly, the New Testament acknowledges or refers directly to Genesis 2:18-25. The apostle Paul alludes to the creation account in his discussion of the headship of the man over the woman in 1 Corinthians 11 (vv. 8-9). He refers in principle to the creation account to substantiate his call for submission of the wife to her husband in the marriage relationship (1 Cor. 14:34-35; Eph. 5:21, 22, 24; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11-14; Tit. 2:5). He also appeals to creation in his explanation of the role of women in the church (1 Tim. 2:13-14; see Appendix 2 — A).

Regarding Genesis 1 and 2, perhaps most important is the fact that the author who linked these parallel accounts of God's creative activity obviously saw no fundamental incompatibility between them but rather considered Genesis 2 to 4 as building upon and augmenting what had been written in Genesis 1. Clark noted that the inspired author had enough understanding of the materials he was putting together to be able to present complementary, and not contradictory, information (Clark 1980:15).

2.2 Some General Reflections on the Meaning of the Phrase "in the Image of God"

The basic question concerns what it means to be made "in the image of God." This distinction sets the man and woman apart from the remainder of God's creation. The rest of creation was "according to its own kind," but man's image was not to be of himself since he was to share a likeness to his Creator. Though not mentioned in other creative activity, in the creation of mankind gender became important to the man and to the woman, not just because of the assignment of procreation given but also because of the unique reciprocity to be involved in the relationship of one with the other (Sailhamer 1990:37).

The terms "image" (צלם), meaning a "shadow" or "sketch" or "outline" from the root meaning "to carve" or "to cut off" (Wilson 1978:225) and "likeness" (דמות), meaning "representation," "image," "model," "pattern," or "an appearance resembling something" (Brown 1907:198) reinforce each other and are considered parallel terms by some commentators.

Phyllis Bird suggests that the term “image” refers to what is concrete in form or appearance and is commonly used of a statue or visual representation; whereas the term “likeness” is abstract, indicating a comparison without specifying content or manner. From this differentiation, Bird concludes that “image” is an empty term without specific content, “inviting ever new attempts to fill it in accordance with changing views of humankind and deity,” and “likeness” suggests the idea of “comparison without specification of manner or content.” She maintains that the two words are parallel with a single meaning when used together (Bird 1994:529-530).

“Image” is rarely used in Scripture (only 17 occurrences). Though etymology is never an absolute guide to usage, in some cases it can aid the interpreter. However, the uncertain etymology of the term used in this phrase makes its interpretation even more challenging. Most often the word refers to some type of physical image (Num. 33:52; 1 Sam. 6:5; Ezek. 16:17). Another view suggests that “image” is a reference to man’s capacity to relate to God, enabling God to speak to him and make covenants with him. Still others maintain that “image” is what makes man God’s representative on earth (Wenham 1987:29-33).

The Church Fathers suggested various interpretations of “image” — dominion over nature (Chrysostom), the capacity to love (Gregory of Nyssa), the aptness for friendship (Basil), the penchant for creativity (Theodoret), or the ability to receive sanctification (Cyril of Alexandria) (Clark 1980:12).

Historically, especially with the Church Fathers, the principal thesis has defined “image” as the spiritual or immaterial in an

individual, which led to the view that “image” (reference to the ability to reason) and “likeness” (reference to spiritual attributes) were two different concepts. However, there is little evidence in the text to suggest this bifurcation.

“Likeness” is related to the verb דמה, literally “to be like, resemble,” (Brown 1907:197-198), denoting a model or plan (1 Kin. 16:10). This word is used most often in the Book of Ezekiel (see Ezek. 1:5). Some suggest that “image” and “likeness” are completely distinct — with “image” referring to the natural qualities in man (e.g., reason, personality, etc.) and “likeness” referring to the supernatural graces (e.g., that which enables one to make ethical judgments). However, in Genesis the terms appear to be used interchangeably.

Others suggest that “image” refers to physical resemblance, i.e., “the absolute, literal, physical resemblance.” Interpreters positing this view point to Genesis 5:1-3, in which Seth is presented in the “image” of his father Adam (Tenney 1977:254). On the other hand, one must still consider the emphasis of the Old Testament and affirmation of the New Testament on the transcendence of God, whose active presence is not limited by form as He is simultaneously present everywhere (Deut. 4:15-16; Jer. 23:23-24; Rom. 1:20; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17).

Commentators have addressed this phenomenon in different ways. Some suggest that the link between “image” and “rule” (Gen. 1:26) suggests that the divine image clarifies the function of the man as ruler. Barth maintained that the image was bound up only in the unity or co-humanity of male and female. Others have tried to limit the “image” to the soul and/or spirit, even though this view is

suspect because of the many anthropomorphisms using actual physical features (i.e., limbs, form) in speaking about God (König 1982:102-103).

Another significant, though often overlooked characteristic of mankind is the unique and exclusive relationship sustained between man and his Creator. One understands God as He is revealed in anthropomorphic language. Also important to this imaging is that man is “called to be and to live like God and like Christ there is a certain agreement, analogy, comparability between God and man” (Eph. 5:2; 1 John 3:2) (König 1982:104-105).

Westermann suggests that “image” does not refer to a particular human quality but relates to the purpose of the Creator for the man and the woman. “The Creator wants to create a being analogous to himself, to whom he can speak, who will listen and speak to him” (Westermann 1987:10).

“Image” and “likeness” are used in tandem only in Genesis 1:26 and 5:3. They may be used together to make the expression more emphatic (Bush 1976:41). First, and most naturally evolving from the text, is the idea that “in His image” emphasizes the idea that the man and the woman are to be **closely patterned after their Maker** — not only made according to the deliberate plan and purpose of God but also patterned after Him (Leupold 1942:88).

. . . The body of man must at least be regarded as the fittest receptacle for man’s spirit and so must bear at least an analogy to the image of God, an analogy that is so close that God and His angels choose to appear in human form when they appear to men (Leupold 1942:90).

In Scripture, “image” and “likeness” are used to affirm that mankind was fashioned in the image of God and that Jesus, the Son, was the image of the invisible God (Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:1, 3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9). Unquestionably, mankind uniquely reflects God (Elwell 1984:546).

God becomes visible in the life of man, and man must represent God: literally, he must make God present on earth man must become transparent so that God can be seen through him, as through a window (König 1982:106-107).

Mankind was created to be like God in some very important ways, since the man and the woman were to be God’s representatives and thus to exercise rule over His creation.

God’s purpose involves giving the human race a very important role in creation and an ability to exercise God’s own authority in the way God himself would (Clark 1980:12).

Second, only mankind in all of God’s creation is like Him — not in the sense of being divine but in the sense of being able to have **fellowship with Him**. Third, mankind is able to represent God by **exercising His dominion on the earth**.

. . . That man’s being, though linked with the divine, is itself essentially not divine, but created, and thus dependent on God and of a different order from His own being though akin to it (Elwell 1984:545).

The fact that the command to continue the generations is linked with the creation of the male and the female would suggest that sexual differentiation is part of God’s original purpose for the human race. Of course, “no sexual functions are ever ascribed to God”

(König 1982:107-108). God supersedes masculinity and femininity; yet He uses both to reveal Himself to His creation.¹

Both the man and the woman are necessary to accomplish the divine assignment, since “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28) involves the sexual uniqueness of both the man and the woman to continue the species. Marie Robinson, a medical doctor, explains the reciprocity within sexuality this way:

A woman’s maternal instinct is as deep and as ineradicable as the instinct to plant the seed of his species is in man. They both subserve the same ends, the continuation of the race (Robinson 1959:63).

Genesis 1 is the foundation for all further discussion of the roles of the man and the women. “The human race as a whole has a call within God’s creation and both men and women participate in that call” (Clark 1980:13-14). Claus Westermann clarifies this Creator/creation relationship, “Humans are to correspond to God so that something can happen between them and God, so that God can speak to them and they can answer” (Westermann 1984:97).

Fourth, to say that something in the physical makeup of man corresponds to God paves the way for the fullest and highest revelation God was to give of Himself — Jesus. This idea would be consistent with the statement of Jesus about His relationship with the Father (John 14:9-10). However, because God is a spirit, He has no bodily form except when He chooses to manifest Himself anthropomorphically or incarnationally in order to communicate more effectively with His creation.

¹See discussion in section 2.2.2, pp. 107-109, concerning female metaphors and section 1.5.1, pp. 82-84, on the use of the metaphor in contrast to the simile.

Imagery for God in the Judeo-Christian tradition has primarily been expressed in masculine terms — Father, Son, King, etc. Some suggest that this use of language is the result of Hebrew patriarchal society, which then appeared within Greek philosophical traditions. Some feminist theologians even suggest that “normative conceptualization of God in analogy with male reality alone is the equivalent of the graven image” (Johnson 1984:442-443). However, a high view of the inspiration of Scripture would suggest that God Himself chose the language for His self-revelation.

2.2.1 The Influence of Patriarchy

Many feminist theologians recognize the presence of patriarchy as the springboard for hierarchy in the creation ordinance, and they are therefore calling for a new basis for doing theology. They ask to be freed from historical patriarchy, as found in Genesis 1 — 4 and throughout the Old Testament.²

Mathews notes that there is a hierarchical structure among those in the garden at the time of creation: God, the man, the woman, and the serpent. This order was reversed in the Fall: “the woman listens to the serpent; the man listens to the woman; and no one listens to God” (Mathews 1996:220).

Although the concept of rulership as the description of the correspondence between God and man is offensive to feminist theologies that maintain that Genesis 1:26-28 pictures God as a monarchical tyrant, these verses clearly state that all individuals are made in the “image of God,” which by all means liberates humanity

²For example, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: a Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, New York: Crossroad, 1983; Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk, Boston: Beacon, 1983.

from any hint of oppressive class systems. In fact, the biblical tradition opposes despotic forces that promote human misery (Mathews 1996:169). Christian scholars generally accept that the culture established in the Old Testament is patriarchal. To reject patriarchy as a moral evil raises the question of whether or not such a view undermines biblical authority.

Carmody declares: "This patriarchal view is simply not acceptable." Her bold statement would seem to indicate that such a system "fails to provide what both women and men require today" (Carmody 1988:73). In response, one must consider that Scripture does not suggest that God's children should dictate what they would "require" from Him in any "day" or generation; rather, as God's creation, they are instructed as to what God requires of them (see Mic. 6:8).

An obsession with patriarchy can create a "victim" culture, which eventually directs one's emotional energies into bitterness and hostility. The result is the tearing down of relationships between men and women and often the catapulting into leadership of those who are angry and resentful (Ellis 1994:43-44, 48).

Patriarchy is most accurately defined in morally neutral terms — i.e., the rule of fathers (Brown 1993:2124). Most feminist theologians, however, react strongly against the concept. They move to interpret and even fashion language, history, and hermeneutics primarily according to their own experience. They equate patriarchy with sexism and thus blame it for "the systematic oppression of women" (Haas 1995:2).

Feminist theologians explain patriarchy by saying that God accommodated Himself to the culture in His revelation: "God revealed Himself and his plan for his people by means of this patriarchal culture" (Haas 1995:9). Certainly such a view presents a problem in that one is then forced to imply that God commanded a sinful practice in order to accommodate Himself to allegedly sinful human practices that existed in the culture — a direct contradiction to what would constitute a pattern of holy and set-apart living for the people of God. Even when one explains this by saying that patriarchal culture was the ground for working redemptive purposes, which would then end patriarchy, one is still suggesting that God prescribes evil so that good may come — a good goal, thus justifying the evil means (see Rom. 3:5-6; 7:7, 14). Another point of interest is the fact that no teachings in the New Testament explicitly condemn patriarchy. In fact, many feminists note that New Testament teachings continue to call for patriarchal patterns in marriage and church leadership (Haas 1995:10-13).

2.2.2 Feminine Metaphors and the Godhead

The man, for whatever reasons, must correspond more nearly, not to the *imago dei* in itself, but to the way the Creator wants to reveal Himself to His creation. God chose not only to become a man in His incarnation, but He also elected to reveal Himself throughout Scripture primarily in masculine terms.

Jewett suggests that "feminine figures could as well be used without altering the substance of our thought about God." He bases this premise upon the fact that the woman, as the man, is created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27) and thus is as much like God as the

man. Jewett further concludes that the gospels do not lay “any emphasis on the maleness of Jesus” (Jewett 1991:324-325).

Elsewhere, however, Jewett also states that “One can hardly use any other pronoun than the masculine when speaking of him whose name is Jesus of Nazareth” (Jewett 1991:46).

Jewett’s latter conclusion seems most appropriate since the Messiah is clearly identified as “the Son of David” (Matt. 22:41-46). Jesus, as well as the Pharisees, understood Psalm 110 as messianic. This, as well as other Old Testament passages, seems to suggest that sonship was inextricably associated with the Messiah. Therefore, the question Jesus asked the Pharisees was “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” Jesus continued, “If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” The New Testament writers, as well as Jesus Himself, also overwhelmingly speak of the Savior in masculine terms (Matt. 3:17; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:17).

Nevertheless, God does occasionally choose feminine metaphors to describe His functions and explain His passions. God is pictured as conceiving or carrying life in His womb and as giving birth as in the phrase using the metaphor of crying like a pregnant woman in labor or as in a breathless and convulsive condition (Is. 42:14; see also Job 38:8; John 3:6). The Hebrew word רחם , often translated “mercy” or “compassion” or even “womb” (Brown 1907:933), is a reference to the tenderness and compassion a mother shows toward her child (Is. 30:18-26; Zech. 1:12). God is also portrayed as a nursing mother (Num. 11:12; Ps. 131:1-2; Is. 49:15; 1 Pet. 2:2-3), a nurturing mother (Job 10:10-12; Is. 46:3-4; Hos. 11:3-4), a midwife (Ps. 22:9-10; Is.

66:9), the mistress of the house (Ps. 123:2), and even as various female animals (Deut. 32:11-12; Hos. 13:8; Luke 13:34).

The metaphor, as a figure of speech, by definition is a term or phrase suggesting a resemblance between two things that are essentially unlike one another. Although metaphors for God from the feminine world can be found in Scripture, their appearance does not indicate that the masculine pronouns God chose to use for Himself can be altered or cast aside. Jean Caffey Lyles warns about the confusion to be found in “the disturbing image of a God-Who-Suffers-From-Gender-Confusion” (Lyles 1980:430-431).

Metaphors, on the other hand, should serve as a reminder that the character of God both encompasses and supersedes masculinity and femininity, since He is neither male nor female, and He may choose to use both to communicate Himself and His acts to His creation. In Scripture, the metaphor is a useful tool for revealing God’s nature and communicating His loving concern by means of examples that are easily understood by all (Patterson 1995:238).³

2.2.3 Summarizing Some Views Defining “the Image of God”

Mankind has the desire and capability for fellowship with God (Gen. 1:16; 2:7). As the mirror image of God, man has a personality capable of fellowship, communication, laughter, sorrow, love, logic, and morality (Cooper 1976:21-27). The phrase may also suggest the man’s responsibility for dominion and authority.

The image of God certainly includes the spiritual nature, which came when God breathed into the man His own breath.

³See section 1.5.1, pp. 82-84, for further discussion of the metaphor.

The breath of God became the soul of man; the soul of man therefore is nothing but the breath of God. The rest of the world exists through the word of God The breath is the seal and pledge of our relation to God, of our godlike dignity (Delitzsch [s a]:63).

Three popular options are considered herewith for defining the significance of gender in what it means to be “in the image of God”:

(1) Male and female distinction is unimportant and contributes nothing to the “the image of God”; (2) the “image of God” is in each individual, whether male or female; (3) the “image of God” exists only in male and female together — i.e., in their fellowship together (Jewett 1975:24-40).

The first view was held primarily by Greek philosophers, such as Plato and Philo of Alexandria, and today is embraced by many radical feminists (Hauke 1993:135-136). Even though there are multiple views concerning what all is included in the phrase “the image of God,” one must note the strategically important ontological ground of mankind’s likeness to God, i.e., the soul, which is not sexually stamped and which distinguishes mankind from animal life. The man received his life from the breath of the Lord (Gen. 1:26). However, one must not take the spiritual uniqueness of the soul to suggest inferiority of the body. Believers, at His return, will be raised bodily (1 Cor. 15:42-49) (König 1988:126-128).

Philosophically, the question as to whether one may even speak univocally about God or whether all talk of God is ultimately analogous is indeed a worthy issue for discussion, but it lies beyond the scope of this research project. Sufficient for the purpose of this treatise is to note that Hauke reminds his readers of the classical

rules of theology, which maintain that no qualities with limitedness or incompleteness can ultimately be attributed to God but may only be applied to Him in a figurative or metaphoric sense (Hauke 1993:149-151). However, one must not carry this argument too far lest God's personhood be downgraded so that He is merely what Tillich described as "the ground of all being."

The second view is held by most evangelicals. Mary J. Evans, in favoring this view and taking the traducionist perspective, cites Genesis 5:1-3 and 9:6, which imply that the image can be and, in fact, is passed on to an individual. The latter verse also affirms that the image of God is not lost because of the Fall. Evans concludes that Genesis 1 does not suggest that the man participated in the "image of God" in a different way than the woman (Evans 1983:13).⁴

The third view is held by Barth, Brunner, and Jewett, as well as by many who call themselves "evangelical feminists." In supporting this view, Spencer asserts that Adam could not reflect the nature of God by himself. "Male and female are needed to reflect God's nature." In her view, the relationship between the man and the woman is the reflection of God's nature (Spencer 1985:21). Spencer's reasoning for this interpretation also reveals her application:

God's original intention for women and men is that in work and in marriage they share tasks and share authority. Females as well as males are needed in positions of authority in the church to help people better to comprehend God's nature. God's image needs male and female to reflect God more fully (Spencer 1985:29).

⁴Other evangelicals, such as Adrio König, are unconvinced that "the image of God" is something that can be passed on but prefer to speak of it as simply "being" in that image (König 1988:129ff).

Karl Barth also held this view that the “image of God” meant “male and female.” He believed the divine plurality to be a prototype of the human plurality of the man and the woman, so that the human relationship between the man and the woman and the unique partnership they were designed to share would reflect God’s own personal relationship with Himself. However, he did not use this position to justify egalitarian views within the plurality of the godhead, as did Spencer.

Likewise Emil Brunner insists that God defines borders and boundaries within His divine order:

The Christian doctrine of man also had a tremendous *social* importance because and in so far as it taught the equal dignity of all men and at the same time found a basis for their actual inequality in the concept of Creation (Brunner 1962:243).

The equality of the persons of the godhead does not negate the harmonious order of function among them. Likewise, mankind, while imaging God, can also have a harmonious order within the plurality of male and female. The gender distinction within mankind mirrors the relationship between distinct persons in the ordered relationship within the godhead.

God created man as male and female, a plurality of persons imaging God both in their plurality-in-unity and in their ordered harmony (Capper 1986:218).

Barth further suggested that “solitary man would not be man created in the image of God, who Himself is not solitary.” He would not be the subject presupposed as the partner of God in the history to come. Man needed a partner himself in order to be God’s partner (Barth III₁ 1958:290).

God then seeks to make the man what he could not be in his solitariness — i.e., man completed by God. There was no error in God's creative activity but merely a momentary incompleteness, a potential deficiency, a pause before the needful completion already in God's purposeful plan for creation. God had not only seen the need in the man for fellowship, for a helper to assist him in the task God had given (v. 18); He designed the man with the need (v. 18); He made the need known to the man (vv. 19-20); He planned and executed the solution for the need (vv. 21-22).

In conclusion, one must be cautious in adopting the third view. Not only does Genesis state that the man is made in God's image (Gen. 1:26), but other references affirm that each individual, male and female, are created by God "in His image" (see Gen. 5:1, 3). Adam, an individual created in God's image, passed that image to his son Seth (Piper 1991:98-99).

2.2.4 Gender and "the Image of God"

The explicit attention given to the sexual differentiation within the human species would seem to indicate that gender is an indispensable part of understanding God's creative purposes for the man and the woman. However, Bird, while affirming this principle, takes a leap to add that the Bible envisions a humanity whose individual and corporate representatives are not defined by sexuality. Bird moves from affirming a "genderless God" to suggesting a "generic humanity," citing no specific biblical references but alluding to "the great majority of texts that consider human nature and need, relationship to God, moral discrimination and ethical obligation" as indicating no distinction on the basis of gender (Bird

1994:528). On the other hand, the evidence seems quite the contrary, beginning in Genesis 2, where the man and woman are clearly presented as separate beings, though clearly joined in a divinely planned unity (see vv. 15-25; 3:6-12, 16-20; 5:2).

The implication that mankind is “of one kind” draws attention to the unity of the human race, dismissing any notion that the woman or the man is inherently inferior or superior. “This unity, however, is not merely sexual; it involves sharing spiritual, intellectual, and emotional dimensions as well” (Mathews 1996:213).

The Reformers added an emphasis in terms of the fellowship of the man and the woman with God in the sense that the man and the woman could enter an “I-Thou” partnership on the human level as well as a “we-Thou” relationship with the Creator. For the man and the woman, human life was not solitary, even as within the godhead there is fellowship and cooperation. The emphasis in “image” then is relationship, but that must be the consequence of the “image” rather than its content (Mathews 1996:164-166).

Each individual man and woman is made “in the image of God”; they both are responsible for dominion over the world (Gen. 2:16). The man and the woman share the same features of personhood, with a focus on the equality of their essential being.

Although male and female hold in common the same unique God-given status as image-bearers, there is an inherent distinction within the human by virtue of their different sexual roles, and this implies that other distinctions are present (Mathews 1996:173).

When this unity is distorted through neglect or abuse, the entire human family suffers, and the image is distorted. Hauke expresses it thus:

Being a likeness of God means that men and women are fundamentally equal before God, but not the same. For the difference between the sexes appears in Genesis 1:27 as a relationship between human beings that precedes all other social realities and is anchored in the will of God.

Although the mandate of creation does not expressly distinguish between the tasks of men and women, that these will take different forms is still parenthetically assumed. For every action is grounded in a certain sort of being (man or woman) and is correlative to that (*agere sequitur esse*) (Hauke 1988:200).

Hauke then has affirmed that men and women exercise authority in an equal way over nonhuman aspects of creation, but he seems to question whether or not they exercise that authority in exactly the same way. Hauke also notes that men may have a certain advantage in the representation of that "likeness," since in the incarnation Jesus chose maleness for His earthly tabernacle; but this in no way presumes prejudice over the essential equality of the man and the woman in ontological rank (Hauke 1988:200).

2.3 The Creator's Plan: Unity in Plurality

In the phrase "Let us make man . . ." the direct command seems to call for a plurality of persons to participate in the making (עשה) of man. Yet the verb is singular. Some suggest that God is taking counsel with the angels, but this could not be correct since the distance between God and angels is pronounced. One looks in vain for a record in Scripture of God taking counsel with the angels about anything (Is. 40:13; Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16). Man was not to be created in the

image of the angels but in the image of God. No mention has been made to this point of the creation of angels (Leupold 1942:87). The plural has also been suggested to be an expression of God's deliberation as He approaches the creation of man, but nothing in the context supports this view (Sailhamer 1990:37-38).

Others note that the plural subject suggests the Lord's majesty, since the Hebrews could not conceive that the greatness of God could be contained in a singular idea. In that case, the plural is not numerical but is incorporated in the description to enhance the idea of might. "Thus among the Israelites the *might* who was God was not an ordinary might, but one peculiar, lofty, unique" (Ryle 1921:23).

Nevertheless, the context of the chapter emphasizes the oneness, the unity, and the sovereignty of God (אלהים). The predicate of the plural subject, in the earliest written Hebrew, is singular except when it is used of the gods of the nations or occasionally when the reference is to the general idea of the godhead (Ryle 1921:23).

Though no evidence exists that the Hebrew mind had any concept of the triunity of God portrayed in the New Testament, many believe that there is the "seed-thought" for the triune nature of God in the Old Testament (Cooper 1976:21). Some commentators suggest that the plural is appropriately used because of the plurality within the godhead. According to this interpretation, God is addressing His Spirit, who was present and active at the beginning of creation (Gen. 1:2). Certainly as the triunity within the godhead is unveiled in the New Testament, Christ is portrayed as active with the Father in creation (Wenham 1987:28).

Because God speaks out of the fullness of His powers and Being in ways that His created beings cannot, often the light of later revelation is needed for clarity. Martin Luther said,

Therefore what is first presented more or less dark, difficult and obscure, Christ has all made manifest and clearly commanded to preach. Nevertheless, the holy fathers held this knowledge through the Holy Spirit, yet by no means as clear as we now have it (Leupold 1942:86).

2.3.1 The Nuance of Good vs. Not Good

Bundesen suggests that “good” would be “male and female created simultaneously and not one at a time.” In other words, she maintains that the creation of Adam is “not good” (Bundesen 1993:22). Such a declaration, of course, is not found in the text of Scripture, and, in fact, the opposite is implied (Gen. 1:31).

The creation as a whole as well as every part of the whole was described as good. Then abruptly there was a change. The phrase “it was good” so consistently used to affirm the divine creativity is not evoked with the creation of man, and the statement “it is not good” seems to be contradictory to the former statement (Leibowitz 1972:9-11).

One cannot read Genesis 2:18-25 and conclude that God’s plan for the union is not “good” as God said. D. J. Miller comments,

The meaning of the good as the harmonious ordering and agreement among the parts is highlighted in Adam and Eve who, as physical and psychological beings, are created in total accord with their environment (Elwell 1984:479-480).

The actual divine evaluation is that the man’s *aloneness* is “not good,” with no suggestion of contradicting the Lord’s earlier pronouncements of “good” nor any indication of a change in His

immutable will. Rather, such phrasing seems to express an incompleteness that surfaced in view of the completion of God's creative handiwork, which produced an awesome earth with many creatures over which the man was to have dominion (Clark 1980:20-21). This momentary deficiency was never without divine foresight and planning for completing the setting with the needed companion, "a helper comparable to him" (עֹזֵר כְּגֹדְלוֹ, lit. "one corresponding to him in kind").

R. David Freedman suggests that God's "original" creation of man was inadequate as indicated by the Creator's words, "It is not good for the man to be alone." The Creator then sought to correct the inadequacy by creating the female of the species (Freedman 1983:58). Yet one must move carefully in speaking of any divine activity as "inadequate" or suggesting that God must "redo" any of His handiwork because it was not done correctly the first time.

Other commentators see no reason to question why God should pronounce what He had once called "good" (Gen. 1:31) as being "not good" at a later point as the working of His plan continues to its completion, at which time when the transition is finished and the divine plan is complete, again it will be "good." For the man to be without a partner suitable to his own intellectual, social, and spiritual nature was to leave him, according to divine design, incomplete in respect to mutual society and comfort, the propagation of the race, and the promised redemption through the seed of the woman (Whitelaw 1977:52).

The idea of "good" has been used to describe that which is appropriate and fitting within the purpose of creation. Thus man's

being alone was “not good” because he would be unable to do all that God had planned for mankind. Claus Westermann points out that the Creator Himself considers “the-being-alone” itself quite negatively (cf. Eccl. 4:9-12) (Westermann 1984:227). The supplying of the incompleteness or deficiency was part of the original purpose of the Creator. Incompleteness caused a deficiency in accomplishing the original purpose of the Creator (Leupold 1942:129). Whether one considers the development of the man’s character, his need for fellowship, or his position as head of the race, there is an incompleteness or void (Thomas 1946:42).

Created with a social nature and a need for fellowship, the man’s intellectual and emotional faculties and character are designed to be expanded and enhanced by social and domestic duties as the member of a family, as a friend, as a co-laborer, as a citizen (Ryle 1914:36). Karl Barth has expressed the idea well,

Is he not perhaps also and at the same time to be understood as the man whom God does not leave to stand alone above all creatures, who longs for a help, and for whom a help arises by God’s creative power out of the mortal wound given him by the same God, and who now can do nothing other than love and nourish and cherish her as his own flesh, the member of his own body (Barth II₁ 1964:118).

2.3.2 The Helper: a Different Function by Assignment

There has been much discussion concerning the term “helper,” which defines the role that the woman is to play in the functional difference existing between the man and the woman. Augustine saw the help to be only in the task of bringing children into the world; whereas Delitzsch included the need for her to help “till and keep”

the garden. Westermann presented a more comprehensive view with the woman providing a wide-range of support (Sailhamer 1990:46). Certainly, whoever helps does not lead while assuming the task of helping, but the helper provides support, walks alongside, offers advice without forcing compliance to that advice, and acts in response to a need presented as allowed to do so (Neuer 1991:73-74).

In cases in which God chooses to assume the role of helping mankind, He does not force that help but waits for His creation to call for the help needed and then to accept His help. Of course, the function of helping may be exchanged for the role of leading when that is appropriate, such as a case within the divine order in which the one helping actually stands in authority over the one being helped. In that case, as with God Himself, the subordination of functional help appropriately returns to leading. Such would also be true when a parent helps his child. General assignments within the divine order have not changed, but the leader always has the prerogative to choose to function as a helper.

Groothuis suggests that helping relationships are defined by who is knowledgeable rather than who is in authority and even goes so far as to pose that the helper should have authority over the helpee, using the example of a school teacher helping a student with his assignment and yet having authority over the student and comparing this with God who is superior in both rank and expertise, thus making the helpee subordinate to His authority (Groothuis 1997:129). Here again one should note that God sometimes sovereignly helps of His own volition without request from His

creation. Any analogy using the godhead is in an arena of its own and cannot be pressed beyond obvious surface comparisons. God uses anthropomorphisms to reveal Himself, but one must remember that ultimately the Creator God is beyond any mere anthropomorphism.

Actually complementarians can use this same illustration to explain the helper/helpee relationship in the way these words have been traditionally understood without using cultural revisionism, which tends to creep into language and history. Paul warns believers appropriately on such matters that they should avoid being squeezed into the mold of the world (Rom. 12:1-2).

Certainly, the appropriate usage of the term “helper” would indicate that any forced construal of God as being subordinate to human beings, even when He is helping, is absurd. The individual being helped has no authority over God ontologically. Nevertheless, when the one being helped does call for specific assistance, God may choose to step into his life in response to that request, or sometimes an individual receives help on the basis of God’s sovereign disposition. Again, the nuance of meaning in the term “helper” is not related to worth or personhood but rather concerns role or function, i.e., the realm in which help is to be offered. The one being helped is not as concerned with the credentials of the one helping as with the helper’s ability to meet the request of the moment with whatever assistance is needed.

Spencer seems to take advantage of the fact that כנגדו is a *hapax legomenon* in evolving from its literal meaning “as in front of him” to interpret the descriptive phrase as meaning “to share the same tasks” and to do so as “equal and similar” (Spencer 1985:23-28). The

purview of this paper does not permit discussion of Spencer's complete explanation as to how such a conclusion could be made. However, she begins by saying that "front" or "visible" suggests equality, or even superiority, on the basis of converting the Hebrew preposition in the text into a nominal form, though there is no grammatical evidence that such a conversion should or can be done. Her reasoning is questionable at best (Piper 1991:103).

Again, Spencer takes a leap in reasoning to state unequivocally that in the Bible the term עָרַב "does not at all imply inherent subordination" because of its frequent reference to God Himself and to military protectors (Spencer 1985:26). Here she overlooks the fact that it is indeed possible for God to choose to subordinate Himself to the task by responding to the request and need of His creation. In fact, God does, *in a sense*, subordinate Himself every time He chooses to help His creation, for in so doing He stops and moves to meet a human need (Phil. 2:6-8). When God chooses to help His people, He does not in any sense lose His deity, but rather He steps into the *role* of servant and uses the powers of His deity to lift up the one who has fallen. Help is service rendered to another. When God is involved in helping, He, too, renders service to His creation, but not at the expense of His deity. Accordingly, when a husband, parent, employer, or anyone in authority offers help to wife, child, employee, or anyone under authority, he chooses a subordinate *function* but not by means of laying aside his God-assigned leadership. Just as to give help does not negate the responsibility to submit to leadership because of the wherewithal or even "power" to help, to receive help does not cripple leadership or remove its responsibilities. Everyone could be capable

of leading just as anyone could be called upon to help. The conclusion of this researcher, however, affirms that the divine order calls for the husband to lead and the wife, as his helper, to submit to that leadership.

One must distinguish between emphatic subordination (inequality of nature and being) and economic subordination (equality in essence but subordination in function). The former is heresy (e.g., Arianism, which asserted a natural inequality within the trinity); the latter was affirmed by the Council of Nicea (e.g., the Son is economically subordinate to the Father with respect to His mission in redemption) (Kovach 1996:6).

Jewett also echoes this distinction that “the Son is not ontologically subordinate as the Son, but economically subordinate as the Savior” (Jewett 1991:323), emphasizing the difference between essence and function. Jewett’s application is that the subordination of the woman cannot be justified by this example of the trinity “as traditionally understood.” The latter phrase is the key for understanding the complementarian position. Just as the Son’s subordination was “voluntary” and “not a necessary condition of his nature,” even so the subordination enjoined for wives in Scripture must also be understood in light of the woman’s equality in essence and her “voluntary” submission to her role according to the divine order. Such submission is voluntary in the sense that God does not coerce it even though He commands it. While freedom is accorded the woman as well as the man, that freedom is replete with either consequences or blessings from God, who does have an order and a plan.

Jewett summarizes:

To teach that the Son is subordinate to the Father by nature is heresy; to teach that he is subordinate by a free and voluntary choice is orthodoxy (Jewett 1991:322).

One might express the complementarian view of a woman's subordination in a similar way: To suggest that the wife is subordinate (in the sense of inferior) to her husband in her nature or personhood is wrong and has no foundation in Holy Scripture; to **maintain** that the wife is subordinate to her husband by her own voluntary choice is in keeping with what is consistently found in Scripture from Creation onward.

The ultimate emptying of the Son in behalf of His creation was in His sacrifice on the cross. His obedience to the will of the Father by no means denigrated Him but rather lifted Him up and glorified Him. Economic subordination, of necessity, is part of the nature of helping (Piper 1991:103-104).

A "helper" is one who provides what is lacking in another, one who can do what another cannot do alone. God is often described as man's helper (Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; 1 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 20:2; 22:11, 19; 33:20; 46:1; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9, 10, 11). The Lord comes as a helper to assist the helpless not because He is inferior and thus relegated to menial "helping" tasks but rather because often He alone has what is needed to meet their needs. He often chooses to take time and bring the powers of His deity to become involved in the affairs of His creation. Jehoshaphat cried to the Lord when under attack from Syria " . . . and the Lord helped him, and God diverted them from him" (2 Chr. 18:31). God "helped" King Uzziah against the

Philistines and other enemies (2 Chr. 26:7, 15). However, anyone **who** helps chooses to give energy and attention to the task accepted.

The usage of עֲזָרָה throughout Scripture is important because its association with God Himself underscores that the term is not reserved for inferior beings. And yet the nuance of meaning in the word obviously is directed to function and not personhood.

When a word like “helper” assumes certain connotations (as in “Godlikeness”) in some references or settings, the term is not bound to have that same nuance of meaning in every usage. Someone has suggested that such would be like assuming that because God is described as “working” for His creation, no person who “works” is responsible to his boss on the basis that when the word is used of God, it could mean that for God to “work” would make God accountable to the one for whom He is working (Piper 1992:51).

Stephen Clark notes the confusion within modern Western society over the use of a term coming out of a different culture.

Subordination simply refers to a relationship in which one person, the subordinate, depends upon another for direction (Clark 1980:23-24).

Clark maintains that the one in leadership may be of equal worth, or the subordinate may hold a greater position. He identifies different types of subordination (domination, mercenary, voluntary) as well as different ways for subordination to be manifested (oppression, care, and unity). Biblical subordination, of course, is voluntary and manifests itself into care and unity (Clark 1980:4).

Carmody asks the question: Why should women be most of “the auxiliaries, the beloved helpers?” In demeaning this role of helper

and labeling unwise the women who would accept that role (Carmody 1988:74), Carmody questions God Himself, who created the woman specifically to be a “helper” (Gen. 2:18).

As a “helper” the woman’s subordination is limited to her function and role but is complete within that function. This self-imposed limitation does not invalidate any superior giftedness but makes all her gifts and abilities available to the one she is committed to help.

Though in contemporary usage, “helper” (עזר) is generally understood to refer to someone in a menial position, the concept of “helper” in the Hebrew Old Testament merely describes the ethical, spiritual, and physical assistance given to one in great need. The Revised English Bible uses the word “partner”; a helper is an indispensable partner. It means support or mutual assistance in a broad sense. Whatever the man lacks, the woman supplies (Westermann 1984:227). The concept goes beyond assistance to include companionship, intellectual interaction, etc. (Driver 1904:41).

“Helper” is not a demeaning term. Even Phyllis Tribble concurs with this deduction. She holds that God is a helper superior to man, the animals are helpers inferior to man; the woman is a helper equal to man. This point is well taken, although this writer would disagree with Tribble on her basic tenet, i.e., that this account is a myth (Tribble, 1973:252, 256).

God’s plan for Adam was evident. He willingly accepted the “helper” God designed for him — one whose nature, disposition, and abilities supplied what was lacking in his own. One might say that the woman supplied what the man lacked, and he supplied what she

lacked (Ross 1988:126). Such reciprocity serves as a unifying backdrop to their respective roles within the divine economy without nullifying the specific assignments given by God to the man and the woman concerning their relationship one with the other.

The Hebrew term עזר is used in three prophetic passages as a reference to military aid (Is. 30:5; Ezek. 12:14; Hos. 13:9). The idea is not so much that the helper is stronger than the one helped but more accurately that the latter's strength is inadequate by itself (e.g., Josh. 1:14; 10:4, 6; 1 Chr.. 12:17, 19, 21, 22) (Wenham 1987:68).

R. David Freedman projected an interesting hypothesis suggesting a revised meaning of עזר, which he suggests is a combination of two roots — one meaning “to save” and the other meaning “to be strong” and thus a mixture of both nuances. Such is not problematic until Freedman discards the meaning of “Savior” and forgets the derived meaning “help” (as the word is so consistently, and by Freedman's testimony, almost universally understood to be translated in Scripture). He then adopts a revised meaning, i.e., “strength,” which he proceeds to enhance further until he settles on the meaning of “power.” Freedman's conclusion then is that the woman is a “power equal to the man” (Freedman 1983:56-58). Such interpretation, of course, destroys the analogies between God and Israel and between Christ and the church, which the inspired writers of Scripture have so consistently and faithfully revealed. Ralph Smith agrees that Freedman's argument does not carry much weight.

Because man and woman emerge at the same time from the hand of the Creator, and are created in the same way after God's image, the difference between the sexes is no longer relevant to their position before God . . . (Smith 1993:249).

2.3.3 The Helper: The Same Essence of Being in Creation

The other Hebrew word used in this compound descriptive term describing the woman is כַּנְגֵדוּ, from a root meaning “tell, announce, report, declare, make known, expound, inform, publish, proclaim, acknowledge, confess” or literally “like him, agreeing to him, counterpart” (Brown 1907:740).

This *hapax legomenon* is a common post-biblical expression for anything correlative and parallel (Delitzsch 1978:140). The woman is to be the perfect resemblance of man, possessing neither inferiority nor superiority but being in all things in her personhood like and equal to him. The idea is that one is set over against another by way of comparison, or one corresponds to another (Alford 1979:13).

In order for the man to accomplish the Creator’s plan for his life, he would need the help of one corresponding to him in every way, one to be a partner in continuing the species unto the generations as well as in fulfilling the responsibilities of dominion assigned to the man by God Himself. Man can call forth a horse to be his “helper” by carrying burdens or pulling a plow. But a horse is not a “helper that corresponds to him” (Clark 1980:23). Only the woman is the helper who corresponds to the man in a complementary way as a partner to provide something different than he provides for himself.

Barth asserted that man needed a partner himself in order to be God’s “partner.” In fact, God declared that man by himself was “not good” and that a suitable helper was necessary (Gen. 2:18).

Everything aims at the one fact, to wit, that God did not create man alone, as a single human being, but in the unequal duality of male and female (Barth III₁ 1958:288).

Barth clarified the nature of this "partner" as one who resembled man but was different from him, claiming that one exactly like him would be merely a repetition or multiplication and thus would not eliminate his solitariness. He also noted that one of a completely different order would still leave him solitary because there would not be the capacity for fellowship (Barth III₁ 1958:290). The woman would not be the man but still one of and from him, relating her to him as to a part of his own body.

This relationship between the man and the woman is uniquely designed to reflect the act of creation.

. . . Man was not taken out of woman but woman out of man . . . primarily he does not belong to her but she to him, . . . he thus belongs to her only secondarily (Barth III₁ 1958:301).

Again Barth is clear that this priority of the man in creation does not question the value, dignity, or honor of the woman but is simply the underlying foundation for the order God designed in His creation.

Even egalitarians like Scanzoni and Hardesty refer to this obvious complementarity between the man and the woman: "Adam's response upon awakening assures us that he realized woman's complementary nature at once." However, they suggest that Adam only saw the woman as like himself and not different (Scanzoni 1974:26-27). Some very obvious differences in physiology alone make this statement inaccurate. Adam must have noticed some differences, but these few differences did not prohibit the ultimate in intimacy and fellowship but rather enhanced it.

The foundation for the divine institution of marriage is found in the man's need and the woman's ability to meet that need — a reciprocity designed by the Creator. However, the woman in no way is the result of male planning or action, for God created her while Adam was in a deep sleep (Gen. 2:21). Intimacy does not have to be understood as the loss of uniqueness by the male or the female, nor does it suggest that one's identity must be absorbed into another. The creation of individualities and the uniqueness of personalities in those individuals was God's idea. The oneness of the man and woman was never intended to negate their uniqueness (McGlone 1989:243-245).

2.4 The Origin of the Woman

The formation of the woman from a part of Adam's side indicated, even through the means by which the woman was created, that these two were to be one flesh, which, in turn, pointed out the peculiar character of their bonding as not only close and intimate but also exclusively wrought, mutually tender, and endearingly affectionate (Jamieson 1946:46). This "surgical" act of God provided the building block, a portion of the man's essential skeletal frame, for constructing the woman. She was taken from the man's side, illustrating that she was of the same substance as the man (Gen. 2:23) as well as reinforcing the unity of the human family (Mathews 1996:216). In the Arab culture even today, one may refer to his close friend as a "rib" with the same understanding as the usage of the word in the Genesis account. The image projected is decidedly one of closeness and intimacy (Clark 1980:18).

Mollenkott rightly maintains that Adam was in a deep sleep when the woman was created: "Adam has no more to do with the creation of Eve than he has to do with creating himself" (Mollenkott 1977:97-98). However, she then questions the priority of the man, saying that the "stories of creation" do not support that priority and holding that to maintain the priority of the man is to ignore the statement in Genesis 1 that the "male and female were created simultaneously," which she considers necessary if both are in the image of God (Mollenkott 1977:101). This interpretation again suggests that Genesis 1 and 2 are contradictory rather than complementary.

Jewett, acknowledging Karl Barth's influence, also affirms that the relationship between the man and the woman is affirmed by the creative act:

Because the woman is taken from the man, he recognizes himself in her — recognizes that he is wholly himself only in his relationship to her. But because she is taken *from* the man, he recognizes in her a distinct and separate self, another over against him . . . unmistakably *of* man, yet also unmistakably *not* man but woman (Jewett 1975:39).

Though Jewett would not have wanted to be identified as a complementarian, he presented that position well. Jewett summarizes this discussion by saying, "Our task is not one of definition but obedient decision to be what God has called us to be" (Jewett 1975:40). The task then is to ferret out God's definition of womanhood and to invite all women to pursue that godly vision passionately in order to find the greatest happiness and exert the most far-reaching influence.

The Hebrew צלע, literally “side,” identifies **that** from which the woman was fashioned.⁵ Because the woman was formed to have an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, she was created from the “side” of the man, not from the dust of the earth from which the man had been fashioned. The mode of her creation was to lay clearly the foundation for her relationship to the man, for whom she was created and to whom she was presented by God Himself. The act of creation is a key to the understanding of God’s plan for marriage. The priority of the man and the dependence of the woman upon the man were established as a basis for how the man and woman would relate to each other in the future (Keil [s a]:89).

The woman is made neither from nothing nor from the earth’s dust but rather from the man. She is the acknowledged offshoot of the man, having a nature like his but coming into existence after him (Delitzsch 1978:144). The Jewish commentator Cassuto describes the story of the rib as “an allegory of the relationship of the woman to her husband” (Cassuto 1978:134). The absolute unity of the human race through the generations is established; the true dignity of the woman is guaranteed; the most genuine kinship between the man and the woman is forged (Leupold 1942:135).

The man did not have the woman made to his order, nor did he take the woman to himself; rather, he received her as designed, offered, and appropriated to him by the Creator God (Gen. 2:22). Instead of ברה, עשה, or יצר, Hebrew root verbs used in other verses within Genesis 1 and 2 to describe God’s creative handiwork, the

⁵See other uses of the same word in the Old Testament, e.g., Ex. 25:12, 14; 26:20; 27:7; 2 Sam. 16:13; 1 Kin. 6:5.

word בנה, literally “built,” is used. God “builds” the woman from the raw resources derived from the man (Gen. 2:22). The word (בנה) is most often associated with fashioning a structure of some importance (Leupold 1942:135). It is regularly employed in Akkadian and Ugaritic literature to describe the creation of human beings by the gods (Cassuto 1978:134). Only here and in Amos 9:6 is this verb used to describe God’s creative activity.

Gilbert Bilezikian seems to maintain that God was surprised by the creation of male and female:

The design calls for ‘man’ (singular) made in His image . . . Then the divine decree crystallizes into action and (surprise!) the result is not one person but two. The original order called only for the creation of ‘man’; but because the product had to conform to the specifications of the divine image, ‘man’ inevitably came as male and female (Bilezikian 1985:23).

Mary Evans would seem to disagree: “. . . the distinction between the sexes is there from the very beginning, inherent in the idea of Man; the creation of mankind as male and female is an integral part of God’s decision to make man” (Evans 1983:12).

Bilezikian’s position would seem to be in conflict with the omniscience of God at the very least, not to mention bringing into question the concept of divine planning and purpose in creation. The text does not say that the woman was created in order to present God’s image but rather in order to help the man fulfill his assignment from God. In order for the woman to be the kind of helper the man needed, she, too, must be in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:18, 22-23).

Bilezikian describes God’s method of creating the woman as “the most bizarre element of this chapter . . . a strange cloning

operation” — not the most reverent way to refer to the activity of the God of the universe. He is concerned that God had established a consistent method of creating “out of the ground,” which He abandons in the creation of the woman. His statement that “From one being, God made two persons” cannot be harmonized with Scripture. The text indicates that God made Adam from the dust of the earth and then Eve from Adam himself. Adam was not made from himself. However, Bilezikian rightly concludes that the methodology of creating the woman from the man “demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt the essential unity between man and woman” (Bilezikian 1985:29).

Some suggest that this usage of “build” to describe the creation of the woman is historical because of its occurrence in other Old Testament passages (Gen. 30:3, “Take the maid that I may be built by her.” Cf. Gen. 16:2; Ex. 1:21). The concept of the wife as a household “building” because she bears and brings up the offspring is a common one in Hebrew life (Pelikan 1958:132). Calvin portrayed man as an unfinished building until Eve was formed (Whitelaw 1977:51).

In Jewish literature, the word is said to explain Eve’s purpose to bear children, noting that a woman’s body is structured like a storehouse for a purpose; and for that she is praised. Motherhood for the Hebrews was considered the highest purpose in a woman’s life. As a storehouse prepared for “building” children, the woman would also “build” the home as her responsibility in marriage. In fact, the rabbis often referred to their wives as their “houses” (Bronner 1994:28-30).

The Genesis description of the creation of the woman is unique within the cosmogonies of the ancient Near East primarily because of the lofty position of womanhood among the Hebrews. Though Israel failed at times to give proper honor and recognition to her women, the Law of Israel protected women in their vulnerability (e.g., the widow through the custom of levirate marriage, Deut. 25:5-10). The Genesis account of creation notes that both the man and the woman were to be made “in the image of God,” and both were commanded to rule the world (Gen. 1:26-28). The relationship between the man and the woman is then described with greater specificity in Genesis 2 (Mathews 1996:213).

Even the man, in looking back to God’s earlier creative activity, marks the uniqueness of this creative act for himself personally. Instinctively, the man knows the woman’s relationship to himself. He recognizes the complete physical congruity of this new person with himself and proclaims Spirit-inspired truth, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23).

Adam used a clever play upon words to express this new relationship. “Man” (אָדָם) is contrasted with “woman” (אִשָּׁה). This linguistic similarity is also approximated in other languages.⁶ Another interesting linguistic note, is the suggestion that the Hebrew words come from different roots (Spurrell 1896:35) and that the Arabic words evolve from diverse roots, namely, the word for man from the root meaning “to exercise power” and similarly the word for

⁶The Anglo Saxon form is “pombman,” literally “the man with the womb”; Luther expresses it in German as *mann* vs. *maennin*.

“woman,” because of its double consonant, from the Arabic parallel root meaning “to be soft” (Leupold 1942:136-137).

Perhaps, however, the most significant use of this passage in the New Testament is in its presentation as the first statement of the divine principle for marriage (Gen. 2:24), which is then reiterated three times in the New Testament (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7-8; Eph. 5:31).

2.5 Sin

Sin, though often identified with the doing or even not doing of certain deeds, begins with a more fundamental attitude within the human heart. To follow one’s own judgments in lieu of what God’s Word has prescribed is in the final analysis to place oneself over God (Prov. 3:5, 7; 14:12). God’s Word is truth, and it is to be obeyed without question, even in the most mundane matters (1 Cor. 10:31). Eve, in that first act of disobedience in the garden of Eden, decided that she knew better than God. She allowed her own judgment to overrule the prohibition, which she knew had come directly from God, and she not only ate the fruit but also gave it to Adam, who, according to what is recorded in the text, did not question her or attempt to dissuade her from the disobedient act but merely took the path of disobedience himself (Gen. 3:1-6) (Patterson 1995:1871).

2.5.1 The Entry of Sin Through the Woman

Eve has long been presented as the archetype or prototype for the woman. She is thus an important part of any discussion on womanhood, whether theological as concerning the standard for biblical womanhood or cultural as in the discussion of the values observed in Hebrew women. Though some indict Eve as the author of

sin and death, all must note that the Bible clearly identifies her as the source of life (Gen. 3:20), which is embodied in her name (Bronner 1994:22-26). Also, when the Lord confronted the couple concerning their disobedience, He addressed His questions to Adam. In the New Testament, Paul notes that Eve was deceived, though Adam was not, perhaps based on Adam's greater awareness of the divine directive (1 Tim. 2:14; see also Gen. 2:15-17).

Some are quick to judge this woman, who was directly deceived by the tempter, as being less intelligent and less spiritual than the man. There is no evidence of this conclusion in the text. Bilezikian rightly notes that the woman's knowledge of the prohibition from God had been obtained from Adam (Gen. 2:16-17). Having received the information secondhand, Eve was more vulnerable to the tempter's lies (Bilezikian 1985:43). Though Adam had been equipped to avoid the temptation directly and personally by the Creator, perhaps he was more vulnerable to the approach of Satan through the woman (Gen. 2:16-17). Calvin made this comment about Paul's words on the Fall,

By these words Paul does not mean that Adam was not involved in the same diabolical deception, but only that the cause and source of his deception came from Eve (Jewett 1975:67).

Accordingly, Calvin clearly states that the subordination of the woman is not merely the result of the Fall but rather is the assignment of God in Creation (Jewett 1975:68). Hauke, an advocate of the documentary hypothesis, nevertheless affirms:

Still, it would be a case of reading modern liberal ideas into the biblical text if one were to assume that, for the Yahwist, any and every sort of subordination of women to men is a consequence of sin. A certain order of succession can already be found in Genesis 2:18-25. There, woman is created after man and receives her name from man. In the account of creation in the priestly text, too, man is mentioned before woman (Hauke 1988:202).

Though Bilezikian argues that the woman is not reproved for assuming leadership in the garden (Bilezikian 1985:54), the text certainly allows for quite the opposite. First, the instructions are purposely delivered to the man when the woman is not present (Gen. 2:16-17) — a fact also affirmed by Bilezikian; second, the text clearly states the basis for divine reprimand and judgment as the fact that Adam listened to his wife (Gen. 3:17); third, though the woman suffered judgment as did the man, the ultimate responsibility was placed on Adam (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:22; 1 Tim. 2:14).

Adam's sin began with his disobedience of God. As a result of his disobedience, Adam forfeited his own responsibility for leadership, with which he had been vested when God entrusted him with the most important information concerning spiritual responsibility (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam committed himself to the spiritual initiative of his wife, thereby setting aside the divine order between male and female. When Eve began the dialogue with the serpent (Gen. 3:1-5), she was forsaking the spiritual leadership God had given to her husband, who was obviously absent from this scene. Eve takes the initiative, while Adam passively allows her to lead without even questioning her actions (Neuer 1991:74-77).

2.5.2 The Consequences of Sin

Adam and Eve moved from a perfect world under the control of God Himself to a world of sin and despair in which they assumed control of their own lives. Disobedience, i.e., going one's own way in contradistinction to God's way, introduces sin together with its inevitable consequences. The judgment on the serpent involved humiliation, and the observation of his situation is described as defeat (Gen. 3:14-15). The judgment on the woman added pain to childbirth and perhaps even difficulty in conceiving, and the observation is made that the man's rule will not always be marked with loving leadership just as the woman's response to that leadership will not be consistent willing submission (Gen. 3:16). Thus, the woman's domination by the man is not a judgment. Headship was in God's plan from the beginning; any tyranny in that headship is indicative of the distortion of God's original plan.

The text gives no warrant for holding that God imposes a punishment involving male tyrannical oppression of the woman or that it regards such despotism as good (Neuer 1991:79).

The judgment on the man is pain and difficulty in the task of providing for his family, i.e., his work (Gen. 3:17-19). A new marital hierarchy is not in view, but rather an already existing hierarchical relationship will be painfully and tragically distorted.

Bilezikian admits that "the biblical text describes hierarchical organization as an element intrinsic to creation." He also references the whole created universe as "carefully organized in a hierarchy of order" and "meticulously defined in Genesis 1" (Bilezikian 1985:25). However, in the same breath he is denying an organizational

structure or lines of authority between the man and the woman on the basis that such is not spelled out in Genesis. Though any argument from silence is weak, Bilezikian completely overlooks the fact that much of Genesis 2 is devoted to this relationship between the man and the woman, beginning with the assignment given to the man alone when the woman was not present (Gen. 2:15-17) and continuing with the clearly stated reason for the woman's creation (Gen. 2:18). This same hierarchical structure is then confirmed clearly in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9; Eph. 5:22-25).

How is the woman's nature affected by the Fall? In Genesis 3:15, the theme is not only ultimate victory but also continual struggle (McGee 1981:26). This verse is believed by many theologians to be the first hope of the gospel — the protevangelium — and the first announcement of the supernatural birth of the Lord (since the reference is to "her seed" — not the man's). Beginning with Justin and Irenaeus, Christian commentators in the second century, this verse was cited as the first messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. Others are quick to suggest that citing this as the author's own understanding would be wrong. However, even the oldest Jewish interpretations accepted the serpent as symbolic of Satan and looked for a victory over him through Messiah (see also Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12) (Wenham 1987:79-81). For many, the serpent's bruising of Jesus' heel has already become history since Jesus was wounded and bruised but has risen from the dead; whereas the bruising of the serpent's head will not occur until the Lord return to the earth (Rev. 20:2-3) (Pink 1922:42-43).

Aida Spencer continually refers to the “curse” on Eve. She describes it as the desire to be ruled or the desire to rule, maintaining that both are operative in women today (Spencer 1985:36, 37). Interestingly, however, the language of Scripture states that the serpent and the ground are cursed (Gen. 3:17); the man and the woman suffer judgment and thus consequences, and their respective judgments take the form of a “disruption of their appointed roles” (Wenham 1987:81).

The judgment upon the woman as found in Genesis 3:16 was not the bearing of children, for to bear children was part of the original plan of God; but after sin entered the world the woman’s maternity would be accompanied with suffering and sorrow (see Is. 13:8; Mic. 4:9-10). Pink expressed it thus: “By woman had come sin, by woman should come the Saviour. By woman had come the curse, by woman should come Him who would bear and remove the curse” (Pink 1922:42).

Wenham comments that the textual evidence does not indicate that female subordination is the result of the judgment of the woman for her sin, since the woman was made from man specifically to be his helper and since she was named by the man twice (Gen. 2:23; 3:10), an indication of his authority over her (Wenham 1987:81-82). However, the supremacy of the man was never intended to manifest itself in tyrannical or despotic rule over the woman.

Clark succinctly presents three views on how the judgment on the woman would affect her relationship to the man:

(1) The popular view among evangelical feminists is that subordination comes as a direct consequence of the Fall and thus is a punishment for sin and completely undesirable and even evil.

(2) The view with strongest support in the Christian tradition and heavy scholarly support as well suggests that the judgment on the woman brought upon her a dominating form of subordination. Although headship was God's design, sin corrupted that and turned a blessing into a burden.

(3) Another view is more complex than the others but a possibility to be considered. The husband's role of leadership and the wife's subordination to him, part of the original plan in creation, are not a curse but a blessing intended to console the woman in her role as mother (Clark 1980:32-36).

What once was to be a blessing to the woman — partnership in marriage and in producing the next generation — would now be the vehicle for the most painful consequences of her rebellion from God. The "desiring" in Genesis 3:16, according to Sailhamer, is understood as "the wife's desire to overcome or gain the upper hand over her husband." The Fall would have its effect on the relationship between the husband and wife (Sailhamer 1990:58).

How interesting to see the appropriateness of the judgments rendered: The woman's punishment centers upon her children and husband; the man's punishment affects his work. She feels her consequences in her role as wife and mother; whereas he suffers the effects of sin in his role as provider and leader (Foh 1979:66). The judgments also offer a clear description of the conditions existing in a

fallen world: tyranny in headship, pain in childbirth, and defiance instead of submission.

Ultimately the man and the woman sinned against God because both were determined to go their own respective ways rather than going God's way (Prov. 3:5; Is. 53:6). This disobedience separated them from God and broke their fellowship with Him.

As a result of the Fall, pain has been added to childbirth, tyranny to headship, rebellion to submission, and problems to work Woman would have a sin tendency to disrespect man's role of leadership, and man in his sinfulness would tend to abuse his authority and even crush the woman" (Patterson 1995:11, 13).

All would agree that sin brings abuse. However, regardless of the situation, God's principles — His plan for the relationship between the man and the woman — offer the greatest protection from abuse (Patterson 1995:889).

Foh notes that the desire of the woman "in no way contributes to the rule of the husband, which is the original intent for marriage." Her husband's rule is not made easier by her desire for him to rule over her. If it were easier, surely more husbands would rule their homes, and more women would be happy with that rule. Instead one sees the beginning of the "war between the sexes." After the Fall, the husband's rule is no longer natural and effective; rather, he must aggressively seek his role of leadership. Also, loving headship on the part of the husband is tainted with selfish motives and sometimes unwise methods. The wife's submission to her husband's headship is also corrupted by her selfish desire to control and manipulate, whether consciously or unconsciously, her husband (Foh 1979:68-69).

Before the Fall, childbirth was at the center of the Creator's blessings for the primal couple (Gen. 1:28), but after the Fall, childbirth again is the channel through which the serpent would be defeated and the blessing restored (Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:15).

2.6 Theological Considerations Relating to Headship and Subordination

Evans pulls together the main arguments based on Genesis 2 for teaching the headship of the husband and subordination of the wife: (1) The man was created first; (2) the woman was taken from the man; (3) the woman is named by the man; (4) the woman was created to be a "helper" to the man. She affirms that the cumulative effect of these arguments "appears" to be conclusive in supporting this premise. However, she then questions the validity of each (Evans 1983:14) as a means of explaining away what appears to be a logical conclusion.

Evans seeks to dismiss the priority of man by suggesting that temporal priority is not significant in Genesis 2. One must be cautious in such a conclusion, lest she seem to presume to judge the mind and motivation of the One who inspired Scripture and attested to its accuracy and value even to every "jot and tittle" (Matt. 5:18). The apostle Paul's allusion to the priority of man in his theological treatise adds weight to the importance of the clear divine order (1 Tim. 2:13). Evans further suggests that for priority to be important would necessitate the implication of "superiority," and in her thinking superiority in being or function. However, complementarians and egalitarians are agreed that there is no suggestion of inferiority of person in this text or any other. The

difference in their positions would lie in the way they view what functions are open to men and women: Egalitarians hold that there must be allowance for, and, with some, even a demand for the same functions for both men and women; complementarians would maintain that difference in function is in view without either role being inherently inferior or superior. This writer would suggest that both the man and the woman should seek to be "superior" in the sense of demanding excellence in fulfilling whatever assignment God gives.

Evans continues her discussion with addressing the woman's origin from the man. She is certainly right in affirming that both the woman and the man ultimately owe their being to the "purposeful act of the creator" (Evans 1983:15-16). Though affirming the emphasis on man's incompleteness without the woman, Evans omits from her discussion how the way in which God created the woman affirms her role of "helping" the man as well as making clear her equality to him, since she also is "in the image of God." Actually the Creator uniquely affirmed both the woman's ontological equality and her practical subordination in the creative act itself. Plus the simultaneous equality and differences are clearly God's purposeful design since the man is "neither participant nor spectator, nor consultant at her birth" (Evans 1983:15).

Concerning the projected argument of naming as implying dominion in the Old Testament, Evans meticulously presents a case for its lack of importance here because the precise "naming formula" is not used in Genesis 2:23. However, she weakens her own argument by noting that the "formula" is indeed used in Genesis 3:20 where

Adam first assigned a specific name to the woman (Evans 1983:16).

The naming function itself has significance even today in many cultures. Knowing the name of a person or thing is to know its essential nature as well as to have some measure of power over it. For God to change the name of an individual in Scripture signified a change in the person's nature or character or destiny (Rowley 1962:79).

The consensus of biblical scholarship would concur that naming is a ruling function (Clark 1980:18). Dominion in itself does not have to be a part of "the image of God" but could be an assignment that is the result or consequence of the likeness to God found in His creation. In any case, God did make the man first, which, in the thinking of many, gave the man authority over the rest of creation.

Every person or thing is what its name implies. Namelessness and anonymity mean unreality. For this reason the naming of a thing is never an incidental act in the Bible. It is always a decisive act, as is presupposed even where it is not expressly mentioned When man names a thing . . . he does so in some sense as the delegate and plenipotentiary of God and not on his own authority (Barth III₁ 1958:124).

Some have suggested that authority attributed to priority in creation would lead to the position that animals or birds and fishes ought to rule over mankind because they were created before man. If such reflections are not rejected for lack of logical reasoning based on differences among the species, they must at least be measured against Old Testament primogeniture (Deut. 21:15-17). Adam carried leadership appropriate for a first-born son, though Adam was "first-formed" rather than first-born (see also Col. 1:15-18). One must not overlook the innate differences between mankind and the animals.

Obviously, primogeniture applied only to people. Any suggestion that mankind might be subordinate to the animals is inadequate (Hurley 1981:206-209).

Finally, Evans attempts to revise the common usage of the term "helper" as indicating one who is subordinate or secondary. Although she is most certainly correct in affirming that the word in itself does not imply inferiority, many would question the leap to say that helping is not "subordination in any sense" (Evans 1983:16).⁷

Evans has attempted to explain away each of these arguments for subordination found in the text, thus concluding that hierarchicalism in marriage is not required by the text and, in fact, must be read into the text. She believes that equality and subordination are antithetical (Evans 1983:14-17). In response, one might consider that elaborate explanations are needed to explain why straightforward statements of Scripture are not true. For example, one test is set against another, as in suggesting that Genesis 1 and 2 are antithetical rather than complementary. Or, differences in male and female are attributed to one's accommodation to the culture, such as the determination to reject what Scripture might prescribe during the biblical era with its patriarchal setting as inappropriate for the modern era with its egalitarian and feministic influences.

⁷See discussion on the role of "helper" in section 2.3.2, pp. 119-127.

2.6.1 Subordination in the New Testament

In each of the New Testament passages addressing subordination, the Greek verb ὑποτάσσω, meaning “place or arrange under” or “submit to” (Liddell 1966:1897) is used. The word itself, and certainly the connotation in its usage by the apostle Paul, is not meant to imply inferiority of person but rather difference in function (Patterson 1983:70-71). This statement is in contradistinction to that of Virginia Mollenkott, who, in her foreword to Jewett’s book, holds that “if woman must of necessity be subordinate, she must of necessity be inferior” (Jewett 1975:8).

Concurring with Paul, Peter used the same term (ὑποτάσσω) to describe a wife’s relationship to her husband. Though he did not refer to the creation account, he did use the example of Sarah and her relationship to Abraham. Furthermore, he used the same principle by describing the wife as the “weaker vessel” but also identifying her as a “fellow-heir of the grace of life,” combining the idea of molding practical function with spiritual equality (1 Peter 3:7).

The problem with one’s refusal to accept subordination or any hierarchical relationship is that in such thinking consistency would then dictate that children are “inferior” to their parents. This presumably would extend to Jesus Himself, who chose to be subordinate to His parents during His childhood (Luke 2:51). All citizens, who must be subordinate to civil authorities, would be inferior to those under whose jurisdiction they might fall.

The term “subordination” does not suggest inferior value, nor does the word include a notion of oppression or the use of force for

domination, though, of course, sinful exploitation could add these nuances of meaning. However, the term "subordination," in itself, simply describes the order in a relationship in which one person as the subordinate depends upon another person for direction. To confine subordination to obedience is to limit the meaning.

People can subordinate their lives or actions to another in many ways: by serving another, by observing and cooperating with the other's purposes and desires, by dedicating their lives to the cause the other is upholding, or by following the other's teaching (Clark 1980:23-24).

2.6.2 Subordination in the Book of Genesis

Genesis 2 does indeed present a clear picture of partnership between the man and the woman, but within that partnership a genuine subordination exists just as clearly. The first clue to this subordination is the priority of the man in creation. The man is the center of the narrative about the creation of the woman. She was created for him and presented to him by God. Her role is understood according to her relationship to the man. The man is there first; he bears the name of the entire race; he keeps that name even after the woman is created; and he is God's spokesman to describe what has happened. He names all the animals; he names the woman. God speaks to the man directly, and evidently He expects the man to relay the divine commands to the woman (Clark 1980:25-26).

The creation of the woman was with divine design and planning. The intimate relationship between the man and the woman is grounded in the process of creation itself. The creation of the woman was indirect in the sense that God took her out of the man, revealing the fact that she is part of the man. The poet has written:

For woman is not undeveloped man,
 But diverse
 Not like to like, but like in difference.
 Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
 Till at the last she set herself to man,
 Like perfect music unto noble words;
 Distinct in individualities,
 But like each other ev'n as those who love.
 (Lord Alfred Tennyson, "The Princess")

The clear division of roles suggested in the creation account carried certain respective responsibilities for the man (Gen. 2:15-17) and the woman (Gen. 2:18), which, in turn, engendered peace and harmony — an orderliness designed by God. Both husband and wife knew the respective duties required, and that kind of understanding will engender unity as both parties follow the divine plan. However, the invasion of sin distorted the plan, leading to misunderstanding and even oppression (Vanier 1984:50-51).

2.7 The Divine Plan: Both the Same and Different

The tendency to deny differences between men and women wields a destructive blow to the family, which was founded on those differences recognized in each by the other. The best communication and greatest harmony is found in recognizing differences (Vanier 1984:55).

J. I. Packer has noted that passages in both Old and New Testaments have convinced him that "the man-woman relationship is intrinsically nonreversible" and that any efforts to reverse their respective roles "will put more strain on the humanity of both parties than if it were the other way around." Packer attributes this to the reality of creation, which he notes is "a given fact that nothing will change." He explains his statement with a reminder that

redemption will not change creation since grace restores nature rather than abolishing it.

Packer does remind his readers that one must not impose on women restrictions that Scripture does not impose just as one should not allow the distinctiveness of the sexes as created to be minimized because of changes in the culture.

Understanding and maintaining the God-created distinction and the God-appointed dynamics of men and women in their mutual relations seems to me far more important at the present time than removing inappropriate restrictions on women in the community and the church (Packer 1986:299).

Ontological understandings should precede and clarify practical outworking. Once theological foundations are clear and accepted, the outworking of those principles will clarify and rectify inappropriate restrictions.

Mathews also notes that the idea of hierarchy, or leadership-followship, as a creation ordinance within the human family is present in Genesis 1 as an integral feature in the structuring of the six days of the Creator's work, laying the groundwork for the superscription found in chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis. "Both affirm that man and woman are equally human and share the same personal worth." Yet in the midst of what is shared in common between the man and woman are also differences. Sameness in the sense of equality does not necessarily mean exactness (Mathews 1996:173, 220).

Hurley explains differences within Genesis 1 — 4 by affirming that the presence or absence of a hierarchical relationship between the man and the woman is not discussed in the structure of Genesis 1

because the emphasis of this chapter is the rule of God over His creation, together with the established order of rule within the various realms (e.g., the fish rule the sea and the birds the air). In the context of chapter 1 both the man and the woman are challenged to multiply and rule the earth. On the other hand, their relationship to one another is then unveiled in chapter 2 (Hurley 1981:172-173).

Another difficulty is to harmonize Genesis 1:26 with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Again Hurley presents a position worthy of consideration.

The woman is not called to image God or Christ *in the relation which she sustains to her husband*. She images instead the response of the church to God and Christ by willing, loving self-subjection (Eph. 5:22-23). *In this particular sense* of authority relationships, the main topic of 1 Corinthians 11, it is absolutely appropriate to say that the man images God and that the woman does not (Hurley 1981:173).

Of course, this particular imaging used by Paul to describe how the man and woman relate does not in any sense negate the woman's being in the image of God in other ways. The context of 1 Corinthians 11 is not related to Genesis 1:26 as the basis for the "image of God" but for the theme of dominion found in chapter one of Genesis (Hurley 1981:173).

The difference in names used by God to identify Himself within these early chapters of Genesis may be understood as a deliberately inspired change of designation so that in the context of establishing His relationship to those He created "in His image," the name of the Creator is joined to His covenant name, making clear that the great Creator of the universe and the covenant God of Israel are one and the same (Patterson 1995:7). This linguistic harbinger may also be

symbolic of the personal relationship the Creator anticipates with His created beings — the man and the woman. The first chapter overview of the entirety of His creative handiwork would not call for such intimacy as is found in the second chapter's careful review of the unfolding of the creation of the man and the woman, the establishment of their relationship to one another, and the description of their dwelling or garden home, and the defining of their relationship to the Creator. To the man and woman the Creator is not only God the Creator but also *Yahweh*, the covenant-maker.

Barth affirms that the woman is different from the man without concluding that her subordination implies inferiority. Though Jewett would not agree with that premise, he does acknowledge that the concept of hierarchy does not in itself entail superiority and inferiority but only that some are over and others under, or some exercise authority while others submit. He is concerned that hierarchy would in any sense be related to gender (Jewett 1975:71). Somehow divine assignment, based upon creative order, is not a consideration for Jewett.

Jewett tries to reject the similarities and natural link between the subordination of the wife to her husband with the subordination of the Son to the Father on the basis that the latter is not an ontological subordination within the godhead but rather a voluntary act of self-humiliation on the part of the Son in the economy of redemption. The Son, as God, is equal with His Father; yet as the Messiah He assumed a servant role and became subordinate to His Father (Jewett 1975:133). This is precisely the point: A woman is not in submission when she is coerced in any way; submission is

meaningless unless it is voluntary. A wife is to submit to her husband not because he desires or demands her subordination but because she responds to the directive of the Creator, who Himself established the divine order for the home.

The text does not claim that only the man has access to God, but rather that the man, as the "firstborn," has the greater responsibility for the collective action of the woman and the man in the garden. The man's sin was not that he listened to the woman but that he followed her into sin (Mathews 1996:222). Paul Jewett has an excellent definition of sin:

Man may be said to be fallen in that he uses the powers with which he is uniquely endowed by his Maker in an effort to achieve a proud autonomy. In this perversion of his true self, he revolts against God and exploits his neighbor, thereby destroying his freedom and living as though he were not a responsible subject (Jewett 1975:22).

The key ingredient in sin is autonomy or self-rule, a slippery slope to separation from God (Is. 53:6).

2.8 Chapter Conclusion

The differences between a man and a woman have been present from creation as has their equality of personhood. One must beware lest in a distortion of that ontological "equality," she obliterates the differences that make the roles of the man and the woman complementary so that their lives and culture are cross-pollinated, enabling them to work together in the task God has given them to extend the generations and have dominion over the world.

Rosemary Radford Ruether notes that in explaining male-female relationships, feminist theology starts with anthropology rather than with an *a priori* definition of God. Ruether suggests that

God has been made in man's image rather than the other way around, and this premise is the substance of her critique of the "image of God" in Scripture. She continues in clearly stating that feminists must construct "images of God that will better manifest and promote the full realization of human potential for women and men" (Ruether 1991:286-287).

Charlotte von Kirschbaum affirms that in their mutual complementarity the man and woman attest to the goodness and rightness of God's order. For that reason, she refuses to accept the view that the order established at creation is a contingent matter without significance among Christians. Rather, she describes this creative order as the "gracious order of God" for His church (Von Kirschbaum 1996:107).

John Stott identifies three fundamental truths about mankind: (1) God made them, male and female, in His own image; (2) the man and woman were given the assignment of continuing the species unto the generations; (3) they were given dominion over the earth and its creatures (Stott 1990:258). Stott also affirms that though God made the man and woman equal, He also made them different. In fact, he suggests that in Genesis 1 masculinity and femininity are related to God's image; whereas in Genesis 2 they are related to each other, so that equality does not mean the same identity but complementarity, i.e., "equal but different" (Stott 1990:263).

The equality of men and women has been expressed in this way:

The Bible teaches that, although there may be differences between males and females, their relationships with one

another should be marked by their complementarity (without either being superior or inferior) and equality (without their being the same) (Cook 1992:32).

This equality between men and women is by creation and in Christ, and thus there is no inferiority of either to the other. In fact, the Bible supports the existence of authorities without destroying the equality of individuals under authority (1 Pet. 2:13; Rom. 13:1). However, complementarity means that there can be no question of the identity of one with the other, recognizing differences without trying to eliminate them or to usurp the distinctives of one another.

. . . All is in order so long, and only so long, as the man and the woman, whether in a single state or within the marriage bond, will to be human beings ever fully conscious of their sex — and not only conscious of it but also honestly happy in it, each thankful to God that he or she can be a human being of a particular sex, proceeding on his or her own unique way through life with a sober and good conscience (Jewett 1975:28).

The uniqueness of this interrelatedness is seen in the emphasis on sexual equality in Genesis 1 and sexual complementarity in Genesis 2 (Stott 1990:263, 265). Men and women can be complementary to one another, while still being dependent on one another — a distinct mutuality. And that mutuality can include a relationship of subordination.

Inherent sexual differences are part of the image of male and female, and they are intrinsic and cannot be obliterated despite the efforts of some to abolish them. George Gilder wrote,

. . . There are no human beings; there are just men and women, and when they deny their divergent sexuality, they reject the deepest sources of identity and love. They commit sexual suicide (Gilder 1975:46).

Karl Barth's passion for Christian freedom did not mean that he rejected sexual differentiation. He did not see a neutral, asexual humanity but rather specific humanity as male and female. Men and women cannot transcend their sexual distinctness; rather they must acknowledge sexual differentiation and distinction within the unity and equality they share as joint-heirs and sharers in the *imago dei* (Green 1979:226).

Finally, Genesis 1:27 (affirming equality between the man and woman) and Genesis 2:18 (expressing a difference between the man and the woman) cannot legitimately be played one against the other since each corresponds to the other and both are viewed together. God's prescription of the woman as "comparable [כנגדו] to him," i.e., to the man, and Adam's description of the woman as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" emphasize the unity of the man and the woman and thus their ontological equality; God's prescription of the woman's function as being Adam's "helper" (עוזר) and Adam's description of his understanding of the difference in their respective role assignments is expressed in his naming the woman ("she shall be called woman"), which for him seemed to imply leadership of and responsibility for the woman (Gen. 2:23). Thus the essence of her design is expressed in the phrase "helper comparable to him" (כנגדו עוזר), linking the function of helping (meaning her subordination) with personhood of ultimate worth (equality). The compound terms in the Hebrew phrase are not antithetical but harmonious.

The combination of equality and subordination is consistent from the creation of the man and woman in Genesis (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18, 23) throughout all of Scripture, including references in the New

Testament (Eph. 5:33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). The man and the woman supplement and depend upon one another in mutuality, while exhibiting differences that invite reciprocity as they relate to one another. The divine plan was perfect for each and both. Only after the Fall did the relationship between the man and the woman degenerate into oppression. Such God-willed and deep-rooted differences are based upon creation order, and they unfold in the pristine perfection of the Garden paradise. They, therefore, continue to contribute to God's order for subsequent generations in a thread of continuity and consistency that only the Creator could have planned and executed.

APPENDIX 2 — A

Theological Foundations for Headship

- * The priority of Adam's creation (Gen. 2:7)
- * The use of the name "Adam" (אָדָם) for the entire race (Gen. 1:27)
- * The investiture of Adam with authority prior to Eve's creation (Gen. 2:15)
- * The assignment to the man of the responsibility for provision and protection (Gen. 2:15-17)
- * The responsibility of the man in naming the animals (Gen. 2:20)
- * The designation of the woman as the man's helper (Gen. 2:18, 20)
- * The naming of the woman by the man (Gen. 2:23; 3:20)
- * The recognition of the man as leader and spokesman (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:9-12)

(Patterson 1995:6).

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Chapter 3

A Consistent But Multifaceted Pattern for Biblical Womanhood

3.1 The Woman of Strength in Proverbs 31:10-31

No passage in the Old Testament is touted to be any more pertinent for describing the essence of biblical femininity than Proverbs 31:10-31. These verses are set apart stylistically not only in poetic form but also as a literary acrostic, with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet as the initial letter of the first word in each verse.

Included are characteristics describing the ways a wife relates to her husband and household: trustworthy, productive, creative, gathering and preparing food, supervising the household, investing resources and maintaining those investments, sensitive to the poor and needy, selecting clothing for her household and herself, even propelling her husband into far-reaching influence. The passage also speaks of the woman's demeanor — she models strength, dignity, confidence, wisdom, kindness; and, of course, most of all, she “fears the Lord.” This woman is not only busy in pursuit of her responsibilities, but she is also efficient and productive, exemplifying the competence and energy required for managing the domestic scene and caring for her family's needs as well as maintaining her own spiritual excellence (Carmody 1988:72-73).

Proverbs 31 presents a different view of the ideal woman than some would expect. This “woman of strength” (אשה-חיל) is capable and is in fact noted for prodigious achievements. Her ministries extend beyond the boundaries of her private dwelling. The message of this passage seems to be that the woman possessing these personal qualities is much more valuable (Prov. 31:10), even in financial terms, than one with a rich dowry (Westbrook 1991:147).

3.1.1 A Critical Evaluation of the Proverbs Woman

Swidler argues that the value of a woman, as portrayed in Scripture, is seen only in conceiving a son or in the labor she contributes to the household. To affirm the latter, he cites Proverbs 31. He summarizes that “women are praised only in their roles as related beneficially to men, that is, as mothers and wives,” commenting that women are lauded as good wives but men are not praised as good husbands. He argues from silence that the orientation of the biblical setting is totally male. He also summarizes rather disparagingly that the woman is the model for the “Perfect Servant” (Swidler 1979:119, 125-126), and his emphasis implies that voluntary servanthood is to be spurned.

Swidler’s comments are in contradistinction to the example of Jesus who willingly assumed the role of servant in relation to His disciples and who delighted to do the will of His Father (Mark 10:43; John 4:34).¹ Swidler’s view is also in opposition to the very reason stated for the creation of the woman, i.e., that she is to be a helper to the man (Gen. 2:18).

The evidence in Proverbs 31 alone indicates, at least implicitly, that there is no intrinsic inferiority in the woman; yet still there is no effort in these verses to refute the situational subordination set forth in Genesis (Gen. 2:15-18) and affirmed in many passages in the New Testament (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). The husband of the Proverbs woman was the one sitting in the gates, while the woman described in the

¹In this chapter, one will find reference to the example of the Godhead and especially of Jesus. Even though Jesus is certainly unique so that no man, or woman, is to be considered equal to or the same as He, the writers of Scripture do appeal to Him as an example. Such analogies, of course, eventually fall short because of His uniqueness and because of the supernatural, beyond-human-understanding nature of God Himself. However, Scripture does present Jesus as an “example,” that believers “should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

text is explicitly praised for her faithfulness to the mundane responsibilities of the household.

Carmody clearly sets forth what the text of Scripture says but then proceeds to say why she rejects the words and message. Her final admonition is thus,

So give us fewer paeans to good wives, fewer dutiful acknowledgments of women's important and special gifts, fewer tortured defenses of policies simply wrong and dumb Indeed charm can be deceitful and beauty vain, but both also can be gifts of God Let us start judging and promoting all of the people of God, men and women alike, only by their fruits (Carmody 1988:76).

In contrast to Carmody's textual comments on what the words of Scripture are saying on the one hand and her response to those words on the other hand, is the actual crux of the matter for every woman seeking an understanding of biblical womanhood. First, one must decide if what God says is normative and pure. If the answer is affirmative, then one must attempt to read God's Word by trying to think His thoughts and understand His ways and by seeking to be one-minded with His Son (Is. 55:8-9; Phil. 2:5).

For example, in Carmody's previously quoted statement, she begins with criticism of the message of Proverbs 31, as it is commonly understood to be, i.e., an affirmation of women in their responsibilities within the home.² Though Carmody acknowledges that charm and beauty in a woman can be "gifts of God," she seems offended that women would possess any

²This interpretation is espoused as the primary view by most commentators, including The Women's Bible Commentary, a self-styled feministic volume, edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, who write ". . . the success of this woman is viewed from the perspective of what she provides for her husband and children. It is her fulfillment of the roles in the home assigned to her by society that causes her to be praised in the very gates of the city where Woman Wisdom first raised her cry" (Newsom and Ringe 1992:152).

gifts that are woven into their lives to accentuate the uniqueness of their womanhood. However, a careful study of the words in this text, even according to the interpretation of rabbinical commentators, reveals that the author of Proverbs sees beauty and charm as feminine traits. However, these assets are put into perspective as not being the essential or even most important qualifications in a woman (Cohen 1965:215).

Charm, a pleasing manner that has been developed by painstaking practice and punctilious discipline, is in itself an outward varnish or veneer. It covers an individual as a cloak and can be tossed off and on at will. Physical beauty is similar since its transitory nature is affected by the passing of years, the ravages of suffering, and the inevitable neglect that comes from preoccupation with other tasks. Also charm and beauty, as external and temporal devices, are more defined by personal preference and cultural venues than by any absolute and universal criterion.

According to Scripture, every woman who stands before the Lord God is on an equal playing field with all other women, and men as well. A woman is set apart by the possibility of grasping the unique gifts of her feminine nature; yet her ultimate success, and especially her standing with God, is based on godly character that is fashioned within (Prov. 31:30; 1 Pet. 3:4; see also Prov. 23:7). Nevertheless, the "fear of the Lord" is distributed abroad most effectively by the adornment of genuine charm and beauty (Patterson 1991:889).

Carmody further calls for judgment by what is termed in the vernacular as "fruit inspection" (Carmody 1988:76). The author of Proverbs affirms this principle in expressing that the "woman of strength" in Proverbs 31 elicits "blessings from her children, devotion from her husband, praise from the beneficent labors of her own hands, and

commendation from God Himself” (see Prov. 31:29, 31; 1 Pet. 3:4) (Patterson 1991:889, 1769).

Archer, who considers the Book of Proverbs to be post-exilic in date, affirms that the book presents the woman’s role as being clearly in the private sphere of the family and home as wife, mother, and homemaker; whereas the man, though husband and father, was assigned to the public sphere as worker, provider of support for the family, and active participant in the affairs of society. She alludes to Proverbs 31 as presenting the woman tending to the needs of her husband and children day and night (v. 27), while contrasting the man as out in the community (v. 23) (Archer 1990:85-86).

Delitzsch also affirms that the housewife or homemaker³ is here depicted as governing and increasing the wealth of the household as well as advancing the position of her husband — and all as virtues with the “fear of the Lord” as their root (Delitzsch [s a]:326).

3.1.2 The Fear of the Lord: The Woman’s Distinction

“The fear of the Lord” is the fundamental principle of biblical wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10). Though the phrase has various shades of meaning, primarily it implies a rightness of one’s heart toward God rather than the alienation of heart characteristic of one who is unconverted. To “fear the Lord” begins with forsaking oneself and looking

³In this paper the term “homemaker” identifies a woman who elects to use her primary and first energies in caring for her home and family. This precludes work place employment that demands for its fulfillment the greatest part of one’s waking hours and one’s freshest energies. However, there is no suggestion that the homemaker does not work, for by devoting her energies to work in her own home, she contributes to society in productive and profitable ways. This definition is not meant to address the issue of whether a wife or mother should pursue employment outside her home but merely to attempt to define the role of the woman described in Proverbs 31.

to God (Matt. 10:39; 16:24; 19:21, 29; Luke 14:33). In so doing, one welcomes God's rebuke and receives His counsel.

. . . To fear God is to rely on him rather than on one's own unaided intelligence, to avoid wrongdoing, and to accept misfortune as a God-sent discipline . . . knowledge of God which is the fruit of belief, trust, and humble submission to him (Scott 1965:37).

Who God is and what He does should inspire awe and awaken serious responsibility before Him in view of the consequences of living outside His will and approval. This sense of awe implies serious responsibility before Him, i.e., understanding the consequences from one's choices. This "fear of the Lord" becomes the watershed between the wise and the foolish (House 1992:22-23). One cannot think herself too wise when she is aware that she is nothing, and God is everything (Arnot 1978:19-22).

True humility is the awareness of God as the source for whatever abilities one may have received and developed (Jensen 1971:43). Such "fear" is reverence or awe for the Creator, resulting in personal piety and righteousness. Acknowledging God's sovereignty in every realm is a positive attitude toward God that presupposes a connection between ethical behavior and spiritual commitment (Berry 1995:20-21, 124-125). To fear the Lord is to submit to the reproof of His instruction as presented in Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), willing to turn from the evil ways prompted by the inclinations of one's human nature in order to walk in the way of the Lord (Oehler 1978:546).

The phrase "fear of the Lord" implies more than a healthy respect for the Almighty. Barth alludes to a tradition in the Early Church "to conceive Him in His incomprehensibility" (Barth II₁, 1964:192). In Proverbs 2:5 and 9:10, "fear" is synonymous with intimate "knowledge" of the Lord. That knowledge goes beyond a method of thought to include a relationship.

Kidner expresses it this way: “*Knowledge*, then, in its full sense, is a relationship, dependent on revelation and inseparable from character” (Kidner 1973:59).

The Hebrew word יראָה means “to fear from an apprehension of danger and a sense of our own weakness joined with trembling.” Thus, one who “fears” in the spiritual sphere has been denominated as one who would “religiously reverence” another. Such represents the essence of religious character “as fear is put for the whole of the doctrine which teaches the fear of God” (Wilson 1978:159). In other words, “to fear God” is the heart of one’s commitment to Him. The word “fear” includes in its meaning two ideas: shrinking back in apprehension and drawing close in awe. Ultimately “to fear the Lord” demands reverential submission to the Lord’s will and is prerequisite to understanding His will (Zuck 1995:175).

One commentator has defined “fear” in this way:

. . . affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father’s law . . . His wrath is so bitter, and his love so sweet; that hence springs an earnest desire to please him . . . (Bridges 1959:3-4).

Oehler cautions that “the fear of the Lord” is not “a blind, gloomy, passive religious emotion, produced merely by the idea of an absolute power which utterly negatives [sic] human nature as such” (Oehler 1978:546-547). Rather this “fear” presupposes the covenant relationship between God and His people. Those who “fear the Lord” share in the obligations and restraints imposed upon the servants of the Lord, so that they want to please and obey the Lord (i.e., heeding His Word), while also being sure that they do not displease or disobey Him (i.e., being sensitive even to the spirit of His commands). The “fear of the Lord” is “reverence for the divine authority, fear of the divine displeasure” (Brown 1975:543).

It takes into account that God is the foundation of a holy and disciplined life. It is expressed by loving Him, walking in His ways (Job 1:1; Ps. 128:1), and serving Him with heart and life (Richards 1991:272-273).

The Book of Proverbs comes full circle so that the lessons end (31:30) at the same point where they began (1:7). The expression “the fear of the Lord” occurs repeatedly in the Book of Proverbs (1:7, 29; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 14:26, 27; 15:33; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4; 23:17; see also 31:30). In the beginning, the author asserts that “the fear of the Lord” is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7), and at the end he presents an anthem of praise honoring a woman who manifests in her life the ideals of wisdom and the “fear of the Lord” (Zuck 1995:379). However, there is no suggestion that “the fear of the Lord” is a virtue reserved for women alone; for neither noble nor base qualities are linked to gender. Nevertheless, the book’s climactic ending, in a key-note hymn, features the life of a woman and portrays how this root of godliness is to be emulated in her life as a wife and mother.

Another interesting connection to the phrase “the fear of the Lord” is found in Ephesians 5:21-33, in which the husband is to love ($\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\alpha\omega$) his wife and the wife is to fear ($\phi\omicron\beta\epsilon\omega$) her husband. Again, “fear” is the reverential respect that underlies a woman’s love for her husband and inspires her deference to him as the leader of the family. The same Greek word is used in the LXX to translate the phrase “the fear of the Lord” in Proverbs 1:7 and to describe the woman “who fears the Lord” in Proverbs 31:30. This contrast in assignments within the home setting marks a distinction between the husband and wife and their responsibilities one to the other (Jewett 1975:58-59).

Peter also references “fear.” Although *εν φόβω* (1 Pet. 3:2) may refer to the wife’s reverence toward her husband, i.e., her concern for showing proper respect for his leadership, more likely the reference extends to a wife’s reverence toward God as the one who placed her husband in the position of leadership and as the one who enables her to live a holy and set apart life, whatever the circumstances (Hiebert 1984:185). A wife offers respect to her husband, not because he deserves it but because of her respect for and obedience to God.

Kassian comments that “ungodly women are terrified of being repressed and unfulfilled.” She identifies this lack of fulfillment as being fueled by a woman’s fear of losing what she believes to be her rights. Women who are thus trapped into personal fears often allow themselves to be controlled by the world (Rom. 12:1-2) rather than trusting in the Lord and obeying Him (Prov. 3:5) (Kassian 1990:73).

Another interesting parallel between Proverbs 31 and 1 Peter 3 is the question of external adornment (Prov. 31:30; 1 Pet. 3:3). The word “adorn” (*κοσμεω*) is in the imperfect tense, indicating continuing or repeated action (1 Pet. 3:3). Some suggest that these commands are to be understood as literal prohibitions concerning hair and jewelry appropriate to the culture of Peter’s day and thus are not applicable in the present era. This view further argues by logical deduction that a wife’s submission to her husband is not applicable in this generation.

On the other hand, since “adornment” includes accouterments a woman uses to make herself beautiful to others, Peter’s admonition to Christian wives to depend on inward qualities rather than outer ornaments is quite consistent with the rest of Scripture (John 7:24; 2 Cor. 10:7). Also Peter elsewhere in his epistle emphasizes internal, unseen spiritual

realities with eternal value as opposed to external, visible appearances (see 1 Pet. 1:1, 4, 7-9, 18-19, 23-25; 2:2, 5, 9, 11). The context of this passage makes clear that Peter rejects the harness of cultural ideas. He does not commend dress (hairstyle, jewelry, or clothing) or behavior that is merely acceptable to society and culture but rather moves to the heart of the Christian faith, which is counter-culture (Balch 1981:101-102).

In Scripture, a beautiful spiritual character overshadows any adornment. That women do seem to be drawn to adornment is illustrated in the suggestion that for a woman to forget her ornaments or a bride her wedding finery is unlikely (Jer. 2:32). Though the text does not suggest that a woman is wrong to choose to dress attractively and even to add accessories or extras (see Prov. 31:22), the apostle does point to a higher and more exclusive adornment (Brown 1975:543-544). Neither Proverbs 31 nor 1 Peter 3 condemns the desire to make one's appearance beautiful and attractive. Rather both passages encourage an emphasis upon the inner spiritual life, which in turn acts as a thermostat, regulating outer appearance and conduct (Prov. 31:30; 1 Pet. 3:3-4; see also 1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 23:7).

The Christian lifestyle does not necessarily attack physical, mundane desires but rather seeks to prune and discipline those desires so that they bring forth good fruit (John 15:2). If this passage were a prohibition against jewelry and certain hair styling, it would also be a veto against clothing. Whether in the Greek text or English translation, the three descriptive clauses addressing jewelry, hair, and clothing are parallel in grammatical construction. The lesson here then is to avoid dependence upon one's outer frame through ostentation — expensive jewelry, elaborate hair-styling, and expensive apparel — all of which are merely outward

covering and thus corruptible. The contrast developed here is clearly between the outward, i.e., what is visible to other people, and the hidden or what is within, i.e., what is visible to God alone (1 Sam. 16:7).

Fearfulness, when referring to terror or alarm, destroys the deeper joy of human fellowship in a relationship. On the other hand, "fear" ($\phi\sigma\beta\omega$), in the sense of "awe" or "reverence," is God's plan to bring a woman rest in the security of her husband's love and in the assurance of God's providence. Though the Christian wife may experience dismay from the actions of an unbelieving husband, she is not to live in "terror" or upheaval; rather, she is to be calm and quiet, trusting God and exercising the creativity and gifts that God has given to her. This exhortation develops naturally out of the context of the passage, which encourages all believers to bear affliction and persecution cheerfully and victoriously (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

3.2 The Mark of an Ideal Woman in 1 Peter 3:1-7

In the New Testament, the heart of biblical womanhood seems to lie in that quality described as the "gentle and quiet spirit" (1 Pet. 3:4), the character or inner disposition that is to be molded only by God Himself. One commentator has described this as "who that person is, at the deepest and most private level, and for Christian wives . . . the wellspring of their beauty" (Michaels 1988:161). Although women throughout history have shown a natural bent toward taking note of their appearance (such as hair, jewelry, and clothing), in this passage fashion is used as a metaphor for and harbinger of one's character and conduct (Slaughter 1996:357-365).⁴

⁴See also discussion on pp. 168-169.

No effort has been made on the part of this researcher to suggest that only women are to be characterized by the virtues described in this phrase or by any other Christ-like qualities presented in Scripture. Robert Leighton expressed it thus,

There is somewhat . . . of a particular cut or fashion of it for wives towards their husbands, and in their domestic affairs; but men, all men, ought to wear of the same stuff, yea, if I may so speak, of the same piece, for it is in all one and the same spirit, and fits the stoutest and greatest commanders. Moses was a great general, and yet not less great in this virtue . . . (Leighton 1972:254).

3.2.1 Jesus and Gentleness

The Christian virtue of gentleness was extolled by the Lord Himself in what is often denominated "The Sermon on the Mount." In this homily, the first in a series of five discourses presenting the Christian life as it is to be lived in the earthly world now and enjoyed in the heavenly life to come, Jesus talks frankly about character qualities that set believers apart to a unique lifestyle like His own. Among these qualities extolled is "gentleness" (πραυτης), a quality suggesting the self-control of one's life and actions and submission to the authority of Christ (see also Num. 12:3; Psalm 22:26; 25:9; 37:11; 147:6; 149:4; Is. 11:4; 29:19; Zech. 2:3). In each of these Old Testament references, the Hebrew word, whether describing the prophet Moses or the followers of Yahweh, is ענו or עניו, meaning "humble," "lowly," "meek," "poor" — or even in a figurative sense "depressed" in mind or circumstances.

Jesus did not speak of a discipline foreign to Himself since He is described in the Gospels as "gentle and lowly" (πραος και ταπεινος). Before His incarnation He was poignantly presented in prophecy as "gentle" or "meek" and "lowly" (Is. 53:7; Zech. 9:9) just as accounts of His life describe

Him thus during the days of His incarnation (Matt. 11:29; 21:5; John 3:3-15; Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 10:1; 1 Pet. 2:23). Of course, the spirit of gentleness or meekness, a right and godly attitude for anyone — male or female, often exposed Jesus, just as it would anyone, to wrong and ungodly responses such as contempt and ridicule.

3.2.2 A Specific Application to Women

Nevertheless, for whatever reasons, the author of 1 Peter specifically challenged women to seek a “gentle and quiet spirit” and described this attitude as “precious in the sight of God.” The virtue *πραῦς* is described by some as especially prized in women. Reasons for such application seem apparent (Bromiley 1985:929).

In the context of this passage as well as in other New Testament references, women are admonished to be “submissive to their own husbands” (see also Eph. 5:21, 22; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1). This theme in 1 Peter 3:1-2 is again picked up in verse 5, affirming a connection between a submissive attitude and the inward beauty described as a “gentle and quiet spirit” in verses 3 and 4.

The imperishable beauty of a “gentle and quiet spirit” enables a wife to submit to her husband’s authority, even if he is an unbeliever, knowing that God Himself has challenged her to this course of action (1 Pet. 3:1-2). Sarah’s husband Abraham was not an unbeliever, but she chose to submit to her husband and trust God even in uncertain, unpleasant, and dangerous situations (Gen. 12:1-8; 12:10-20; 20) (Grudem 1988:141-142).⁵

Peter does not imply that there will never be suffering (1 Pet. 2:18-20; see also Matt. 5:44-45). Yet the clear message is that spiritual strength can overcome discouragement and even physical weakness (1 Pet. 3:6).

⁵See also further discussion of Sarah on pp 220-222.

Whatever else is involved, certainly submission is the yielding of oneself to the authority and direction of another — an attitude that would be impossible without a “gentle and quiet” spirit.

Egalitarians note that 1 Peter 3:1-6 is addressed to women and that “the emphasis is on inner character and the respect and honoring of others.” They interpret this passage as admonishing wives to use their freedom in Christ to comply with the restraints placed upon them by their unbelieving husbands and to be examples of godliness in their own homes (Kroeger 1995:508).

However, the editorial comments in the Study Bible for Women present a paradox by juxtaposing Peter’s commendation of women possessing a “gentle and quiet spirit” with the description of these women whom they say chose to commit themselves to Christ even though their husbands remained unbelievers by showing “some independence and assertiveness.” The “gentle and quiet spirit,” on the other hand, would more likely exhibit a dependence upon the Lord and courage to obey His directives even in the midst of the uncertainties of living with an unbeliever. Such a spirit does not preclude godly boldness, which is founded upon unwavering confidence in the Lord that enables one to stand for right even in the midst of overwhelming difficulties (see Esth. 5:2-8). Boldness, as presented in Scripture, is the result of God’s work within one’s heart rather than merely personal self-determination.

In addition, to praise the virtue of the “gentle and quiet spirit,” which is described as “incorruptible” and “precious in the sight of God,” as an appropriate response to an unbelieving husband but an inappropriate response to a believing husband would present a dilemma. The editors of the Study Bible for Women note that Peter teaches “that it is the inner

character which is important, not outward decoration” and that “Christian wives are to display a reverence for God, gentleness of spirit and purity.” Yet these editors attribute the necessity of this virtue to “the conventions of the time” rather than divine fiat (Kroeger 1995:508).

Another puzzling comment is the admonition that the “gentle and quiet spirit” would be evidenced by a “reverence for God, gentleness of spirit and purity” with no mention of the clear statement of the text that the “gentle and quiet spirit” is a manifestation for women of their “accepting the authority of their husbands” (1 Pet. 3:6, NRSV). Certainly such a spirit is impossible without the indwelling Holy Spirit and thus a reverence for God, but the text is explicit in making the application that this attitude is to be the responsibility of a wife to her husband (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s commentary on this passage begins with this comment:

Woman’s influence is most clearly set forth by all the Apostles in meek submission to their husbands and to all the Church ordinances and discipline. A reverent silence, a respectful observance of rules and authorities was their power. They could not aid in spreading the gospel and in converting their husbands to the true faith by teaching, by personal attraction, by braided hair or ornaments. The normal beauty of a sanctified heart would be manifested by a meek and quiet spirit, valuable in the sight of God as well as their husbands (Stanton 1993:174).

Stanton has no basis for suggesting that women in general, or wives in particular, cannot “aid in spreading the gospel” since the thrust of New Testament evangelism is completely the antithesis of her statement (see 1 Pet. 3:15, an admonition located within the context of this passage) and since women were, in fact, entrusted first with the announcement of the Lord’s resurrection (Matt. 28:1-8). The context of the passage under

discussion is not directed at prohibitions but sets forth the most effective means for reaching unbelieving husbands.

Also it is interesting to note that Stanton ends this discussion asking about what honor could come from this "complete subordination." She then suggests that a woman ought to be a rebel outright lest she be made "a slave, a subject, the mere reflection of another human will" (Stanton 1993:175). Again, this advice is completely contrary to what is taught in the New Testament (see Matt. 16:24-25; Rom. 1:1; 6:22; Eph. 6:6; Jas. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1).

The Epistle of 1 Peter also affirms that allegiance to Christ takes priority over allegiance to all human relationships (see 1 Pet. 2:13, 21). Wives with unbelieving husbands were not encouraged to abandon, nor did they have the option to forsake their Christian faith and follow their husbands in unbelief as a criterion for practicing submission to their husbands. Scripture does not suggest that submission means putting a husband in the place of Christ. Rather a wife is instructed in how to be most effective in encouraging an unbelieving husband to respond to the gospel and be converted. No suggestion is made for the abandonment of independent thought on the part of a wife.

3.2.3 A Word to Husbands

Peter does not assume that he must deliver his message to wives only through their husbands. He does speak directly to women, obviously expecting them to hear, consider, and respond to God's Word for themselves (Piper 1991:194-195). Nevertheless, even in this passage directed primarily to wives, he has a warning for husbands

The implication here is that her [the wife's] submission is not a de facto yielding to all that he [the husband] says (since she has a

higher allegiance to Jesus), but a disposition to yield and an inclination to follow. Her submission is a readiness to support his leadership wherever it does not lead to sin (Piper 1991:476).

First Peter 3 has a strong reciprocity within the respective admonitions set forth, a balance that is also characteristic of the Pauline corpus (Eph. 5:21-29; Col. 3:18-19). While the author clearly addresses wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6, he turns his attention with the same clarity to husbands in verse 7, and then addresses both women and men with his words of spiritual challenge in verses 8 to 17.⁶

Husbands are given a reciprocal or counter response to the submissive attitudes of their wives. They are warned to avoid potential abuse of their leadership responsibilities and admonished to treat their wives with respect or suffer spiritual consequences, i.e., a cutting off of their prayers, which could indicate a fatherly discipline from the heavenly Father Himself (see Heb. 12:3-11) (Piper 1991:205-206).

Peter further affirms that this warning and admonition do not mean a wife, as the "weaker vessel," is any less important than her husband, since both are "heirs together in the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). Certainly a wife's opinions and feelings about every issue or decision are not only to be received graciously but also to be weighed and considered carefully.

In eternal worth and spiritual privilege, wife and husband are equal, meaning that they are both in His image, and both come to God on the same terms.

Here as elsewhere the New Testament authors couple their treatment of differences in roles of husband and wife with an implicit or explicit affirmation of their equality in status and importance (see 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7, 12; Ephesians 5:22, 33; Colossians 3:18, 19) (Piper 1991:207).

⁶See further discussion in section 3.3.7, pp. 218-219.

The word translated “wife” (γυναικεῖος, lit. “feminine one”) would suggest that perhaps even the very nature or characteristic of womanhood, i.e., femininity itself, presupposes a vulnerability that is enough to call for receiving respect and honor (Piper 1991:208).

The woman’s “gentle and quiet spirit,” produced by the ministry of the Holy Spirit within her life, not only equips her for her role — whether daughter, wife, and/or mother — in the domestic setting; but also it is an enabling force for her service in the church, since both the woman and man are to glorify Jesus Christ and be ready for spiritual ministry (1 Pet. 3:15).

3.2.4 Comments on the Word “Gentle”

An individual characterized as “gentle,” another word used to translate the Greek πραύς, is described as “mild” or “meek” (Liddell 1966:1459). The character quality is described as connoting a Christian virtue “free from haughtiness and self-will, piously humble and submissive, patient and unresentful” In fact, the “Biblical Gr. πραύς” is a specific reference in the Oxford Dictionary. Interestingly, the dictionary also noted the expression “the gentle sex” as referring to the female sex (Oxford English Dictionary 1989:559-560).

“Gentle” (πραύς) denotes someone who is “pleasant,” “courteous,” or “kind.” Lawrence Richards has defined the word and its cognates as indicating a “mild, soothing quality . . . that is to be expected in friends, benevolent rulers, tame animals, and mild medications” (Richards 1991:303). Geoffrey Bromiley describes the word as meaning “mild of things, tame of animals, gentle or pleasant of persons” (Bromiley 1985:929).

Gentleness is presented as a deliberate and active attitude, suggesting determined, patient endurance rather than a passive submission. It is the antithesis of roughness, bad temper, or sudden and volatile anger (Friedrich 1968:645-650).

In the Old Testament, parallel to the secular classical usage of the word, “gentleness” or “meekness” is used to describe Moses (Num. 12:3) and David (Ps. 132:1) and even Artaxerxes (Esth. 5:1). The word cannot exclusively suggest non-violence since Moses killed an Egyptian in his resistance to Pharaoh’s oppression (Ex. 2:12). The nuance of meaning in a spiritual sense would seem to suggest more of a religious quality involving total submission to God and humility in dealing with other people (Spicq 1994:166-167).

In the classical period, *πραῦς* is used to describe a calm and soothing disposition in contrast to rage and savagery and to imply moderation permitting reconciliation. Further, the “gentle” one keeps serenity in whatever misfortunes may come, bearing them calmly and patiently (Spicq 1994:161-163). In a secular setting, “the *πραῖος*” is described as having “a mild look . . . a smiling countenance . . . a soft voice . . . a tranquil demeanor . . . is accommodating and affable . . . courteous . . . charming and gracious . . . but also quiet and reserved . . . and at the same time easygoing and welcoming toward all . . .” (Spicq 1994:165).

Among the Greeks this quality was valued highly when accompanied by compensating strength. For example, admired rulers, though gentle with their subjects, were expected to be firm with their enemies. The Greeks did not consider gentleness that degenerated into self-abasement as appropriate or wise. Gentleness or meekness is an humble attitude that maintains patience regardless of offenses suffered and that is untainted by

the vindictiveness or malice of another (Matt. 5:5; 21:5; Jas. 1:21; 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:4, 15) (Richards 1991:439).

Although the opposite to self-aggressiveness and violent self-assertion, gentleness in no way suggests servility and servitude. Rather, gentleness is self-suppression that results in beneficent service. Gentleness follows broad and inclusive paths to unselfish ends instead of narrow paths to selfish ambition and personal gain (Jowett 1993:60).

For example, Jesus described Himself as "gentle" (Matt. 11:29), and yet He is also denominated the "Lion of Judah" to whom God the Father has committed all judgment (Matt. 21:12; John 5:22). Jesus described the "meek" or gentle ones as those who will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5), and He notes this quality as a mark of spiritual maturity and as an indication of responsiveness to God's Spirit (Gal. 5:23). In the context of 1 Peter 3, gentleness focuses upon the gracious cooperation with which a wife submits to her husband's leadership. The quality is noted to be "of great worth in God's sight" (Richards 1991:304).

The New Testament does not change these meanings but heightens and puts focus on them. The nominal form does not occur in the Gospels, and the adjective (*πραεις*) is found only in Matthew 5:5 and 1 Peter 3:4. The New Testament context does not allow the exalting of a sociological condition but rather commends submission to and confidence in God, which then unfolds into patience and gentleness (Spicq 1994:167-168). In referring to 1 Peter 3:4, Spicq notes,

These women are to accept the dependency they are in vis-a-vis their husbands, whom they hope to convert to the faith (cf. the beatitude of the meek, Matt. 5:4), with the help of the meekness that disarms opponents (2 Tim. 2:25), according to Israel's experience (Ps. 149:4-5). Aware of their weakness, docile, and submissive, these Christian women are 'poor' folk who know no bitter zeal. They are

often mistreated, even insulted, but they remain peaceful (Titus 3:2) and disposed to forgive (2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 6:1). Like the Messiah, they neither dispute nor cry out (Matt. 11:29; 12:19). Thus they imitate the Suffering Servant . . . (Spicq 1994:169).

Having considered the lexical documentation as well as the use of *πραυς* in the New Testament and the LXX, one can accept, with some measure of confidence, this connotation of the word. Gentleness describes selfless service, not self-assertion. Gentleness is associated with humble labor, not proud ambition. Gentleness suggests the deposit of confident courage, not the embezzlement of self-dignity. Gentleness is associated with the exhibition of spiritual strength rather than physical weakness (Bromiley 1985:930).

Winsome gentleness is described as more influential in winning an unbelieving husband to Christ than outward physical beauty or eloquent verbal testimony (1 Pet. 3:1-4). In gentleness, the gaining of self-control, not the losing of personal rights, is the emphasis. Gentleness may demand great personal sacrifice of worldly possessions or earthy position, but in return the apostle Peter notes the gain of "that which is very precious in the sight of God."

Paul also used *πραυς*, translated "meekness" (KJV) to describe the correction he, as an apostle, planned to bring to the wayward Corinthians (2 Cor. 10:1). Paul's discipline of his spiritual children would be without arrogance, impatience, anger, or contentiousness (Friedrich 1968:650). The apostle assumed the meekness of Christ, which has its basis in love rather than weakness (1 Cor. 4:21), and he reminded the believer that correcting opponents with gentleness might bring about their conversion (2 Tim. 2:25) (Bromiley 1985:930).

Charlotte von Kirschbaum sees “the gentle and quiet spirit” of a wife that leads her to submit to her husband as obedience to the law of Christ:

Although Christ’s law applies to all, men and women, husbands and wives, nevertheless it seems to be the wife who is primarily addressed here. It is only the woman who is able in her natural position as wife to reflect the position of the Christian. By acknowledging her position in respect of her husband — not as a law that is burdensome but as a place assigned to her in particular by God himself, a place that she affirms because of its special distinction as a lived parable . . . (Von Kirschbaum 1996:89).

3.2.5 The Effect of Gender Upon Virtue

Some have found tension in the possibility of a difference between general Christian virtues and virtues assigned by gender. A careful look at Scripture would seem to suggest that rather than different virtues, there is a difference in how these virtues are applied — whether in timing or degree. In both Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3, unless a textual variant can be found, one must acquiesce that the instruction given for submission is addressed to wives, and not to husbands, and that within the domestic setting.

In Ephesians 5, some suggest that Paul is not emphasizing the submission of wives to their husbands because of the New Testament cultural setting, in which wives were forced to defer to their husbands in everything. In this case, Paul’s admonition is understood as beginning with a challenge to mutual submission (Eph. 5:21) to protect a wife from “slavish” submission. According to this view, the directive to wives is considered redundant because of the cultural milieu (Eph. 5:22). However, in the broader context slaves are instructed to “obey your earthly masters with respect” (Eph. 6:5), and children are to “obey” and “honor” their parents (Eph. 6:1). Both of these directives would be considered obvious in

the first-century cultural setting; yet both are clearly stated, and thus in a sense reiterated, by the apostle. Also, although parents do honor their children, by being open to hear their requests, by being quick to meet their needs, and even on occasion by being willing to hear their counsel, such esteem is not in the same sense that children are to honor their parents. A child's honoring of his parents then becomes a benchmark for appropriate behavior of the child. Likewise, a husband esteems his wife as does a wife her husband, but the directive given to wives consistently throughout Scripture (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1) frames a wife's appropriate response to her husband in such a way that her submission to her husband becomes a benchmark in their unique relationship to one another.

Accordingly, the gentleness and quietness that are to characterize the spirit of a woman are uniquely adjudicated in her obedience to the divine directive that she submit to her own husband. Nevertheless, gentleness is a "fruit of the Spirit" and thus a reflection of the character of God in the believer's life (Gal. 5:22-23). The Gospel of Matthew notes that those who are "gentle" or "meek" will be true heirs to the inheritance of God (Matt. 5:5). Strength submitted to God and sanctified by Him works itself out as service to others. A man, too, seeks this "fruit of the spirit," e.g., "gentleness" (Gal. 5:22), even in the way he treats his wife. He would do well also to learn quietness, including listening to his wife so that he can meet her needs (1 Pet. 3:7).

For whatever reasons, however, God issues His directive with purpose and foreplanning, as well as a unique orderliness (1 Cor. 14:40), even though His creatures may not understand what He is doing and the why or wherefore (Is. 55:8). A man and woman may receive the same

spiritual challenge and yet appropriate it in different ways, according to the role assignments each has been given by God.

In summary, the character qualities a woman is called upon to emulate would commonly be understood as de facto Christian virtues and thus ideals for all believers. By the same token, however, the text does specifically address women and thus must have a unique application to them. One must then accept this admonition addressed to wives as a benchmark for biblical womanhood in general and as the cornerstone for creating a salubrious relationship between wife and husband, especially in the home setting.

3.2.6 Comments on the Word “Quiet”

“Quiet” (ἡσυχία), the adjective coupled with “gentle” in the descriptive phrase under consideration, suggests “calm,” “peaceful,” a constant and optimistic attitude toward life in general (Liddell 1966:779). Spiros Zodhiates adds that ἡσυχία includes a tranquillity that is undisturbed from without (Zodhiates 1992:715). Quietness is consistently included in the ethical code of early Christianity (see 1 Thess. 4:11; 1 Tim. 2:2, 11, 12).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “quiet” as “the absence of disturbance or tumult” with peace in social or political life; the absence of noise; calmness, stillness; peace of mind; the attitude of remaining quiet in the sense of refraining from disturbances, hurrying, and exertion (Oxford English Dictionary 1989:24-25) .

In the LXX and the papyri, ἡσυχία commonly refers to calm and tranquillity (Job 37:17; Ps. 76:9; 107:30; Prov. 26:20). The contrast is between war and peace or agitation and rest (Ex. 24:14; Josh. 5:8; Ruth 3:18). Levels of rest are apparent. The term ἡσυχία is used to describe these conditions: relief from war (1 Chr. 4:40; 22:9), the stillness of night (Prov.

7:9), and the tranquillity of life (Prov. 11:12; Ezek. 38:11). The verb ἡσυχάζω continues to describe in the same vein: peace that follows war (Judg. 3:11, 30; 2 Kin. 22:20), the restraint from speaking (Neh. 5:8; Job 32:6), the ceasing of a particular course of action (Job 32:1), relaxation (Job 37:8), or even culpable inaction (Judg. 18:9).

According to Colin Brown, in non-biblical Greek sources, Thucydides used ἡσυχία to describe the quietness of peace as opposed to the noises of battle; Plato used the word to mean relief from pain as well as to reveal the tranquillity of the philosopher who retreats from the clamoring political arena; Xenophon chose the word to denominate a place of solitude; and Herodotus used the word to suggest a quiet disposition (Brown 1971:111).

In the New Testament the verb ἡσυχάζω describes abstention from work (Luke 23:56), cessation from indoctrination (Acts 21:14), and the silencing of potential opposition (Luke 14:4; Acts 11:18); the noun ἡσυχία describes the silence that fell on an agitated crowd (Acts 22:2), a life of tranquillity and quiet (1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:4). The word does not primarily mean muteness or the absence of sound or the cessation of all activity (see 2 Thess. 3:12; 1 Thess. 4:11) (Brown 1971:111-112).

Gertrude von le Fort understands the spirit of the quality described when she refers to a woman's calling as "the apostleship of silence" and of her mission "to portray the hidden life of Christ in the church." Such quietness is in complete contrast to what some have interpreted to be the disruptive outbursts of the Corinthian women of the first century (1 Cor. 14:26-40) or to the noisy spirit of emancipation found in the present age. God, however, affirms that quietness offers a woman beauty and power to

change others and invokes the blessing of God on her life (Neuer 1991:133).

For example, Mary, the mother of the Lord, embodied such a spirit when in quiet willingness she let the miracle of incarnation happen to her (Luke 1:38). As the mother of Messiah, she must have held a position of honor in the first-century church even as she does today, especially within the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Yet instead of seeking an outlet for public activity and praise for personal accomplishment, as an humble mother she allowed God to work within and through her in the private nurture and preparation of her Son for His public ministry (Neuer 1991:133).

Likewise, the women who followed Jesus during His earthly sojourn worked quietly in the background to minister to the Lord and in His name (Luke 8:2-3). Their behind-the-scenes service to the Lord must have made His public ministries easier and more effective (Neuer 1991:133). Ceslas Spicq comments, "Christian women, according to 1 Pet. 3:4, have the charm of quietness and peacefulness . . . the opposite of agitation, impatience, annoyance . . ." (Spicq 1994:182).

3.2.7 The Word ἡσυχία in Selected New Testament Passages

Of special interest to this writer is the use of ἡσυχία in 1 Timothy 2 to describe how women should listen to church instruction. Stephen Clark notes that the similarities between 1 Peter 3:3-6 and 1 Timothy 2:9-11 are too close to be accidental, although the two passages are not directly parallel. Clark summarizes the instruction concerning women in teaching/ruling responsibilities in the early church: "Women should not

adorn themselves in expensive or luxurious ways, but should adorn themselves in quietness and subordination" (Clark 1980:93).

In the 1 Timothy passage, women are to listen in "quietness" (KJV "silence"), which properly understood does not demand the complete absence of sound but may suggest a patient and respectful self-control characteristic of an acquiescence to ecclesiastical authority and of a disposition receptive to learning. Charlotte von Kirschbaum, a pupil and teaching assistant to the twentieth-century Swiss theologian Karl Barth, expressed well the importance of ἡσυχία, "The silent women represent the listening church — which the teaching church must constantly revert to being" (Von Kirschbaum 1996:112).

Clark goes so far as to state that ἡσυχία is a word that would suggest the **antithesis** or the **opposite** of the refusal, or even the disinclination, to accept teaching or receive direction. The term does not necessarily intimate refraining from all speech in a public setting or in community assemblies, though certainly speech that is directive or didactic would be precluded in the setting and circumstances described (Clark 1980:195). On the other hand, Paul uses a stronger and more explicit word for making no sound (στυαω) to reprimand the disruptive women in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 14:34).

This attitude of "silence" pictures a quiet disposition in contrast to a noisy, boisterous demeanor, ". . . a spirit which calmly bears the disturbances created by others and which itself does not create disturbances" (Brown 1971:111-14). The psalmist wrote "God setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. 68:6), and surely the most gracious households are marked by quietness and tranquillity (Zodhiates 1992:715).

Interestingly, many feminist theologians do not comment on “the gentle and quiet spirit.” Sharyn Dowd addresses her comments on 1 Peter 3 to the “household code,” simply noting that women are told to obey their husbands in order to evangelize them (Newsom 1992:371). In fact, some suggest that Peter is calling for submission only on the part of wives with non-Christian husbands. Mary J. Evans suggests that “Peter’s primary concern is for those whose husbands are not believers” (Evans 1983:118), as does Margaret Howe, “. . . the wives addressed are those whose husbands are not Christians” (Howe 1982:55-56).

However, Evans also notes that Paul states clearly that submission is the proper attitude for every Christian wife (Eph. 5:22), which would add weight to the thesis that Peter, too, is taking for granted this attitude in wives as the norm (Evans 1983:118). This interpretation from Evans is especially significant because she does see the passage as primarily directed to women married to unbelievers. Nevertheless, she still notes that submission is the key to a wife’s relationship to her husband.

Gilbert Bilezikian also acknowledges the power of the witness of a Christian wife’s behavior as a tool for winning her unbelieving husband to the Lord (Bilezikian 1985:277). However, the text itself does not seem to limit itself to wives with unbelieving husbands. Rather Peter admonishes wives to maintain the “gentle and quiet spirit,” primarily because such an attitude is “precious in the sight of God” and characterizes “holy women who put their trust in God” and who are committed to “do good” (1 Pet. 3:4-6).

The phrase *καὶ εἰ*, “even if,” is a conditional construction, suggesting that most of the women Peter was addressing had Christian husbands. This interpretation would suggest that more likely the situation is one in which

the wife in a pagan marriage had come to Christ, making this scenario an unexpected and perhaps even uncommon occurrence. The wife's conversion did not call for or allow for the dissolution of her marriage; rather, her obedience to God in submitting to her husband would become her best evangelistic tool for reaching him for Christ (Hiebert 1984:183).

Certainly Peter would never encourage submission as an evangelistic tool if it were, as some claim, sinful behavior for a wife in relation to her husband (whether such was a cultural response or the whim of her husband). Rather he is calling for "chaste conduct" or a holy and set-apart lifestyle (Grudem 1988:138-139). Yet one cannot dismiss the patient well-doing of a wife as a powerful tool for the salvation of her husband and others (Bigg 1961:151). Hiebert said, "His [the husband's] attention to the gospel would be won through the eye rather than the ear" (Hiebert 1984:185).

Swidler presents the household tables (*haustafeln*) as possibly originating with Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, who lived at the end of the fourth century B.C. Zeno's household philosophy became part of the schools of Hellenistic ethics and, according to Swidler, an integral element in Hellenistic Judaism (Swidler 1979:332-333).

The problem in Swidler's statement is not that Zeno produced household tables that reflected biblical principles but rather the implication that divine principles governing the relationship between husbands and wives originated with Zeno. Ahasuerus of Persia and his advisors stated the divine order clearly when they discussed the repercussions to come when wives did not honor their husbands (Esth. 1:20-22; see also 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)).

Throughout the generations worldviews affirming the subordination of wives and headship of husbands have appeared just as various cultures have presented the importance of children honoring parents long before the birth of Christ and the advent of Christianity, but the foundational principle that directed children to honor their parents appeared in the Decalogue in one of the earliest recorded historical documents (Ex. 20:12). The author of Ecclesiastes affirmed the limited perspective of earthly life when balanced against eternity (Eccl. 1:9-11).

General revelation has existed and been recognized throughout the eons of time. That revelation was codified in the Bible, and it has been recognized by and has saturated the peoples of the world and their cultures. God has indeed worked in various cultures throughout the generations, and His principles have permeated civilizations cross-culturally. Nevertheless, He chose to reveal Himself and His purposes through Holy Scripture given first to His chosen people, the Jews, and then canonized for all succeeding generations.

A conclusion like Swidler's suggests assigning the guidelines found throughout the New Testament (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-25; Titus 2:3-9; 1 Pet. 3:1-7) to Greek philosophy rather than divinely inspired revelation. To question the integrity or origin of any portion of New Testament teaching with the presumption that it originated somewhere other than the mind and heart of God is to put all Scripture under the authority of human judgment rather than divine commandment.

While most religious documents do not arise in a cultural vacuum and while Greek moral philosophy often provides arresting parallels to biblical mandates, it is nonetheless unavoidable that the authors of Scripture fully believed that what they were writing came directly from

God and not from Greek philosophy or Hellenism (2 Tim. 3:16). For example, Paul seemed to recognize the validity of certain moral and philosophical conclusions of Hellenistic society in his address to the intellectuals on Mars Hill, but he also felt the need to correct the trajectory of those perspectives based on what he deemed to be a sure Word from God (Acts 17:22-28).

Sharyn Dowd further develops the concept of the household code. She suggests that

. . . The author of 1 Peter advocated this system not because God had revealed it as the divine will for Christian homes but because it was the only stable and respectable system anyone knew about. It was the best the culture had to offer (Newsom 1992:371).

Dowd's conclusion, at best, is conjecture. To suggest that Scripture would describe as "precious" to the Lord any relationship that merely accommodates the culture would seem to be dangerous presumption. In addition, the relationship between husband and wife described by Peter (1 Pet. 3:1-7) is consistent with what is set forth by the apostle Paul (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:3-5) and with the account of creation (Gen. 2:18-25).

Dowd notes that for Peter to "adopt the system uncritically" would demand that women and slaves were under obligation to follow the religion of the head of the household (Newsom 1992:371). However, nowhere in Scripture is one's personal relationship with the Lord described as subservient to a human relationship, but rather the antithesis is suggested (Matt. 6:33; Acts 5:29).

3.3 A Discussion of Biblical Submission

Because the debate centering upon submission seems to focus more on the ideological revision of the word's meaning, one needs a brief

introduction to the English term "submission," which is derived from a Latin root *submittere*. The unabridged dictionary continues with elaborations of detailed definition with these phrases: "the act of letting down or lowering," "humble or compliant behavior," "a yielding of power or authority" or "a surrendering of person and power to the control of another" (Gove 1971:2277).

Synonyms include "yielding," "obedience," and "humility." Submission suggests putting oneself wholly — i.e., understandings, knowledge, opinions, feelings, energies — under the direction and protection of the person to whom one is accountable. Nothing in this yielding of humble and intelligent obedience to an ordained power or authority demands or even suggests inferiority or worthlessness. Such is borne out and illustrated in institutions and government. For example, in an academic institution, one professor is head of the department; other professors are members of the faculty and colleagues within a respective department. Are these colleagues inferior to the professor who is titular head? Or if the department headship is rotated, is the person so designated superior only for that year? Certainly not, but as the department head, that individual does have an authority of leadership and responsibility for decision-making for an appointed time because of official assignment.

The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood has defined biblical submission for a wife as her "divine calling to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts." Piper and Grudem hasten to say that submission is not "an absolute surrender" of the will but rather a wife's "disposition to yield to her husband's guidance and her inclination to follow his leadership." This clarification keeps foremost Christ as the absolute authority, affirming that

a wife should not knowingly follow her husband into sin, the consequence of such action as was illustrated in the experience of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5-10). It also allows a “spirit of submission” or “a disposition to yield” even when the husband is an unbeliever (Piper 1992:11).

3.3.1 The Linguistic Foundation for ὑποτάσσω

According to Arndt and Gingrich, the Greek verb ὑποτάσσω means “subject oneself to” or “be subjected or subordinated to,” “obey persons worthy of respect” — e.g., secular authorities (Rom. 13:1; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13), church officials (1 Pet. 5:5), parents (Luke 2:51), husbands (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5). The same word is used with respect to God (1 Cor. 15:28; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 4:7) and to Christ (Eph. 5:24) (Arndt 1957:855). The word is surprisingly prominent in the New Testament canon (see Appendix 3 — A). R. T. France suggests “a more etymological translation” as “order oneself under,” based on the root τασσω, which is concerned with “order” and on the regular usage of the Greek middle voice, which usually carries a reflexive sense (France 1995:33).

. . . The wider use of related terms in the New Testament reveals (mainly, but not only, in the writings of Paul) a wide-ranging concept of an ‘order’ which God has designed for human society at many levels, and within which it is appropriate that we each find our due role To submit is to recognise [sic] your place within the God-given order of society and to act appropriately to that place, by accepting the authority of those to whom God has entrusted it (France 1995:33-34).

The first New Testament usage of ὑποτάσσω describes the subjection of Jesus to His parents during His childhood (Luke 2:51). After Jesus’ visit to the temple when He was only twelve years of age, He returned with His parents to Nazareth and willingly chose to submit Himself to their authority, which was an appropriate response for Him in His role as a child

in the parental home. The directive that governed His actions was according to a divinely willed order; yet Jesus was not inferior to His parents since He always remained who He was and is — God. Even so, women are not made inferior as persons by their willingness to submit even when they are treated as inferior beings, which is always not only inappropriate but wrong. They are the children of God, and as such they are loved and accepted by the Lord. Personal significance in the divine economy is never dependent upon one's position in the home, church, or community (Richards 1991:585).

France also notes that the majority of injunctions to women to “submit” to men are addressed to the context of the home, but he alludes to two passages in which similar language is used in reference to the relationship of men and women in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15). In the Corinthians passage, Paul discusses what should and should not happen when the church gathers to worship. The reference “to ask their own husbands at home” is thought by many to suggest rather strongly that the focus is on the marriage relationship, implying that a married woman should allow her husband to be the spokesman for their partnership in the church setting. On the other hand, 1 Timothy cannot necessarily be confined to the marriage relationship, but, on the contrary, the passage seems to have “a wider application to the woman's role in the church” (France 1995:37-38).

Thayer adds to the above the connotation of submitting to another's control, yielding to someone's admonition or advice (Thayer 1889:645). Liddell and Scott include the word's meaning in classical Greek as “placing or arranging under,” “assigning” (Liddell 1966:1897).

The compound word combines the preposition ὑπο meaning “under,” and τασσω, meaning “arrange,” “appoint,” “set,” “assign.” In its earliest usage, primarily as a military term, the word expresses a response to authority and command (Vine 1966:86). To identify the word as a military term should not be considered pejorative, however, since the words μακροθυμια (“longsuffering”), ἀνεχομαι (“endure”), and καρτερω (“steadfast”) are also used in the same genre, even though they are all used in the New Testament to describe endurance in the midst of the adversities of life.

There is no confusion as to the meaning of the root in the Greek language, i.e., “placing under,” as under the authority or power or control of another. The connotation of the word, however, does not necessarily emphasize obedience itself or the determination to do the will of someone else as much as it indicates the predisposition to lose or to surrender voluntarily to another one’s right to pursue her own way or one’s willfulness to retain self-control (Friedrich 1972:40). This concept of submission does not demand the surrender of substantive rights or of the mind but instead offers a woman the opportunity to respond to God’s design and plan.⁷

In James Barr’s critique on the Theological Word Book of the New Testament, he properly insisted on an emphasis upon context, but at the same time he never denied the general conceptuality or the historical development of the term itself. Whereas the meaning of any word unfolds

⁷Discussion follows concerning the biblical definition for submission as found in Scripture. As sin has marred the world and its inhabitants, God’s design for the man and the woman has not gone unscathed. People not committed to Yahweh pervert and distort His teachings and ignore His commands. But Christ came to free and liberate His creation from the oppression of sin. Submission according to God’s plan liberates to full potential and is radically different from submission offered by the world (see chart “Role Relationships Between Men and Women” in The Woman’s Study Bible, p. 1967).

more fully from its context and cannot be completely understood without consideration of that context; it is nevertheless true that words have histories that establish basic concepts, and the context nuances those concepts but does not obliterate the foundational concept itself. There does appear to be consistency in the New Testament usage of ὑποτασσω (see Appendix 3 — A).⁸

3.3.2 The Usage of ὑποτασσω in the Septuagint

The verb is not common in the LXX, and often its equivalents are loosely linked. Note Appendix 3 — B for these Old Testament examples: God makes the creatures subject to man (Ps. 8:6); the people are subject to David (Ps. 143:2); the nations are subject to the Israelites (Ps. 46:4). Nevertheless, there is certainly a consistency in meaning and usage of the word as it appears in the LXX and elsewhere (Friedrich 1972:40).

3.3.3 The Usage of ὑποτασσω in the New Testament

In the New Testament, ὑποτασσω is restricted to the Gospel of Luke, the Pauline writings, the books of Hebrews and James, and the Epistle of 1 Peter. Note Appendix 3 — A for the consistency of its usage. No other word indicates any more clearly the divinely-willed order between the man and the woman in the home from its presentation at creation. The headship of the man, established by his priority of creation, as noted in the Genesis account, is complemented by the wife's submission to her husband's leadership (see Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1; Tit. 2:5); and this order is consistently maintained in the church assemblies (1 Cor. 11:5; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:9-11).

⁸See James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

The sense of divine order also extends to civil authorities or to government, which is also ordained of God (Rom. 13:1, 5; 1 Pet. 2:13), and to the relationship between slaves and masters, which though mentioned in Scripture as a social reality, is not ordained or commended by God. The New Testament does not affirm slavery, nor does it encourage believers to be a part of such a demeaning system (see Philem. 8-18). On the other hand, the relationship of headship and submission between husband and wife is described and affirmed repeatedly and with consistency (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

Slavery was not rooted in the creation ordinance (see Tit. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18). Although Christians may not have been in a position legally to set aside slavery at that time, this burden, as any trial, could be endured and even overcome through the Christian principles of individual worth and brotherhood (Friedrich 1972:41-45), going the extra mile in service even when the demands made were not just (see Matt. 5:41). The instructions given by the apostles concern appropriate attitudes toward work duties; and, among themselves, Christians could choose to abandon the practice since both masters and slaves were members of one family of God. Actually, Christians who supported slavery used strong pressures in their contemporary society to justify doing so — a wrong reason in any setting.

To equate the submission of a wife to her husband with slavery seems to be at best an emotional response. Even if one could make a case for Paul's condoning slavery, one still finds no theological or exegetical requirement in the text of Scripture for the continuation of slavery.⁹

⁹The only textual evidence adduced would be the fact that Paul gives instructions for behavior of slaves toward masters, which may easily be explained as counsel to those in slavery for living the Christian life under adverse circumstances. See section 1.4.1, especially p. 60.

However, the opposite is true concerning the subordination of women, since Scripture declares that women are to be submissive because of the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-13). There is no socioeconomic foundation or biblical admonition for continuing slavery; nevertheless, to keep order and harmony in the home and church and to be obedient to the authority of Scripture, headship and submission are to be honored.

Paul never appealed to Jesus to support the sinful institution of slavery, the very existence of which must have been an abomination to the Creator, but he appealed to biblical principles to regulate the behavior of both slaves and masters. The admonition of Paul for slaves to remain in slavery (1 Cor. 7:21-24) is not an endorsement of the slavery itself but a recognition that in most cases becoming a Christian would not change the social status of the slave living in the first century milieu. Paul argues that Christianity is functional under both ideal and less than ideal circumstances. Scripture regulated those relationships by challenging a slave to respectful submission to his master on the one hand, while clearly calling for a master to rise above the worldly caste system to treat a slave as a brother or friend (see Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1; Philem. 15-17). Certainly, the institution of slavery was irrelevant in determining membership or positions within the church. The apostle Paul reminded Philemon of this principle in regard to Philemon's run-away slave Onesimus (Philem. 15-16; see also Gal. 3:28). The entire Epistle to Philemon provides ample evidence for rejecting slavery (Bromiley 1985:1159).

The text does not suggest that the submission of wives to their husbands is comparable to the submission of slaves to their masters. However, one may assume that whether the issue is a wife's submission to

her husband or even a slave's response to his master, **all** believers, whatever their circumstances of life, ought to be motivated by a desire to have their lives mastered by the redemptive love of the Lord Christ (Hiebert 1984:182).

The order of creation established the unity of the race, guaranteed the dignity of the woman (as being of the same flesh and blood and fashioned in the same divine image), created the most intimate kinship between husband and wife, and prefigured an inseparable, permanent unity in marriage. That same order of creation confirms the divine plan for the husband's headship in the home (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9; Eph. 5:22-23).

3.3.4 Mutual Submission

"Submission" among evangelicals is a word that has come to be closely connected with biblical admonitions to women and thus deserves consideration as part of the warp and woof of biblical womanhood.¹⁰ The challenging question is multifaceted: How is "biblical submission" defined? Is this principle only for women, especially for women, or exclusively for women in certain cultures? Is this principle associated only with women in the Old Testament and thus merely the tool of patriarchy? Is the principle found in the New Testament? How did Jesus view submission?

In actuality, submission touches every individual at some point in life's relationships. Most certainly it is not an assignment reserved only for "the weaker vessel" (1 Pet. 3:7). Every citizen, whether male or female, must submit to appropriate government authorities; all children, both male and female, must submit to parents — both father and mother; believers

¹⁰Refer to sections 2.6.1-2.7, pp. 148-154, for additional discussion of submission and subordination.

are expected to be a part of a local congregation, and as such they — men and women — are to submit to spiritual leaders.

Mutual submission, as described by most egalitarians, is no less than “eisegetical fabrication” (a phrase used by Gilbert Bilezikian in another setting but quite appropriate here). Scanzoni and Hardesty define egalitarianism in this way: “True egalitarianism must be characterized by what sociologists call ‘role-interchangeability’” (Scanzoni 1974:110). Such is not the emphasis in the Old Testament’s record of creation or in the New Testament’s discussion of submission.

The New Testament has one clear reference to mutual submission (Eph. 5:21), and that seems to describe relationships among believers. Whereas humility and an openness to learning from one another should be characteristic of all those within the body of believers (see Rom. 12:16; Phil. 2:3; Titus 3:1-2); the relationships described among members of the body, and thus between men and women within the body, are also clearly and specifically defined.

For example, citizens are commanded to submit to government authorities (Rom. 13:1-7), but government is nowhere asked to submit to its citizens. Children are admonished to submit to their parents (Eph. 6:1-2), but parents are not asked to submit to their children. Wives are instructed to submit to their own husbands (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-2), but husbands are not told to submit to their wives in the same way wives are to submit to their husbands. Submission in itself is not governed by reciprocity in the New Testament; however, within the relationship of marriage a reciprocity, in the sense of initiation and response or interaction prompted by respective roles, does exist between husband and

wife. This give and take is designed to call forth the best in each and to provide opportunity for each to minister to the other.

Virginia Mollenkott is concerned about what she describes as “separating” the concepts of “wifely” submission and “mutual” submission. Mollenkott builds her argument on the absence of the Greek verb in Ephesians 5:22 so that the verb “submit” is carried over from verse 21, which reads “submitting to one another” Her understanding of this structure is that “every Christian is intended to submit to every other Christian” (Mollenkott 1977:23). Certainly mutual submission is demanded of all in the sense of each extending loving courtesy in the way all relate to one another (Eph. 4:32). On the other hand, one must again view the matter of submission in light of role assignment. One can function in a position of leadership with authority over another in a kind way and still require the submission of that person to authority, since such is the essence of divine order.

Francis Martin presents the mutuality described in the passage as an ideal context within which a wife is to be subordinate to her own husband. Mutual submission in the fear of Christ is a two-way avenue: The wife submits to the leadership of her husband with reverence and respect; on the other hand, the husband’s subordination to his wife is expressed in his willingness to love her to the point of laying down his life for her (Martin 1994:356). Jesus’ love for the church did not preempt His lordship nor did Jesus as Redeemer lose His lordship or divinity because of His self-sacrificing love for the church.

By redefining subordination and headship in terms of New Creation theology, the author of Ephesians has dislodged androcentric marriage from its power-base of domination and relocated it in the

sphere of discipleship which participates in and makes a contribution to the New Creation (Martin 1994:357).

Without doubt, biblical submission redefines the oppressive nature of this concept in the secular world and, in fact, places it on a higher plane. In Ephesians 5, Paul's directive to husbands is to "love" their wives, not to "rule over" them. His example is not the ruling of Christ over the church but Christ's self-sacrificing love for the church. In other words, the apostle frames and illustrates headship and submission on a completely different plane than that understood and practiced in the world. Nevertheless, the world's distortion does not negate or revise the meaning of a divinely given assignment.

Paul also clarifies and crystallizes for wives the radically new understanding of submission in the New Testament. Rather than admonishing wives to "love" their husbands, the apostle calls for their submission to and respect for their husbands. Thus, he continues to present "servant leadership" expected of husbands as coupled with voluntary and respectful submission of wives as the New Testament pattern in contrast to the tyrannical rule of husbands and the forced submission of wives that characterized not only the cultural setting of the first century but also every generation thereafter.

Four New Testament passages call for wives to be submissive to their husbands (Eph. 5:21-24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5), with several others possibly referring to women submitting to men in general (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11). In each reference, the Greek word used is ὑποτάσσω, literally "placing under," "being subject to." Not once is this term or one like it used to describe the husband's response to his wife or to delineate the role of a man in relation to a woman (Cottrell 1992:301-302).

Some commentators cite Ephesians 5:21 as a demand for unrestricted "mutual submission" between husband and wife, even in every function and role assignment. However, this interpretation cannot be supported from the text and would suggest that the apostle Paul was contradicting himself within a few words, since clearly in the succeeding verses Paul calls for headship and submission respectively from husband and wife.

An attitude of general submission should characterize all believers as their general deportment ought to be one of humility and deference to others (Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:3-4), but there is also a particular submission assigned to a wife in relating to her own husband. A wife is not left at liberty to disregard the headship of her husband when he does not do things her way, even though she is always free to present the merits of her views. He may in fact submit to her suggestions but not in the sense that he is submitting to her as the head or leader of their home, which would be to abandon his divinely given assignment and render the divine order meaningless, but rather he is wise, when he sees the wisdom in his wife's position, to accede to the higher authority of truth to which they both ought to be committed. Again, this researcher would contend and affirm that Scripture never contradicts itself and must be understood as the whole counsel of God rather than any portion of the whole in isolation. Ephesians 5:21 introduces a section of discussion that touches upon husbands/wives, parents/children, masters/slaves (or perhaps by extended application in this era, employer/employee), and Christ/church. Within these respective relationships, all are assigned functioning roles; and all can express their mutuality in appropriate and non-conflicting ways by following the divine directive.

The verse seems more logically to be illustrative of areas in which submission works itself out (marriage, parenthood, job, community, church). Therefore, to use this phrase to assign "mutual" submission to husbands and wives within their role assignments, in the sense of eliminating the headship of the husband and submission of the wife, would logically demand its application to the other human relationships as well, not to mention the picture of Christ and His church, which is also found in the context of this passage.

Would anyone dare to suggest that Christ should submit to the church as husbands should submit to their wives? Divinely assigned roles cannot be reversed. Therefore, the roles in marriage are set, not just because of the arbitrary and consistent presentation of those roles in Scripture (Gen. 2:18-25; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7) but also because of what the roles symbolize (Eph. 5:24-30). For whatever reasons within the divine economy, God chose to reveal Himself, in part, through the metaphor of the home and the relationships within the home: He is Father; believers are His children; Christ is the Bridegroom, and the church is the bride; heaven is the eternal home for believers.

Each party in the respective pairs addressed within this passage has a particular responsibility. When one side submits, the other side must exercise its authority in a loving, kind, considerate manner (servant leadership). For example, the wife submits to her husband and in so doing shows her respect for him; the husband cares for his wife and in so doing shows his love for her.

Husband and wife have different role assignments, but their respective roles are complementary. The responsibilities per se are not mutual or reciprocal; rather they are complementary. The reciprocity and

mutuality is found in the fact that each has a responsibility to the other, and both have an appropriate response to the manifestation of that responsibility on the part of the other.

On the other hand, all authority within human relationships is superintended with appropriate limits. Interestingly, most references admonishing submission to authority found in the New Testament are coupled with a warning to the one in authority not to abuse that responsibility (see John 19:10-11, government officials; 1 Pet. 5:3, church leaders; Eph. 6:9, masters; Eph. 6:4; parents; Eph. 5:25 and 1 Pet. 3:7, husbands).

Peter does not question that the wife's submission to her husband is her rightly assumed duty (1 Pet. 3:1). Paul recognized the roots of this duty as coming from the Creator's assignments to the primal couple in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2 — 3; 1 Tim. 2:9-15). This divinely appointed order for administering the home does not imply that the wife is inferior. The home, as all human institutions, requires someone to lead and act as the final authority, and God arbitrarily assigned that position of leadership. For whatever reasons, ultimately known only to Him, He assigned this headship to the husband. Of course, subjection without affection quickly loses its God-given significance and purpose (Hiebert 1984:183).

Hurley warns that headship is not restricted to "the right to command" or "the top of the chain of command." He states that "biblical headship and authority are for the sake of building up others." For that reason, headship must weigh the needs and abilities of those who are under authority and whose lives are affected by the decisions being made. For example, the activities of the woman of Proverbs 31 illustrate how effectively a husband's authority may be delegated to his wife without a

challenge to the husband's headship (Prov. 31:11, 16, 27). No effective leader attempts to make all the decisions without deference to the needs, desires, and abilities of those under his authority (Hurley 1981:240-242).

3.3.5 The Method of Submission

The methodology of submission as carefully described in the New Testament is summarized herewith: (1) as "unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22); (2) as "to your own husband" (Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1); (3) as an act of the will of the one who is submitting (1 Pet. 3:1-2) and as an attitude that goes beyond mere obedience (1 Pet. 3:4); (4) as "in everything" (Eph. 5:24); (5) as a pattern for the relationship of the church to Christ (Eph. 5:25-32); and (6) as a prerequisite for the headship of the husband (Eph. 5:23), to which the wife submits as a response to her husband's love (Eph. 5:24-25).

The phrase "as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22) suggests that a wife's submission to her husband goes beyond the domestic setting, both in the motivation that prompts her to act and in the actual outworking of her daily life. The motivation for her submission must go beyond merely pleasing her husband; rather, she must be committed to obeying God. A wife's deference to her husband is a duty she owes to the Lord. Her submission, therefore, is to God's plan for marriage so that Christ Himself stands in the stead of those to whom subjection and reverence are owed. Submission then becomes part of a wife's obedience to the Lord. Only when fulfilling that domestic submission would blatantly violate God's moral law as recorded in Scripture does a wife find reason to abandon the divine command (see Acts 5:29). Therefore, submission primarily honors the Lord who established the relationship between husband and wife; this attitude also exalts the Lord, who is the ultimate authority for the couple, since the husband himself is also directly accountable to God.

The submission of wife to husband parallels the submission of the couple (husband and wife) to God in three ways: First, the submission of a wife to her husband must be voluntary, which by all means should not be equated as being optional, just as Jesus was submissive to the Father (see Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 2:23). Apart from her relating to her husband in marriage, the woman is equal to the man in her personhood, since both were created in God's image (Gen. 1:27) just as within the godhead Jesus Christ the Son is equal to God the Father. Ephesians 5 places the relationship between husband and wife alongside the relationship between Christ and the church. Such analogies always eventually break down, but the text is clear that Jesus is to provide for believers an example so that one can learn submission and a host of other lessons from observing Jesus' life and following His steps (1 Pet. 2:21).

In marriage, the wife voluntarily becomes a helper to her husband just as in redemption Jesus Christ chose to humble Himself to die on the cross during His incarnation. Just as God the Father raised up the Son from the dead, the husband has the opportunity to arise and praise his wife, who has turned from pursuing her own desires to link her life with her husband, accepting his leadership. For this, she is worthy of praise and honor from him. For this parallel to exist, the wife must voluntarily line up under the headship (i.e., servant leadership) of her husband. This principle is also affirmed by Gilbert Bilezikian, who identifies himself as an egalitarian.

A submission that is mere obedience or required conformity to authority will cause nobody's conversion However, the voluntary submission in servanthood of a believer bent on conforming to Christ's example and on following in His steps (2:21) is likely to elicit reflection The motivations for such submission have nothing in

common with submission defined as obedience to authority Any pagan wife can submit in obedience, but only a Christian woman can submit in servanthood so as to demonstrate the power of the gospel without saying a word and thus win her unbelieving husband Only the element of sacrifice present in submission as servanthood can point to Christ (Bilezikian 1985:190).

Second, the submission of a wife to her husband demands completeness. Submission extends to "everything" (Eph. 5:24). When a wife chooses whether or not to submit, she has taken authority and leadership into her own hands. The real test for submission comes only when two diametrically opposed wills are locked together. Genuine submission cannot be relegated to selective areas of life — e.g., decisions concerning the children or questions concerning financial planning. To decide how much and in what areas to submit is to refuse the directive altogether or to make a mockery of it. Jesus' submission took Him to the cross (Phil. 2:8).

Rebekah and Isaac had conflicting views concerning future plans for their sons. Isaac was determined to give Esau, as the firstborn of the twins, the coveted blessing; Rebekah, seeing the weaknesses of their older son, being drawn to the younger, and considering the prophecy of God for the supremacy of the younger, decided to take matters into her own hands instead of waiting for God. She secured the blessing for the younger son Jacob by deceiving Isaac, her aging husband, and by outmaneuvering Esau, her wayward older son. In so doing, she usurped her husband's decision-making responsibility and must have caused considerable hurt in the heart of the husband who had been so devoted to her (Gen. 27:5-46). In securing the blessing for Jacob, she ultimately lost the fellowship of this favored son, who was forced into exile, and the text offers no evidence that she had any influence for good on her wayward son Esau.

Rebekah may have convinced herself that she was helping God to accomplish His will in order to justify her own actions. Yet a holy and perfect God is not dependent upon human deceit and manipulation to accomplish His divine purposes. Nor should the created being seek to justify circumventing or ignoring instructions from the Creator in favor of human plans to “help” God reach His objectives. Neither Rebekah nor subsequent generations will know how God planned to execute His will in righteousness and truth before Rebekah tried a shortcut.

Though submission extends over all life, it is limited in all so that no human being can make it obligatory for another person to do what God forbids or not to do what God commands. The burden of proof is always upon anyone who questions divinely assigned authority. Surely the Holy Spirit, who is fully God, does not direct a wife to rebel against the authority of her husband unless that husband violates a clear mandate in Scripture. For to do so would put the Holy Spirit within against the Spirit-breathed Word He inspired (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Third, the responsibility of a wife to submit to her husband is continuous, as indicated by the present middle participle ὑποτασσομενοι (Eph. 5:21-22). Submission is not relegated to the honeymoon nor designed for the years of child-rearing nor limited to a period established by mutual agreement of the parties involved. It is an all-encompassing lifestyle. Its worth is determined by the continuous and habitual honoring of what is presented in Scripture as a timeless principle. Jesus, too, modeled this challenge and did not waver in His commitment to do the Father’s will (Luke 22:41).

The scope of submission is “to your own husband” (1 Pet. 3:1). God’s plan for the woman to be a “helper” for the man was part of the divine

design from creation, but she was not the “helper” of every man but rather of the man for whom she was designed (Gen. 2:18). God did not receive architectural plans from Adam for the woman he envisioned and desired. Rather, God Himself “builds” (from בנה) a custom-designed wife for any husband who seeks His will (Gen. 2:21-23). This “helper fit for him,” his “counterpart” (עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ), is designed to be a partner just as Eve was created to assist Adam in caring for the garden, obeying the Word of God, and performing the service God prescribed. The woman was created as a perfect resemblance of the man, possessing neither inferiority nor superiority but alike and equal in essential being, while unique and different in function.

Submission does not require the assumption that the one in authority must be superior to the one who submits to that authority. Jesus submitted to His earthly parents; yet He was and is God incarnate (Luke 2:51). Sometimes the one who submits may be superior to the one to whose authority he submits. One’s submission signifies respect for the position held by the person in authority, even when that authority is not deserving of personal respect.

Submission is an act of the will. Submission neither suggests that a woman has no right to her opinions, nor precludes her prerogative to disagree with her husband, nor demands that she change her own personal convictions to accommodate her husband. However, when a decision must be made in the midst of differences in opinion, the wife is to respond with an attitude of gracious and loving cooperation, not only out of affection for her husband but also out of respect for his God-given leadership, recognizing the just grounds for her husband’s authority and being

confident that God in His providence will honor her own obedience to His plan.

The pattern for submission of a wife to her husband is found in observing the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-27). Because of its sanctity, the analogy certainly must not be irreverently cast aside. For example, to say that κεφαλη (lit. "head") is synonymous with αρχη (lit. "beginning") and then conclude that Jesus Christ is the "source of life" for the church and not its ruler (Scanzoni 1974:31) moves beyond the meaning of the word itself and assumes more than the context allows. Such reasoning appears to revise the understanding of a word used commonly enough in Scripture to maintain a clear and consistent meaning. This revisionism becomes a means to undercut the headship of the husband and even erode the authority of the very Son of God.¹¹ The submission of the wife to her husband is sanctified and verified by the lucid analogy between this domestic relationship and the headship of Christ over His bride, the church.

Submission actually is more than obedience, which in itself could be one person's forcing and coercing another to outward conformity. The nuance of meaning in this word calls for the resting and leaning of one upon another, the trusting of another, even abandoning oneself — one's rights, desires, energies — to another, not because of weakness to resist the other, nor because of lack of personal desires and plans, but simply because of a choice to defer to one who, by virtue of position, is divinely appointed to lead.

¹¹See Wayne Grudem's extensive discussion on κεφαλη, presenting lexical, textual, and historical evidence as well as interacting with Scanzoni and other egalitarians in an Appendix within Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1991:425-468). Grudem presents a carefully reasoned argument resisting this interpretation.

Submission is void of stubbornness or rebellion. Ultimately, submission is an attitude of the will that bends, even willingly bends, under the hand of God, seeking ways to obey the divinely assigned authorities in one's life and thus ultimately God Himself. For example, a wife renders obedience to her husband, not because she is inferior to him or less worthy than he, but because her husband is the divinely appointed authority over her (Gen. 2:15-18; 1 Cor. 11:3, 8-9; Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).

The submission of a wife to her husband fulfills a prerequisite for his headship and leadership in the home, and this humble attitude is a logical response to a husband's loving servant leadership. Jesus Christ is the initiator of redemption and love; the church is the responder to Christ's sacrifice and lordship. The husband is the initiator by right of creation order and divine design (Gen. 2:22-23), and the wife is designed to be a responder to the husband's love and leadership (Eph. 5:31, 33).

3.3.6 Some Rewards of Submission

An attitude of submission prompted by sacrificial and selfless devotion also produces rewards such as those summarized here: (1) a vibrant and effective witness (1 Pet. 3:1); (2) a means of glorifying God (1 Pet. 3:5-6); (3) a springboard for teaching spiritual truths (Eph. 5:25-32); (4) a pattern for training children (Titus 2:3-5); (5) the assurance of a husband's love (Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 3:7) and God's protection (1 Pet. 3:4, 7); (6) God's measuring rod for increased worth (1 Pet. 3:4); (7) a means for liberating creativity (1 Pet. 3:7). These rewards will now be presented more completely, though not exhaustively.

The fertile ground for a vibrant and productive witness described by Peter is presumably one in which the wife in a pagan marriage is

converted (1 Pet. 3:1). There is no textual evidence that the passage would be directed to those who desire and determine to marry out of the Lord, since believers are clearly forbidden to be “unequally yoked” with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14). The consequences of disobeying a direct command of God are bitter indeed, and no promise is given for winning the unbelieving spouse when the believer first despises God’s Word and disobeys its clear admonition.

In the first century, if a husband became a Christian, his wife would have been expected to come into the church with him. On the other hand, if a wife became a Christian, because she was subject to her husband, she often found herself completely at her husband’s mercy in her desire to participate in a fellowship of believers. Considered in the light of cultural norm, Peter’s advice is not what one would expect. In agreement with Paul, he does not suggest that the wife leave her husband (see 1 Cor. 7:13-16). Nor does Peter suggest that the wife should proclaim “the word,” argue the gospel, or beg a husband’s response to the gospel. The apostle’s advice is simple: Follow the divine plan for being a good wife. A wife’s sermon is to be mirrored in her own Christian lifestyle. She must swallow pride, forget selfish desires, refuse self-righteousness, work toward perfect love.

Even husbands described by the verb *απειθειν*, meaning “obey not,” suggesting those husbands who would deliberately set themselves against the truth, could be won by the conduct or behavior or lifestyle (*αναστροφης*) of their wives and “without a word.” Since this structure is not articular, the reference here is not to the gospel itself but rather to the absence of speaking or explaining its message. When a husband refuses to read the Scripture or hear the preaching of the Word, the effective

testimony of a godly wife is often his only link to the gospel. In this case, God honors the faithfulness of a godly wife.

Augustine records that his mother Monica spoke of Christ to her wayward husband through her feminine virtues. She saw her husband commit himself to Christ at the end of his life after she had borne his insolence without complaint. Monica was grateful for her husband as a believer despite what she had suffered from his hands as an unbeliever (Bentley-Taylor 1980:11-48).

Chrysostom, the great orator of the Early Church, wrote in one of his homilies:

. . . If thy husband give thee disgust, and thou endure it, thou shalt receive a glorious crown; but if he be gentle and mild, what will there be for God to reward in thee? And these things I say, not bidding the husbands be harsh; but persuading the wives to bear even with harshness in their husbands. Since when each is careful to fulfil his own duty, his neighbor's part also will quickly follow: as when the wife is prepared to bear even with rough behavior in the husband, and the husband refrains from abusing her in her [sic] angry mood; then all is a calm harbor free from waves (Schaff 1956:155).

Submission is a means of glorifying God (1 Pet. 3:5-6). Peter describes the "gentle and quiet spirit," which is at the heart of submission, as the attitude of a submissive wife patterning her life after the Lord God, honoring Him with her submissive obedience, and emulating Him with her example as a precious ornament to the Savior. A submissive life of pure, selfless, and chaste behavior is a powerful testimony.

Submission is a springboard for teaching spiritual truths (Eph. 5:21-33). Not only does a wife's submission to her husband portray a vivid illustration of the relationship of the church to Christ, but also examples within the home are valuable for teaching the mysteries of the kingdom.

The submission of the wife to her husband and the overriding love of the husband for his wife provide valuable lessons in Christology, opening a deeper understanding of the lordship of Christ that would include both responsibility and submission. Jesus, throughout the Gospels, taught with parables, using very ordinary things and the happenings of daily life to explain spiritual truths. In Ephesians 5, on the other hand, the Lord uses spiritual or heavenly truths to explain earthly relationships, i.e., marriage. This reversal may be a way of emphasizing the Lord's high regard for marriage.

Submission, which is better caught than taught, presents a pattern for training children (Titus 2:3-5). The respect of children for parents is greatly enhanced by the exemplary relationship between father and mother, who thus provide a pattern for Christian marriage as well as a living object lesson of the relationship between Christ and the church and an animated illustration of the submission of the believer to the lordship of Christ.

A wife's submission, though not meant to be a prerequisite for her husband's love, awakens human love and calls forth divine protection (1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:25). Having given directives to wives, Peter moved to instruct husbands.¹² His exhortation to husbands is needed to avoid any misunderstanding of the meaning of submission or to allow any abuse of wives who submit to their husbands. Husbands are to live with their wives as faithful friends, seeking knowledge of the peculiar needs and special desires of their wives (1 Pet. 3:7). A most intimate fellowship and understanding is indicated by the Greek word *συνοικειν*, literally "to dwell together," a word often used in the LXX even as a euphemism for marital

¹²See further discussion in section 3.2.3, pp. 175-176.

intercourse. The apostle Paul is no less challenging as he directs husbands to “love” their wives, and not with an ordinary love but with a love patterned after the love Christ has for the church (Eph. 5:25).

The equality and unity of husband and wife is clearly affirmed in the term “heirs” (KJV “joint-heirs,” συνκληρομοις). The context emphasizes the distinct differences in husbands and wives within their role relationships; yet this word affirms the ontological equality that characterizes husband and wife. Both are in Christ Jesus, standing on level ground before Him. In the same context Peter calls for a role differentiation between the husband and wife, while still affirming their unity as “heirs.”

If “specialization according to sex” is to be wiped away, as suggested by Scanzoni and Hardesty, why did the Creator plan for male and female and describe and maintain their differences so specifically? Scanzoni and Hardesty maintain that “Equality and subordination are contradictions.” They suggest that complementarians are elevating equality to the spiritual realm (Scanzoni 1974:110), as if that were a put down. On the other hand, many would maintain that equality in the spiritual arena is to be most coveted and thus most appreciated. To speak of equality in one area cannot automatically guarantee equality in another when one considers the diversity of abilities characterizing individuals and the varied experiences in their respective lives.

For example, one’s submission to the authority of human magistrates is not based on the magistrate’s superiority by way of creation, birth, giftedness, or abilities. Rather, Scripture demands obedience to the civil authority by virtue of his office, even though such obedience comes from those who are fully his equal in value (Rom. 13:1). However, there is still a very logical argument that balances equality, i.e., seeing individuals as

having the same worth, yet without rejecting subordination, i.e., recognizing the diversity of roles or assignments given to individuals, so that all may be coordinated for efficient success in the creative order.

Martin has noted that the *genre* of the New Testament texts treating household relationships is one of exhortation rather than abstract speculation. These texts are not third-person descriptions of idealism but are rather second-person admonitions to individuals who are equals in Christ. Thus, the wife responds to her husband as a free and responsible agent; she responds to her husband's love for her, or she responds simply because of the divine directive. Seventy per cent of the text in Ephesians 5 is addressed to husbands in a thorough excursus on the essence of $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ love, illustrated ultimately in Christ Himself, whose example called for husbands to lay down their lives for their wives just as Christ did for the church (Eph. 5:25) (Martin 1994:355-356).

Those who assume that oneness in Christ automatically abolishes God-ordained distinctions miss the mark. Statements in Scripture do not eradicate differences in sex, race, or citizenship; rather the likenesses shared by the man and the woman in creation, i.e., being created in the image of God are accentuated (Gen. 1:27); the equality of spiritual inheritance is affirmed (Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7). The distinction between the husband and the wife was established at creation and thus as part of the divine order cannot be abolished. A man is not a woman in physical nature; a Jew is not a Gentile in racial heritage. A prisoner is not a free man in the jurisdiction of the civil law. However, in Christ, all are the same (Gal. 3:28).

Nevertheless, egalitarians are correct to call attention to the fact that a substantive difference in human relationships ought not to be present in

the church of God, and those distinctions that do exist (e.g., Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female) do not affect one's standing in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

The Holy Spirit is equally faithful in endowing women as well as men, and the Lord invested His time and teaching in women, as well as in men, who followed Him. Yet in no instance are the teachings of Scripture violated by the Holy Spirit in His bestowing of gifts or by Jesus in His issuing calls to various ministries.

3.3.7 Some Examples of Submission

Submission (ὑποτασσω) is defined in its linguistic foundations in both the LXX and the New Testament, and its principles are imbedded in interpretive formulation in both the Old and New Testaments. The clearest example of submission is seen in the Son — Jesus Himself (Phil. 2:9-11), but it is also emulated in the lives of women in Scripture, e.g., Sarah and Esther in the Old Testament, together with Mary and Elizabeth in the New Testament.

Within the godhead itself submission is perfectly illustrated with an example that is both paradoxical and irrefutable. The divine triunity is comprised of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: each is fully God (John 4:25-26; 10:30; 11:25; 14:4-7; 14:9; Acts 5:3-4; Col. 2:9), and their unity is also clearly seen throughout Scripture (Gen. 1; Matt. 3:16-17; John 1:1; Eph. 1:2-14). Salvation is the result of the cooperative purpose and activity of the triune God. The perfect and complete wisdom of the Father planned and directed redemption (John 3:16); the voluntary sacrifice of the Son accomplished atonement (Rom. 5:6-8); and the teaching of the Holy Spirit continually nurtures the faith (John 14:26).

Jesus is fully God, equal with the Father and one with Him (John 10:30; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9); yet Jesus submits to the Father's leadership and even testifies that the Father is greater than He, the Son (John 7:16; 12:49; 14:28). In office or function, Jesus the Son was obedient to the Father during His incarnation (Luke 22:42; John 5:19-20; 6:38; 8:28-29, 54; 14:13, 28, 31; 1 Cor. 15:28; Phil. 2:5-11), and the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father to testify of and to glorify the Son (John 14:26; 15:16; 16:13-14). Neither is less than God in submitting to the authority of the Father as He directs redemption through the work of all. Each is not the other in function and office, but all are God in essence and being. The triunity is a mystery that must be accepted by faith even though our finite minds cannot fully understand its meaning.

Jesus the Son was submissive to the Father; He was completely dependent upon the Father and absolutely devoted to Him and to doing the Father's will; whereas at the same time Jesus voluntarily humbled Himself before those He redeemed, whose servant and helper He had chosen to become. Does Jesus provide women a model for what it means to be not only human but also female?

Is it possible that in the picture of the subordinate Son, in full, joyful partnership with the Father, whose desires and will he warmly affirms, we have a picture not only of full humanity but, especially, of full femininity? (Denton 1989:12-13).

To parallel this concept of submission modeled in Jesus with that of the wife to her husband: The wife humbles herself before her husband, whose helper she voluntarily becomes and whose leadership she willingly accepts. At the same time, the husband is challenged to accept the humble role of servant leader. The submission of the wife as well as the servant leadership and sacrificial love of the husband are modeled in Christ (see

Eph. 5:25; Phil. 2:5-8). And both husband and wife ultimately must submit themselves to the Father, since the plan for marriage and the relationships within that sacred union are His (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:31).

For women, the example of Jesus is especially helpful in understanding the challenge of a wife's submission to her husband. This submission does not imply that she is inferior in any way. In fact, Scripture affirms that both husband and wife have the same standing before God (1 Pet. 3:7). Men and women are equal before God in creation (Gen. 1:27-28) and redemption (Gal. 3:28). The same is true of citizens, children, servants, congregants, etc. Yet in the context of defining these relationships, Paul called Christians to submit to appropriate authorities (Eph. 6:9).

Some special lessons in submission are illustrated in the life of Jesus, the Son, as He related to the Father. First, Jesus had no other purpose than to do the Father's will (Heb. 10:7). His office and the task to which He was assigned in redemption required His absolute commitment to humble obedience. Second, Jesus performed the Father's will with delight (Ps. 40:7-8). His attitude of joy went beyond mere obedience and resignation to the duty of submission. Third, Jesus never considered Himself, His rights, and His will (John 5:30). The choice for submission also haunts human relationships. For a woman, being a daughter does not end when she becomes a wife; nor does she cease being her husband's wife when she becomes the mother of their children. Though she is one person, she may have at least three different roles that command her attention and energies.

The divinely designed relationship between husband and wife is an analogy and visual teaching tool for revealing the great mystery of the

triunity within the godhead, and the equal relationship of distinct personalities within the godhead is a pattern for the family unit. Though submission denotes humility, selflessness, helpfulness, respect, and honor, the slightest hint of inferiority or worthlessness of the subject or superiority of the master is neither found nor intimated in Scripture.

Scripture also presents exemplary women. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is mentioned in 1 Peter 3:5-6 as well as in the listing of the heroes of faith (Heb. 11:11). She is also used by the apostle Paul to illustrate the difference between bond and free (Gal. 4:21-31; see also Rom. 4:19; 9:9). Peter's allusion seems to be to Genesis 18:12, where, even in a moment of doubt and uncertainty, Sarah still calls her husband Abraham "lord" (אֲדֹנָי), an appropriate translation brought out clearly in the KJV, NKJV, and NASB (1 Pet. 3:5-6). Sarah followed Abraham when he left their homeland to go to an unknown land; they gave up their possessions and wealth; they lost the support of their family circle (Gen. 11:31; 12:5). Sarah also put her only son, Isaac, at the disposal of his father, with no hint in the text of hostile opposition, despite what must have been an apprehensive situation (Gen. 22:1-3). In each of these choices, there is no evidence that Sarah's decision to follow the leadership of her husband was the result of blind obedience. Sarah had her own personal relationship with the Lord and remained personally accountable to Him (Gen. 18:9-15; 21:6-7).

Peter specifically cited Sarah, whose husband Abraham was not just a patriarch but the father of the faithful and the one with whom God made His covenant and from whose loins were to come the people of God. Sarah was of the same rank as her husband and a member of the same family (Gen. 20:12). She is mentioned by name in the official genealogy as

Abraham is introduced (Gen. 11:29), and even her burial is carefully recorded (Gen. 23:1-2). She is honored in the covenant as the mother of the son of promise (Gen. 17:15-16; 21:1-3); yet she accepted the most humble duties of her assignment as wife and mother (Gen. 18:6), obeying or reverencing her husband (1 Pet. 3:6) and recognizing his leadership even when he was clearly wrong.

An enlightened fear of God will equally lead a Christian wife to yield all due respect and obedience to her husband, and to refuse that species and degree of respect and obedience which are due only to God" (Brown 1975:561).

Sarah's obedience was an outworking of her submission. Even to this modern era among the Jews and beyond, Sarah is honored in her position as the mother of the son of promise and ancestress of God's chosen people. Scripture records her honor and achievement, not simply as the mother of a child in her old age but also as a respectful wife, regarding and reverencing her husband.

A wife's submission to her husband is quartered within the limits of her obedience to Christ — submission unless it would be sin to obey (see Ex. 1:17; Esth. 4:16). Even so her demeanor is always to honor her husband as leader even when she must dissent in order to obey the Lord (Piper 1991:194-196).

No apparent textual evidence is found to suggest Moses or Peter taught that Sarah was to obey Abraham *blindly* and do *whatever* he told her to do. Indeed, a cursory reading of Genesis 20:5 indicates that Sarah herself willingly participated in the second incident of deception. The fact that Sarah's lie, as well as Abraham's, is clearly mentioned in the text in exonerating Abimelech would suggest that Sarah was as culpable as Abraham in the deception. One would be irresponsible to use either

Genesis 20 or 1 Peter 3 as the basis for teaching that **anything** is acceptable and right for a wife as long as her husband tells her to do it.

Genesis 12 certainly ought not to be used as warrant for a *blind* obedience — a perverse doctrine not to be found in Scripture. On the other hand, wives, as all believers, must be cautious in applying the admonition to “obey God rather than man” lest it be misunderstood or misappropriated to mean that wives, as autonomous agents, may simply choose what they will obey and what they will disobey.

For Sarah to obey her husband and thereby disobey the teachings of God as recorded in Holy Scripture would never win praise for her from the Lord God. Rather, to submit herself to her husband, but within the boundaries of God’s Word, even when she did not deem her husband’s decisions wise, was to affirm her acceptance of the divine order and her willingness to trust God to work through the order He Himself established. These incidents, which were beyond human understanding, do indeed make Sarah exemplary to all women as a model for submission.

When Abraham cowered before the Egyptian pharaoh (Gen. 12:10-20) and before Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gen. 20:1-18), he used the same lie on two different occasions, making his deception all the more reprehensible. His identification of Sarah as his “sister” was a half-truth (Gen. 20:12). Not only did he lie, but also he was willing to risk the life of Sarah by putting her in the hands of a pagan monarch. Sarah’s submission to Abraham, even in his wrongdoing, placed her under the protection of God, who Himself dealt respectively with the pharaoh and with Abimelech in their own households and even with her husband Abraham, who on occasion was unfaithful to his responsibilities for providing, protecting, and leading his wife (Gen. 2:15-17). On the other hand, Sarah failed miserably

when she abandoned submission, usurped her husband's leadership, and ignored God's providence in order to secure by her own means the promised son and heir (Gen. 16:1-4).

The Book of Esther provides an excellent study in submission in the lives of two queens. Vashti appears unwise in disobeying Ahasuerus, who was not only her husband but also her king (Esth. 1:12, 15-17). Some commentators have sought to cover Vashti's disobedience with the suggestion of a sense of propriety on her part, but there is no evidence in the text that her husband did any more than give a ridiculous and distasteful command to his wife, the queen. For a wife to acquiesce only in all reasonable requests is hardly considered obedience, and by no means is such selective acquiescence to be understood as submission.

Vashti was a Gentile, and thus almost certainly a pagan queen. She refused publicly to give honor to her husband and rebelled against his leadership, defying a call for her presence from the ruling monarch of her country (Esth. 1:12, 15-20, 22). Vashti had every reason at least to seek to be excused from her husband's command, capricious though it may have been; but, according to what is recorded in the text, she sent neither a plea to be excused nor an apology for her absence. The king's command may well have been foolish, but a careful reading of the text allows also the possibility that her disobedience was unwise and that it was perceived by the leaders of the nation to be disrespectful of her husband as well as being an example of divisiveness and rebellion for the families throughout the land (Esth. 1:16-18).

On the other hand, Esther was winsome, grateful, selfless, obedient, and courageous (Esth. 2:9, 15, 17, 20; 5:2; 4:14, 16). She experienced difficulties — a member of a minority race, an orphan bereft of father and

mother, an alien uprooted from family and friends, a young woman ultimately saddled with awesome and fearful responsibility. Yet, according to the text, Esther rose to the occasion with inner beauty of spirit and unshaking commitment to God's providence. She was obedient to her foster father (Esth. 2:20), cooperative with those who had authority over her (Esth. 2:8-9, 15), and submissive to her pagan husband (Esth. 2:17; 5:2-4; 8:3). The text allows the interpretation that Esther saved her people, not ultimately by her power as the Queen of Persia but by the influence she exerted as a submissive wife who honored her husband.

Even the king could not reverse his own decrees, and certainly no young queen could do so. The text seems to indicate that the opportunity for Queen Esther to use her creativity and influence came because of the king's love for her and because of his willingness to delegate to her the powers of his throne and not because of the powers inherent in her own queenship (Esth. 5:2-4; 7:3; 8:3-8)

The influence of the complementary principles of a husband's headship and his wife's submission, which originated with God Himself and are found in Scripture, were also reflected in the law of Ahasuerus and the Persians (Esth. 1:16-18; see also Gen. 2:15-18; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

Peter did not stress the rights of husband and wife but the duties they were to discharge in their relationship one to the other. The demand for personal rights has surfaced repeatedly throughout history. Scripture notes that a determination to go one's own way has always left a path of destruction (see Judg. 21:25; Prov. 3:5; 12:15; 21:2; 29:15; Is. 53:6; Jas. 1:14-15). In an era when individuals in society are all tending to assert

their rights and to demand what they think is their due, it is refreshing to see that Peter's clarion call to wives (1 Pet. 3:1-6) and husbands (1 Pet. 3:7) is to discharge their duties to one another. Christianity should radically alter one's lifestyle even in social relationships, including the inner family circle (Stibbs 1959:122-123).

Certainly one of the ways the uniqueness of Christianity was effectively exemplified to observing unbelievers was in the lifestyles of wives who conscientiously performed their duties to their husbands, even in the most adverse circumstances. At once the character of the wife is elevated for an example to all, and the heart of the unbelieving husband may well be softened. The joyful, consistent performance of conjugal duties, especially when prompted by a commitment to the Lord and given under His command, will make an impression, even on insensitive and overbearing husbands (see Is. 55:11).

Yet the question to be answered is this: How does such a phenomenon happen? The author of 1 Peter indicates that the centerpiece of this exemplary lifestyle is the "gentle and quiet spirit." This inner nature fashioned by the indwelling Spirit of God becomes an outer manifestation that molds one's lifestyle. Such seems to be a lofty ornamentation that cannot be seized or grasped but must patiently be woven into the fabric of life through heart-felt commitment. The heart is considered the seat of intellect and affection (Brown 1975:537-538).

The high value of this "gentle and quiet spirit" is undoubtedly based upon the fact that it can only be obtained through a quiet and continual trust in God Himself to supply all one's needs. Nothing pleases God more than for His creation to trust Him (see 1 Pet. 1:5, 7, 8-9, 21; 2:6, 7, 23; 3:12, 5:7) (Grudem 1988:140). Michaels suggests that the "gentle and quiet

spirit" drew together Peter's themes of a wife's submission and adornment, making them one by "defining the latter in terms of the former" (Michaels 1988:163).

God observes and judges the quality of one's inner disposition and its manifestation in daily lifestyle (Hiebert 1984:188-189). The "gentle and quiet spirit" becomes the fail-safe combination for every woman. Gentleness does not cause upheaval or disturbance, and quietness bears the outbursts and disturbances of others with serenity. Gentleness will not provoke others; quietness will not be irritated by the provocation of others. Gentleness suggests gracious cooperation and consistent self-control with no sign of rebellion or resentment. Quietness confirms the absence of panic or fuss and the presence of calm and peace.

A woman's spiritual worth can either be enhanced or tarnished by her response to the Word of God, which demands her decision either to obey or disobey (1 Pet. 2:8; 3:1). Paul even went so far as to say that a woman who does not observe and perform her assigned tasks in consistency and harmony with the Word of God is blaspheming that Word (Titus 2:5).

Karl Barth described as foolishness the one who refuses to accept the divine order and even devises ways to escape it. Such a one could be a woman, in which case she is fighting against herself. What she determines is overwhelmingly more may in truth be infinitely less. In her plans to attain glory, she may cover herself with shame. Where she is seeking to exalt herself, she may fall (Luke 14:11). Even though her activity and development and freedom are limited in the overall divine plan, she is also preserved and protected within that order. To deny a God-assigned role is to walk down the path of self-destruction. By an act of rebellion, the

servant of God becomes a slave to the evil one. The Lord, when spurned, may become an incomprehensible and even harsh Judge because the disobedient one who comes before Him no longer sees Him as He is (Barth IV, 1961:435-436).

Whether in the pattern for biblical womanhood presented in Proverbs 31 ("a woman who feareth the Lord") or the portrait of a Christian wife found in 1 Peter 3 ("coupled with fear" and "gentle and quiet spirit"), the godly woman is encased with those instincts of reverence, which are an essential ingredient of the Christian life for anyone (Selwyn 1964:183). Yet these traits are uniquely emulated in biblical womanhood in the sense that they find poignant expression in the woman as she does the tasks she is assigned within the divine order.

Peter is clear in presenting the responsibility of submission not only to wives in the first century but also to wives in future generations. The early Roman moral code placed all obligations upon the wife while giving all privileges to the husband. However, God never places every responsibility or all duties on one side — i.e., to men or to women. The New Testament does not present privilege without a corresponding obligation. The divine reciprocity is certainly clear in 1 Peter 3:1-7. The simple formula governing the relationship between husband and wife is consistently presented throughout Scripture: equality of personhood with both bearing the image of God from creation and uniqueness (or difference) in function or assignment within the divine economy — also bestowed at creation. Karl Barth said:

Man and woman are not an A and a second A whose being and relationship can be described like the two halves of an hour glass, which are obviously two, but absolutely equal and therefore interchangeable. Man and woman are an A and a B and cannot,

therefore, be equated. In inner dignity and right, and therefore in human dignity and right, A has not the slightest advantage over B, nor does it suffer the slightest disadvantage Man and woman are fully equal before God They are also equal in regard to the necessity of their mutual relationship and orientation. They stand or fall together. They become and are free or unfree together. They are claimed and sanctified by the command of God together, at the same time, with equal seriousness, by the same free grace, to the same obedience and the reception of the same benefits. Yet the fact remains — and in this respect there is no simple equality — that they are claimed and sanctified as man and woman, each for himself, each in relation to the other in his own particular place, and therefore in such a way that A is not B but A, and B is not another A but B (Barth III₄ 1961:168-169).

The plan from God for a woman with a “gentle and quiet spirit” who “fears the Lord” to link her life to and submit herself to a man who “loves her as Christ loved the church” and who accordingly, as a servant leader, provides for and protects her is a fail-safe combination that enables the home and the relationships within its confines to be a divine metaphor for God’s revelation of Himself to His creation. Publilius Syrus said, “It is the submissive wife who generally gets most of her own way” (Goold 1982:29).

Appendix 3 — A
The Uses of Words Derived From ὑποτασσω in the New Testament

Luke 2:51	Reference to the obedience of the boy Jesus to His parents
Luke 10:17, 20	Reference to the subjection of demons (KJV "devils") by the seventy sent out by Christ
Rom. 8:7	Reference to the carnal mind as refusing subjection to the law of God
Rom. 8:20	Reference to the creation (KJV "creature") as being subject to folly or religious error or false religion (KJV "vanity")
Rom. 10:3	Reference to Israel's refusal to submit to the "righteousness of God"
Rom. 13:1, 5	Reference to the authority of government or civil powers
1 Cor. 14:32	Reference to "spirits of the prophets" as subject to "the prophets" in whom they dwell
1 Cor. 14:34	Reference to women (or "wives") as under "obedience" in the churches
1 Cor. 15:27-28	Reference to all of creation as being subject (KJV "under his feet" in v. 27 and "subdued" in v. 28) to the Son
1 Cor. 16:16	Reference to submission to the leadership in the churches (KJV "such" literally "such ones," masc. pl. ending)
Eph. 1:22	Reference to the lordship and headship of Jesus Christ
Eph. 5:21	Reference to mutual submission in husband-wife relationships in Christ

- Eph. 5:22 Reference to wife's responsibility of submission to her husband (verb understood from v. 21)
- Eph. 5:24 Reference to the submission of the church to Christ
- Phil. 3:21 Reference to the subjection of all things to Christ
- Col. 3:18 Reference to wife's responsibility of submission to her husband
- Titus 2:5 Reference to wife's responsibility of submission to her husband
- Titus 2:9 Reference to servant's responsibility for submission to his own master (Eph. 6:5 and Col. 3:22 verb is υπακουω)
- Titus 3:1 Reference to submission to civil authority or government
- Heb 2:5 Reference to the authority of angels
- Heb. 2:8 Reference to the authority of man over creation
- Heb. 12:9 Reference to man's submission to the Father
- James 4:7 Reference to man's submission to God
- 1 Pet. 2:13 Reference to submission to civil authority or government
- 1 Pet. 2:18 Reference to servant's responsibility for submission to his own master
- 1 Pet. 3:1, 5 Reference to wife's submission to her husband
- 1 Pet. 3:22 Reference to submission of all authorities and powers to the Son

1 Pet. 5:5

Reference to submission of younger to elder
and all to one another (verb understood in
latter instance)

Appendix 3 — B

The Uses of Words Derived From ὑποτάσσω in the Septuagint

1 Kin. 10:15	Reference to Solomon's power
1 Chr. 22:18	Reference to subduing of land
1 Chr. 29:24	Reference to submission of people to Solomon
2 Chr. 9:14	Reference to submission of people to Solomon
Ps. 8:7	Reference to submission of man
Ps. 17:48	Reference to submission of people to God
Ps. 37:7	Reference to submission of people to God
Ps. 47:3	Reference to submission of people to God
Ps. 59:10	Reference to subjection of enemies
Ps. 61:2	Reference to subduing of life or breath
Ps. 61:6	Reference to subduing of life or breath
Ps. 107:10	Reference to subjection by affliction
Ps. 144:2	Reference to subjection by affliction
Dan. 6:13	Reference to subjection by affliction
Dan. 11:39	Reference to rule
Hag. 2:19	Reference to yielding fruit

Chapter 4

Women and Ministries within the Kingdom

4.1.1 An Historic Overview

Throughout history women have obtained many distinctions in the kingdom of Christ as well as in the secular setting. Miriam, together with her brothers Aaron and Moses, became a leader of the children of Israel and was noted as a musician and prophetess (Ex. 15:20); Deborah, identified as “the wife of Lapidoth” and a “mother in Israel,” used her gifts of leadership as a judge in counseling people with problems and in participating in their deliverance in time of war (Judg. 4 — 5); Huldah, a prophetess in Israel’s history during a time of their spiritual backsliding, participated in their subsequent spiritual revival by delivering a message from God to the High Priest and King Josiah (2 Kin. 22:14-20); Jesus’ mother, Mary of Nazareth, exemplified courage and commitment by remaining last at the cross (John 19:25) and modeled biblical submission like no other woman or man other than Jesus Himself; the prophetess Anna was the first evangelist to the Jews and upon seeing the Christ Child immediately proclaimed redemption to Israel (Luke 2:36-38); Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive at the resurrection scene and thus the first to proclaim that Jesus had risen from the grave (John 20:1-18); women were the first to greet Christian missionaries Paul and Silas in Europe (Acts 16:11-15; 17:1-4, 10-12, 22-34; 18:1-3, 26).

Enthusiasm for proclamation of the gospel and commitment to follow Christ have characterized women in every succeeding generation as well. During the Reformation, especially among the Anabaptists, women were patronesses, protectresses, companions in

the faith, partners in missionary enterprise and even in martyrdom (Williams 1946:762).

In the early nineteenth century in North America, women individually and corporately assumed leadership for the support of missions and Christian publishing. Helen Barrett Montgomery was a superior student with far-reaching interests in Christian missions and civic activities. After her marriage, she was supported and encouraged by her husband to speak and give leadership to the support of missionary work around the world. The names of Helen Montgomery and her friend Lucy Peabody became synonymous with women's work throughout the world — hospices for convalescing women patients, educational institutions to train women for innovative strategies especially designed to reach women for Christ. Montgomery also produced the Centenary Translation of the New Testament, using suggestions from D. L. Moody and A. T. Robertson, together with her own insights. Yet in the midst of outstanding achievements in the religious world, both women maintained a sensitivity to what was described as "matriarchal leadership." Lucy Peabody once resigned a position of leadership with these words:

My major reasons for resigning are the propriety and wisdom of electing a man to fill this important office since it deals with churches and pastors, as well as with questions which properly belong to masculine leadership in the church (Brackney 1994:67).

Both Montgomery and Peabody worked toward creating a strong theological basis for biblical womanhood. They certainly found in the New Testament a sense of value for women. Their legacy is not just the positions of leadership each held in worldwide missions but

more in the burden both carried for the hurting and unconverted women of the world and their joint commitment to being faithful to the Great Commission (Brackney 1994:62-68).

4.1.2 The Question to Be Answered

There is confusion on the nature of the question. For example, Stanley Grenz, in his volume on the role of women in the church, frames the question with some ambiguity: Is it the *ministry* of women, the ministry of *women in leadership*, the ministry of women in positions of assuming *ultimate responsibility* for the church before God, or is there some other nuance of meaning to be explored? (Grenz 1995:16).

For this researcher, the ultimate question is not whether or not women are to be involved in ministry within the church and kingdom of Christ but rather what ministries — any, some, or all — are open to women. This question cannot be answered with any accuracy or certainty until one determines what criterion is to be used for answering the question. Some suggest that the decision should be made according to pragmatic guidelines — i.e., determined by “proper qualifications,” such as educational preparation, availability for service, personal interests; others maintain the decision is simply to be made by whether or not one “feels” called to the task.

Because feelings are subjective, often varying with mood and circumstances and sometimes without convincing authority, this researcher favors a more objective authority outside oneself. Among evangelicals, there is still much debate on passages, such as those considered in this chapter, that appear to mandate functionally

distinct though equally important roles of service for men and women in the church just as in previous chapters a distinction has been made between the respective functions of husbands and wives in the home.

Gilbert Bilezikian addresses the issue of the role of women in kingdom ministries extensively. For example, he attributes Jesus' choice of twelve men to be His apostles as being based only on "cultural constraints" that would have made the choice of a woman for such ministry unacceptable. He does not acknowledge any biblical reason for the obvious absence of women in the inner circle of Jesus. Bilezikian implies that women are to be considered as the equivalent of an ethnic group, such as Samaritans or other Gentiles. He states that "Pragmatic considerations of accommodation determined the composition of the first apostolic group" (Bilezikian 1985:274).

Such reasoning would have put Jesus Himself in contradistinction to the apostle Paul (see Rom. 12:2, especially the paraphrase by J. B. Phillips). The truth seems quite the contrary since nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus compromise on moral issues because of cultural or any other pressures. Such an implication would impugn His integrity and even raise serious questions about His deity and sinless nature. Christ is a part of the culture, but He is also above and sometimes even against culture; certainly He has never been bound by culture.

Stephen Clark lists twelve special situations in the New Testament church and notes the absence of actual reasoning for the particular explanation given in the text. He concludes that the hypotheses given by various authors about the intention of the

biblical writer are different than "the actual reasons for the teaching given in the texts themselves."

Most of these reasons are not even suggested by the texts themselves In fact, the key texts themselves state a rather different set of reasons and manifest a different set of concerns than those proposed by advocates of the 'special situation of the early church' views (Clark 1980:216-217).

When Scripture explains itself, the focus is not on some special situation in the early church but on two primary reasons that have been, are, and will be relevant for every generation: (1) the teaching on God's purposes for men and women, namely, that because He had different purposes for them, He created them differently and (2) the appeal to divine authority.

Clark maintains that the texts presenting teaching on men and women are appropriately grounded in an understanding of God's purpose for the human race and thus are supported by the authority of theological reasons through divine revelation. He also adds that the supporting argumentation in the text is tied to the most fundamental truths in Christianity: the original acts of creation, the triunity, the relationship of Christ to the church, the meaning of marriage, and the restoration of mankind to God's original purposes. This restoration that moves the creation toward unity in Christ is often overlooked (Clark 1980:220).

For this researcher, and for all who link the more subjectively understood authority of Christ with the more objectively presented divine authority recorded in the written Word of God, the canon of Holy Scripture is the standard that provides a recognized authority over life and practice and a sure and certain measure against which

one may test personal feelings and desires (2 Tim. 3:14-17). According to Scripture, the ultimate question to be settled is not who is over whom or who is under whose authority, not whether one is a ruler or a servant but whether or not one is obedient to the divine mandate (1 Sam. 15:22). Scripture must endure culture throughout the passing of generations and appropriate itself anew in each generation with vitality and relevance.

4.2 A Model — 1 Corinthians 11:3-10

The appropriate demeanor of women in public worship is the subject of these verses, following a discussion of moral issues within the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor. 6 — 10), especially within the parameters of religious liberty. Paul acknowledged that women were praying and prophesying in public worship (1 Cor. 11:5); yet he also called for women to “keep silent in the churches” (1 Cor. 14:34). The harmonization of what would appear to be contradictory is discussed at length by this researcher in subsequent pages.¹ Paul obviously allowed, and even expected, women to participate in worship, but he consistently made clear certain boundaries to be honored in that participation.

Whether or not Jewett’s suggestion that the apostle Paul’s response was occasioned by what some have called “the first woman’s emancipation movement” is immaterial (Jewett 1975:52). Because of new-found freedom in Christ, many Corinthians, perhaps especially some from among the women, had opted to put aside any differences between men and women, especially within the worship services (1 Cor. 11:13-16). Jewett noted that Israel, in ancient times,

¹See Section 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, especially pp. 259-265.

as societies throughout history, used clothing to make sexual identity more evident as well as to symbolize the mutual relationship between the sexes (Jewett 1975:53).

Paul, after these innovations came to his attention, prepared a general commendation on the church's faithfulness, together with a specific warning about the importance of ecclesiastical guidelines he had already established among the Corinthians. The apostle maintained that unfaithfulness to the divine order, even in what appeared to be peripheral external matters, would in fact be an assault on what Godet describes as "the most sublime relations," the keeping of which is "an element of Christian holiness" (Godet 1977:531-535).

4.2.1 The Debate Over κεφαλη

Godet, in defense of his position, sets forth "a sort of hierarchy" in which the human relationship between the man and the woman is lowest on the scale, followed by the divine/human relationship between Christ and the man, and ultimately as the highest on the scale, the wholly divine relationship between God and Christ. Each of these levels is described using the common denominator κεφαλη or "head."

Bilezikian, as many egalitarians, suggests for κεφαλη a different meaning, namely "source," implying in his comments that any lexicon would not only allow but even give weight to this translation. He gives the impression that certain findings are true when they have been declared otherwise by centuries of scholarship and even when such a conclusion is being widely and plausibly contested for accuracy by contemporary interpreters.

The respected classical Greek lexicon by Liddell and Scott does list “source” or “origin” as a possible translation in the sense of the “source” for the beginning point of something like a river, but this researcher has found no lexicon listing “source” as a metaphorical meaning for κηφαλη when the word is applied to persons. In fact, all major lexicons covering the language for the New Testament period list as a primary meaning for the word, “authority” or “ruler,” and this has been true for two millennia (Piper 1991:458). This fact makes Bilezikian’s reference to “the battle of the lexicons” (Bilezikian 1985:219) misleading.

Wayne Grudem has done extensive lexical studies on κηφαλη, and he notes another weakness in Bilezikian’s thesis — namely, that in order for Bilezikian’s explanation to work, he must not only claim the obscure translation (primarily found in lexicons from periods other than the New Testament era), but he must also assume that κηφαλη is linked to something — i.e., as in “source of something.” Such an interpretation would prohibit merely translating the word as “source,” since something would also have to be added to complete the idea of “source of something.” To suggest that the source of Christ is God would certainly raise further questions. Such ambiguity in methodology seems to offer no control or boundaries for sound linguistic analysis and translation (Piper 1991:459-460).²

Stanley Grenz acknowledges Paul’s concern with the worship

²The scope of this treatise does not permit the presentation of lexical evidence on κηφαλη in biblical materials, not to mention non-biblical writings. For the complementarian position, see Wayne Grudem’s appendix in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Piper 1991:425-468). For the egalitarian view, see Gilbert Bilezikian’s appendix in Beyond Sex Roles (Bilezikian 1985:215-252).

life in the Corinthians congregation. However, one must question Grenz's objectivity in evaluation when he suggests that the apostle's "overall concern is that everything 'be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. 14:40) so that the saints could be built up in the faith and the gospel would not come into disrepute among outsiders" (Grenz 1995:107). While orderliness was certainly a factor in the effectiveness of worship, the apostle's stated passion and primary admonition for all the congregations to whom he ministered, a challenge expressed even in this Epistle to the Corinthians, was to win people to Christ and equip them to win others (1 Cor. 9:19-23; see also Acts 17:2-4; Rom. 1:16; 10:1).

Though Grenz suggests that this 1 Corinthian passage is so problematic as to make its interpretation difficult, he proceeds to present his own view: ". . . We cannot miss the egalitarianism that this freedom entails" (Grenz 1995:113). One must, at the very least, ask for clarification of the antecedent for "we," beg for caution on the part of Grenz not to misrepresent complementarians, and appeal for his care to present conclusions by careful exegesis rather than to assume their veracity because of his own views.

In the same discussion Grenz cites the complementarian position of Elliott, Ortlund, and Wilson, who, as complementarians, must have missed the egalitarian conclusions. Grenz betrays his own mindset clearly in statements like his comment on the exegetical insight of Kenneth Wilson: "But then Wilson sneaks his complementarian view into the verse . . ." (Grenz 1995:113). Grenz then proceeds to present his own egalitarian conclusion that Paul is affirming "a woman's right to determine how she should dress her

head for worship.” One must be very cautious in attributing to Paul or any inspired author of Scripture the call to personal rights (see Rom. 1:1, 14; 2 Cor. 12:7, 15; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:3).

Perhaps Grenz is most vulnerable, however, when he acknowledges that “the complementarian argument [i.e., the subordinate Son and Spirit share fully in deity with the Father] is technically correct,” while in the next breath noting its failure (Grenz 1995:114). Logic would suggest that herein is a *non sequitur*. In addition, Grenz, perhaps inadvertently, then attributes to complementarians a view that has never been widely held, if at all, by evangelicals, i.e., “group subordination,” in which all women/wives are subject to all men/husbands. The burden of proof is on Grenz to show what complementarians are suggesting that the wife of any man should be subject to all men.

Grenz uses a puzzling qualifying phrase “apart from considerations of the abilities, giftedness or mission of the individuals involved” in his discussion (Grenz 1995:114-115). One wonders if he is suggesting that the Son is not gifted as the Spirit, and does the Spirit have different “abilities” than the Son. If each is fully God, there is no difference in the abilities and gifts of each. Why must these be different in application to men and women. On the other hand, for whatever reason, there is a difference in “mission” for the Father and for the Son as well as for the Spirit. The Father does not die on the cross. This difference in mission, coupled with the same potential for abilities and giftedness, is exactly the point evangelical complementarians are trying to make. If God chooses to use these differences within the godhead as He seems to express

clearly in 1 Corinthians 11, and then to apply them to male/female relationships, then Paul's argument would overrule human variance, such as those based on differences in culture.

Gordon Fee attempts to move away from any hierarchical understanding of the word by suggesting that Paul's concern was relational. He even stretches his argument to suggest that ἐξουσία (lit. "authority") refers to "the woman's own authority" (1 Cor. 11:10) (Fee 1987:502). This concept of personal authority over oneself does not seem to find expression elsewhere in the New Testament, nor does Fee give any basis for this argument.

Godet identifies κηφαλη as figurative, including "community of life and inequality within this community." He further describes the apostle's view as one in which the relationship between husband and wife in marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the believer and even to some extent the relationship between God and Christ (Godet 1977:536, 540). Yet also within the passage a clear and concise argument for male leadership and female subordination is presented. Paul's reasoning projected the subordination of the woman as part of "a larger hierarchy which reaches up to God himself" (Jewett 1975:54).

This hierarchy insures a proper order in all relationships of life, and within that hierarchy is a divinely appointed counterbalance (1 Cor. 11:11-12) in which the priority of the man in creation lies alongside his dependence upon the woman in the divine order (Gen. 2:18). The woman's subordination in owing her existence to the man in creation is juxtaposed with the fact that all other men were conceived and brought into the world from the wombs of women

(Jewett 1975:57).

4.2.2 The Interworking of Home, Church, and Community

The setting for the behavior of women described must have been within the assembled congregation since subsequent discussion moves to irregularities in the observance of the Lord's Supper. Also, "prophesying" by Jewett's definition refers to a public act in which divine truth is uttered, under the immediate prompting of the Spirit for the mutual edification of those gathered (Jewett 1975:53).

Some define biblical prophecy as that which is received from God and delivered exactly as received under divine constraint (Jer. 20:7) by one who is invited, summoned, and even impelled by God (Elwell 1984:886). Hauke describes the prophet as "God's direct channel," speaking only when inspiration comes rather than with a continuous mission as would "an office bearer in the proper sense." Thus, there is no implication of institutionalized teaching office but rather a service to be "effected anew in each case by the Holy Spirit" (Hauke 1988:360-361). However, one is wise to refrain from taking the text further than it goes. In this specific text, women are not *admonished* to pray and prophesy but rather are *restricted* in their demeanor *if* praying and prophesying.

According to Hans Conzelmann, the discussion in these verses is not primarily the status of the woman in marriage but her place in the community. In other words, he assigns the discussion to the nature of the man and the woman. He also notes that "the order of nature does not become the order of salvation . . . the order of salvation does not abrogate the order of the world" (Conzelmann

1975:188).

The passage clearly allows and encourages participation in ecclesiastical worship by both men and women. However, there are guidelines, and those guidelines are consistent within the Pauline literature and all the canon of Scripture. Hodge issues a reminder “that order and subordination pervade the whole universe” and consequently are essential to its existence (Hodge 1972:119).

One cannot separate the home and church in divine order because the underlying principles governing both are the same, and the home is the primary metaphor used to describe Christ’s relationship to His church. The most natural meaning of the words in verse 3 is this: The woman is subordinate to the man; the man is subordinate to Christ; Christ is subordinate to God. It is furthermore obvious that the subordination described is appropriated in different ways. Just as the subordination of the woman to the man is different from the subordination of the man to Christ, even more so is the subordination of Christ to God different from the subordination within both the aforementioned relationships; and the subordination of each is perfectly consistent with that party’s nature. Certainly the subordination of Christ to God is completely consistent with that fact that the Son is just as fully God as the Father (Hodge 1972:119).

The hierarchical structure within the godhead is acknowledged as present from the beginning by many commentators.³ One may entertain an implication of the triunity in the Creation account in these references: “God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1);

³See the discussion by Raymond C. Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship” (Piper 1991:95-112).

“The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). The New Testament identifies Jesus as the agent of creation: “In the beginning was the Word And the Word became flesh” (John 1:1-14). Within this triunity there is obviously unity in personhood — the one God — and diversity of function in the creative activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Ortlund expresses it thus:

God exists as one Godhead in three Persons, equal in glory but unequal in role. Within the Holy Trinity the Father leads, the Son submits to Him, and the Spirit submits to both (the Economic Trinity). But it is also true that the three Persons are fully equal in divinity, power, and glory (the Ontological Trinity) The ranking within the Godhead is a part of the sublime beauty and logic of true deity (Piper 1991:103).

In Philippians 2:5-9 the Son is clearly described as “equal with God,” and yet He is also “obedient” to the Father in His redemptive assignment. Just as Christ is not less than fully God because the Father is His head or “authority,” a woman is not an inferior person because a man is her head or “authority” (Eph. 5:22-24). The Son's deity is not dependent upon a denial of the Father's headship. Nor is the woman's equality dependent upon a denial of the man's headship. Paul appeals (1 Cor. 11:9) to the account of creation (Gen. 2:15-25) rather than to the story of the fall (Gen. 3:1-7) because the divine assignments are clearly given before the Fall (Gen. 2:15-24), and these assignments are only *distorted* and *perverted* in the Fall (see Appendix 1 — A).

4.3 A Discussion of Subordinationism

The Kroegers define subordinationism as “A doctrine that assigns an inferiority of being, status, or role to the Son or Holy Spirit within the Trinity.” The problem in this definition lies in the addition

of "role," since to label as inferior any work of the Son or of the Holy Spirit militates against the clear teaching of Scripture itself. Note the words describing Jesus (Phil. 2:5-9), and consider the assignment to the Holy Spirit to "glorify the Son" (John 16:13-14).

The Kroegers seem to reflect a misunderstanding of both the doctrine of the triunity and the nature of subordinationism. Both historically and critically, a distinction has been made between essence or ontological being and role or practical function. Any subordinationism that prescribes a difference or inferiority in essence or personhood among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is heresy indeed; but a different and distinct role or function neither implies nor demands inferiority. A different assignment, however mundane it may seem and at whatever level in the acceptable "pecking order," is not to be labeled as inferior because it seems less significant than assignments given to others (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:14-26). On the other hand, the Kroegers themselves also state in the same article,

The Nicene fathers ascribed to the Son and Spirit an equality of being or essence, but a subordination of order, with both deriving their existence from the Father as primal source (Elwell 1984:1058).

Subordinationism has been distorted before in the history of the church. Arius assigned inferiority of being to Jesus the Son, thereby refusing to accept the claim of Scripture that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in being and personhood (John 1:1; 5:23; 10:23; 14:6, 7, 9, 11) and yet different in office and function. The Son voluntarily becomes subject and subordinate to the Father (John 5:19-20; 6:38; 8:28, 29, 54; 1 Cor. 15:28; Phil. 2:5-11), and the Holy

Spirit is sent forth by, and thus is under the direction of, the Father with the task of glorifying the Son (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14).

The heretical Arian brand of subordinationism was a distortion of Trinitarianism because it either misread or ignored certain passages of Scripture. The orthodox position has been clear throughout church history: equality in essence and being and subordination in role or function, a combination that is both consistent and complementary. The Arian error, which suggested a subordination in the essence or being of the Son so that Christ was not ὁμοουσιος with the Father, resulted from a one-sided interpretation of certain Scripture passages and from Gnostic tendencies that simply dismissed or abandoned those passages that the human mind could not explain.⁴

Craig Blaising, in an article on the Council of Nicea, summarizes that “. . . an ontological rather than merely functional deity of the Son was upheld at Nicea,” affirming that the main purpose of this Council was to declare the unity of the Trinity ontologically (Elwell 1984:774-775).

The statement adopted at Nicea reads:

We believe in one God, Father, Ruler of all, the maker of heaven and earth and of all things seen and unseen.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one essence with the Father; through whom all things were made; who for us human beings and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and became human; and suffered, and rose on the third day and went up into the heavens and is seated at the right hand of the

⁴See the article “Subordinationism” (Cross 1958:1301).

Father, and is coming to judge the living and the dead.
And in the Holy Spirit (Norris 1980:156).

The Constantinople Council expounded on the Holy Spirit in this way:

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Lifegiver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets . . . (Norris 1980:157).

Clearly the natural sense of reading these statements as well as searching the documents of orthodox faith throughout the centuries leads one to an understanding that the triunity of the godhead is not without purpose and plan. For example,

Jesus was the one through whom others entered into the new order of things; he was the bearer of God's rule, the mediator of God's salvation (Norris 1980:2).

Again,

For there is but one God even the Father of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things, and one Holy Spirit in whom are all things (Schaff XIV₂ 1971:312).

Subordination is apparent when one reads that Jesus was obedient to His parents. In His role as the incarnate Son of God, Jesus took His place in a human family and thus within its relationships, in which, as a child, He accepted the assignment of modeling voluntary submission to His parents. Furthermore, Scripture states that God sent His Son into the world (John 3:17); Jesus used the words "not My will, but Yours, be done" in His prayer (Luke 22:42); the Son asked "Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given me?" (John 18:11); Jesus expressed His mission thus, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"

(John 6:38).

In each of these aforementioned selected examples, one sees subordination in role: The Father commands and sends; the Son obeys and enters the world first and most urgently to die for sinners (Schaff XIV₂ 1971:333-334). However, the subordination of the Son to the Father and of the Spirit to both the Father and the Son is merely the mode of operation for the divine economy. Who God is finds definition in the life of Christ and through the nurture of the Holy Spirit.

Pannenberg acknowledges that the person of Jesus cannot be separated from God's essence because Jesus in person is God's self-revelation. Yet clearly Jesus distinguished Himself from the One He called Father. Speaking of the contrast between the Father and the Son within the godhead in a sense is figurative or symbolic because Jesus' relationship to the Father is part of the essence of God Himself. The Holy Spirit is also both a part of and distinct from the Father and Son. He is the one through whom believers know the Son. He guarantees the participation of believers in Christ (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 4:6). God is revealed in Jesus through the Spirit (Pannenberg 1968:158-160, 168-174).

The trinity is further developed by Pannenberg as expressing "relational unity."

The Father is Father only vis-a-vis the Son; the Son is Son only vis-a-vis the Father; the Spirit is Spirit only as the bond of the community of Father and Son. No one of the Trinitarian Persons is who he is without the others; each exists only in reference to the others (Pannenberg 1968:180-181).

Pannenberg further explains the functional aspect of this

relationship:

The antinomy between the personal independence of Father, Son, and Spirit, on the one hand, and the unity of the divine essence, on the other, is resolved in such a way that the personal independence consists precisely in the relation of origin through which the persons are bound together in the unity of the divine essence (Pannenberg 1968:181).

In summary, he links relational unity and practical diversity:

In the vital movement of such reciprocal dedication, the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit consummates itself in the historical process of the revelatory event (Pannenberg 1968:183).

The Kroeger definition of subordinationism is thus misleading according to the historical evangelical doctrine of the Trinity, which defines subordinationism as in the realm of order and relationship — modeled within the godhead and appropriate within the human family as well.

4.4 Paul's Commitment to Role Distinctions

Paul clearly states his commitment to role distinctions (1 Cor. 11:3-10), while certainly indicating that he did not thereby consider women to be inferior or less vital to the kingdom (1 Cor. 3:11-12). The essence of this passage is that women can pray and prophesy in the church, but they are admonished to do so with an attitude of submission to male leadership. This attitude seems to be illustrated in the Corinthian culture by the wearing of a head covering. The crux of the interpretation of this passage then is found in distinguishing between timeless principles (i.e., headship/submission), which are identified with theological foundations, and timely manifestations of those principles (e.g., that women are to adorn themselves in a

certain way, such as with a head covering), which may be viewed as an outer adornment and thus appropriated according to its contemporary setting.

Timeless or abiding principles may be defined as those for which historical and theological support is embedded in Scripture. Such principles have the capacity to transcend generations and to leap cultural fences. Appropriate timely manifestations of such principles represent a particular cultural response and contemporary application. For example, consider the admonition to “greet one another with a kiss of love,” a common greeting among first-century Christians (1 Pet. 5:14). Embodied in this greeting are godly affection, acceptance, and encouragement. The principle of expressing Christian love and concern is timeless, but the particular expression referenced here, i.e., “the kiss of love,” is a manifestation of this compassion timely to the first century and culturally to the Near Eastern context even in the modern era.

Gordon Fee addresses the question as to why some of the Corinthian women were disregarding “the customary mode of appearance.” Some suggested that the problem centered in women who were being insubordinate to their husbands because of their own newly found freedom in Christ. The text would thus be an attempt to force these women to reclaim the traditional symbol of their subordination, i.e., the veil. Others relate the problem to the overall historical situation in the church at Corinth and suggest that these women are to be considered in an eschatological sense as part of a new age inaugurated by Christ in which women participated in worship along with men. Fee alludes to the “overrealized

eschatology” of the Corinthian women who adapted a new “spirituality” in which they were disregarding some very customary distinctions between the sexes in a manner that would otherwise have been considered disgraceful (Fee 1987:498).

In this passage, as in 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Paul supports his position with creation rather than the Fall because he considers the distinctions between the man and the woman part of the divinely planned created order (1 Cor. 11:8-9), and apparently the apostle did not think the created order was negated by redemption. Fee notes that Paul seems “to shift the problem from one of individual freedom to one of relational responsibility,” as the women in Corinth may have been trying to eliminate distinctions between the sexes through changes in their appearance, thereby bringing shame on the relationship between men and women (Fee 1987:501-502).

Some may argue the egalitarian position that Genesis 1 and 2 do not support role differences, but Paul obviously saw a distinction in roles between the man and the woman in Genesis 2 (see 1 Cor. 11:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:13). Schreiner has appropriately called for the burden of proof to fall on those who question Paul’s appeal to creation since the most natural reading of the text would affirm exactly that (Piper 1991:133-134). Godet also points to the fact that Paul’s conclusion is confirmed by “the mode of the woman’s creation” (Gen. 2:21-23) and by the fact that the woman came from the man because she was created to serve as his helper (Gen. 2:18), thereby completing his existence (Godet 1977:547-549).⁵

⁵See sections 2.6, pp. 144-147, and section 2.6.2, pp. 149-150, for further discussion on the relationship between Genesis 2 and the admonitions found in the Pauline corpus.

One who provides, protects, and is entrusted with the highest spiritual directive should be worthy of leadership (Gen. 2:15-17). One created to “help,” according to the conclusion of this researcher, should understand that to be a supportive role (Gen. 2:18).⁶ Nowhere is Scripture is there evidence that differences between men and women embedded in the order of creation are to be abolished. Rather the evidence points to movement toward the perfection that is to be ushered in by God’s plan for redemption. It is natural to assume that men and women who have experienced genuine regeneration are going to be more Christlike in their actions and reactions (2 Cor. 5:17).

Although in respect of [sic] religion men and women are in an equality, yet the Gospel does not overthrow the natural ordinance, which is really of Divine appointment, that woman is subject to man. To disavow this subjection before the congregation must cause grave scandal; and such shamelessness is condemned by nature, by authority, and by general custom (Robertson 1978:226).

First Corinthians 11:3-12 does indeed affirm the full participation of women in worship within the clearly defined boundaries that Paul records elsewhere (1 Tim. 2:8-15). However, he does not negate or remove the divine order of male headship and female submission that is found throughout the warp and woof of Scripture. Paul did not see role distinctions and equality as being antithetical or contradictory. He did not present women as being inferior to men. At the very least, logic would dictate that individuals (men and women) can be equal in personhood or essence and yet

⁶See sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, pp. 119-130, for further discussion of the nuance of meaning in the term “helper,” with special emphasis on its usage in describing the woman in Genesis 2.

have different roles or functions.

In fact, Paul presents an amazing balance in this passage under consideration: Verses 3-10 clearly express role distinctions; verses 11-12 affirm that the apostle did not believe women to be inferior or less important than men (Piper 1991:136-137). The whole explains both parts; the broad context presents the whole counsel of God so that there is a complete picture of the role of women in worship. The timeless principle presented in this text is that men and women, although equal in personhood, are different in role assignment or function. This understanding preserves male leadership within the setting of worship. Women, however, are free to pray and prophesy as part of the church's worship, but their participation is to be under the authority and direction of male leadership. The timely manifestation of that principle is found in Paul's word concerning head coverings.

Evidently, in the first century, a woman's failure to wear the head covering was interpreted as her rejection of the authority of male leadership. Therefore, Paul's comments on head coverings were made because they were the means for communicating a woman's acceptance of male leadership in the worship service within that culture. To abrogate whatever cultural expression God has prescribed within the culture to appropriate a divine principle would seem to move toward putting aside that principle, e.g., in this text, the distinction between men and women (Piper 1991:138-139; see also Appendix 4 — C).

Godet expresses the overall thrust of the passage well:

I rather think, therefore, that while rejecting, as a rule, the speaking of women in Churches, Paul yet meant to leave them a certain degree of liberty for the exceptional case in which, in consequence of a sudden revelation (*prophesying*), or under the influence of a strong inspiration of prayer and thanksgiving (*speaking in tongues*), the woman should feel herself constrained to give utterance to this extraordinary impulse of the Spirit (Godet 1977:545).

Godet's admonition is that a woman doing that which is out of her natural position of subordination ("position of reserve and dependence") should all the more be reminded, and the church with her, of the "abnormal character" of her action. This warning in itself would suggest that such cases would be infrequent and unusual (Godet 1977:545).

Even if one finds Godet's interpretation of public female participation as being "infrequent and unusual" and lacking in support from the text, the clear sense of subordination remains. Godet also notes that the subordination of the wife to her husband is tempered by their oneness in Christ so that as believers both husband and wife have spiritual resources available beyond themselves. He rejects the suggestion that the gospel "softens" the wife's subordination as set forth in the creation order (1 Cor. 11:9-10), since the order of nature is both recognized and sanctioned by the gospel (Godet 1977:553-554).

Even if Godet is to be questioned about his reference to the matter of an "exceptional case," his major point seems to stand; i.e., the apostle Paul has provided conditions under which women may do certain things in the church from which they may have been most naturally excluded. The fact is that Paul has made it very clear that there are limits in what a woman can do and that there are certain

ways in which it is acceptable for her to work within a structure that is complementarian.

4.5 A Reprimand — 1 Corinthians 14:33-35

In chapters 11 through 14 of 1 Corinthians, the apostle addresses abuses that are found in the Corinthian congregation. Interestingly the section begins (11:3-16, dealing with the fundamental relationship between men and women) and ends (14:33b-38, focusing on a particular aspect of that relationship) with the same theme — the position of women. In addition, within the question-and-answer section of the letter, particularly in chapter 7, women are also in view as the apostle addresses marriage and celibacy (Hauke 1988:369).

In observing the public ministries of women in 1 Corinthians, one notes that Paul deals primarily with the woman's position in chapter 11, followed by more specifically dealing with her activity in public worship in chapter 14. Here the apostle speaks authoritatively concerning the use of spiritual gifts in the church.

4.5.1 Some Exegetical Comments

First Corinthians 14:33-35 is set in the midst of a chapter in which the apostle speaks authoritatively concerning the ways in which spiritual gifts are to be used. To test the value of each gift, Paul uses the norm of whether or not the gift edifies or builds up (1 Cor. 14:4-5). Again, he finds in the Corinthian congregation circumstances that prompt him to emphasize the divine order to be honored by women, as well as by prophets and other speakers. Paul introduces the directive ἐπιτρέπεται (lit. "permit") in this passage and then uses the same present tense ἐπιτρέπω in 1 Timothy 2:12.

In verse 33, the apostle adds “as in all the churches of the saints,” a phrase that goes more naturally as an introductory phrase to verse 34 because of the punctuation found in both the Nestle and Aland Greek texts (Nestle 1963:451; Aland, Black, Martini, Metzger, and Wikgren, 1983:611) and so placed in numerous translations (Amplified New Testament, p. 647; Wuest’s New Testament, p. 410; New English Bible, Rotherham’s Emphasized New Testament, Beck’s New Testament in the Language of Today, Twentieth Century New Testament, Knox’s New Testament (Vaughn 1967:778). This particular grammatical construction and, in fact, even the words themselves, certainly do not suggest a temporary or merely culturally relative condition or simply a happenstance. Rather, it would indicate the straightforward statement of a general apostolic principle revealed in two different settings chosen by God as being most appropriate, as to time and place, for transmitting the clear message He wanted to send to all the churches.

Not only is that message recorded in two different passages within the canon of Scripture, but furthermore, precise phrases such as “in all the churches of the saints” (1 Cor. 14:33), “in the churches” and “as the law also says” (1 Cor. 14:34), plus the discussion’s concluding admonition “Let all things be done decently and in order” provide general statements that imply broad application extending beyond one particular congregation.

Some interpreters consider the reference to “the Law” to be an appeal to rabbinic traditions regarding the role of women rather than an appeal to Scripture itself. However, in more than a hundred references to νόμος Paul never once uses this word to mean rabbinic

tradition, making it highly probable that the reference is indeed an appeal to Scripture. In addition, in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 Paul appeals to Scripture, making it reasonable to assume that his appeal to νόμος in 1 Corinthians 14:34 would function in the same way (Lundy 1994:31).

In verse 34, the placement of the article with νόμος, translated “law,” implies more than mere custom and would suggest a connection to the commands of the Torah (Dockery 1987:370). Jewett flatly declares that “the law . . . nowhere says this” (Jewett 1975:114). It would seem, however, that he is not considering the variety of ways in which the term “law” is used. For example, Oehler defines the law as “The compass of the people’s obligations, the revelation of God’s commanding will” (Oehler 1978:182). It is indeed significant that this reference to the “law” is consistent with Paul’s appeal to the Old Testament in both 1 Corinthians 11, in which verses 8-9 allude to the creation narrative in Genesis 2, and in 1 Timothy 2, in which verses 13 and 14 also allude to Genesis 2 and 3 as concerns creation and the Fall. The idea of male headship and female submission is again obviously found in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the writings of Paul and Peter.

The Pentateuch, both in its treatment of man’s creation (cf. 1 Tim. 2:13; 1 Cor. 11:7-9) and fall (Gen. 3:16; cf. 1 Tim. 2:14) and in its legal stipulations, declared the headship of the male Functional male headship in the family was applied by extension to the church (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) (Holmyard 1997:464).

In verse 36, Paul alludes to the matter of personal preferences and “relevant” interpretations with some very pointed rhetorical questions, making it clear that no one should suppose that God’s

Word and the divine order originated with him or that he has some new word from God that is contrary to the understanding and practices of the apostles and of the churches. This principle has now been extended to many centuries of understanding and remained relevant in practice throughout the Christian era.

Obviously, the mandate to women for silence in 1 Corinthians 14 is in contrast to the permission for participation in worship in chapter 11. While one's initial reaction may be to suggest contradiction or confusion, one who maintains the inerrancy and infallibility of the text in its autographs and faithfulness in its transmission through the translating process must take more than a cursory look before drawing conclusions. Since the earlier passage does not exclude the vocal participation of women in worship services and, in fact, gives permission for both praying and prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5) — albeit with certain restrictions, one must weigh harmonious interpretations carefully. Even one who does not advocate inerrancy must account for the fact that a New Testament author who, on the one hand, exhibits a remarkable literary adroitness in arguing his theses with logical coherency would not, on the other hand, within a few paragraphs in the same letter so egregiously contradict himself. If this were the only possible explanation, it might merit some consideration, but there are other reasonable explanations offering internal consistency, and these must be seriously contemplated.

Three resolutions are suggested in The Woman's Study Bible. Paul could have had in mind a particular kind of speech, i.e., the gift of prophecy, and especially the evaluation or judgment of that

prophecy (see the broader context of the passage, 1 Cor. 14:29-39). In this case, Paul would have been forbidding the women from offering their criticisms of these prophecies in public, which action in the public assembly might have been considered an affront to the headship of their husbands. If the women had questioned those who stood to prophesy or to teach the congregation, such behavior would have been construed as unbecoming or even disrespectful to the masculine leadership in the church, especially for a woman under the authority of her husband.

Another possibility is to interpret this command as an effort to achieve orderliness if some of the women had been disorderly in their conduct in the assembly (see 1 Cor. 14:40). Finally, the interpretation favored by this researcher is one in which the prohibition to these Corinthian women was to refrain from ecstatic utterance. Apparently some of the Corinthian women were speaking in tongues, since this directive falls within a section in chapter 14 discussing guidelines for worship at Corinth and in all the churches of the saints. One could interpret the prohibition as being specifically directed to women who were caught up in this phenomenon rather than a prohibition for any speaking on the part of women in the assembly (Patterson 1995:1920). Any of these explanations would be harmonious not only with both of Paul's statements to the Corinthians but also with other teachings of the apostle himself and with the New Testament canon as a whole.

Paul's treatment of a similar theme in 1 Timothy 2 makes it clear that there were theological reasons bound up in this limitation, and not merely cultural circumstances (Patterson, P 1983:265).

Wayne Grudem has done an exhaustive study comparing and contrasting the gifts of prophecy and teaching, in which he shows through an inductive study of the New Testament text itself that these two functions are distinct activities with authority differing according to those who exercise the respective function. Grudem concludes that teaching (at least in a primary sense, i.e., from the apostles), rather than prophecy, provided the doctrinal and ethical norms by which the early church was regulated. New Testament prophecy seems to be a human reporting of a divine revelation given to encourage, build up, comfort, and inspire (1 Cor. 14:3) (Grudem 1987:11-23). Hauke also pursues the description of “teachers” as having a task “clearly distinguished from the activity of the prophet” and entailing “an official, long-term mission of spreading the word” or “fundamental instruction in the Faith” (Hauke 1988:361).

4.5.2 An Addendum on Reconciling the Passages

One of the greatest challenges within the Pauline corpus is to reconcile the prohibition to women from speaking in church (1 Cor. 14:34-35) with the presupposition that women are praying and prophesying (1 Cor. 11:4-5, 13). There are some who believe that one passage allows, and even encourages, the unlimited participation of women in the church (1 Cor. 11:3-10), while other verses (1 Cor. 14:33-35) call for unlimited exclusion of women. Such would be extremely problematic, since one would have to look at the author as contradicting himself and thus having no credibility and all that within the context of closely related paragraphs and on an issue clearly identified. Consequently, believing Paul to be a capable and coherent theologian who knew what he wanted to accomplish, it

would seem that there must be a resolution of the supposed conflict.

Though some seek to interpret what on the surface appears to be inconsistency by resorting to “interpolation theories,” others move to interpret the text by harmonizing it with other passages (Nuccum 1997:242). Gordon Fee maintains that these verses 34-35 are an interpolation. Although the verses are found in all known manuscripts, either here or at the end of the chapter, Fee declares that the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authority (Fee 1987:699).

When Fee finds no evidence to suggest the accidental or deliberate moving of the verses by a scribal emendation, he argues that there must have been an original text lacking these verses (Fee 1987:699-708). However, his questioning of the strong internal evidence of the passage “has not gone unchallenged” because of the subjective manner of his evaluation. Nuccum concludes by stating: “Fee’s position ultimately hinges upon the external evidence, yet it unanimously supports the inclusion of these verses” (Nuccum 1997:243).⁷

Hauke proposes three possible solutions to the alleged contradiction:

(1) The behavior of women who pray or prophesy in their homes or in small gatherings is in view in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; the congregation is the setting for the ban on speaking found in 1

⁷Nuccum deals extensively with the textual apparatus on these verses, interacting with both Gordon Fee and Philip Payne in a thorough way. He concludes that “No extant MS offers evidence of an original omission of 1 Cor. 14:34-5” (Nuccum 1997:254).

Corinthians 14:33b-36. This solution is weakened by the context, which seems to indicate clearly the worship service as the setting for both.

(2) The setting is a regular communal assembly, and Paul's criticism concerns the participation of women with their heads uncovered. The prophesying by women is mentioned but without clear apostolic sanction. This solution seems more likely than the former, though not strong within its context.

(3) The speaking in 1 Corinthians 11 is different from that addressed in 1 Corinthians 14. In the latter chapter, the apostle deals primarily with glossolalia or tongues, especially the misuse of that phenomenon. In regard to prophecy, the ban on speaking may not apply to what is effected by the Holy Spirit but rather to the discussions accompanying such prophecy. Perhaps in the questioning within the discussion time, the Corinthian women moved toward assuming the role of teacher. Hauke's conclusion is thus that the ban on speaking in 1 Corinthians 14 is a prohibition "against the participation of women in official teaching activities during the divine service" (Hauke 1988:372-380).

Both The Woman's Study Bible and Hauke present similar interpretations for harmonizing these chapters in Corinthians. Perhaps the final judgment rests again in the presupposition from which one begins the hermeneutical pilgrimage. For this researcher, Scripture does not, even cannot, contradict itself. Knowing it is true and consistent does narrow the options for interpretation. The purpose of this project is to propose that this consistency is indeed present in the midst of these challenging questions but that it can be

seen only in the careful examination of all of the parts in light of the whole. Without the foundations laid in Genesis, it is impossible to understand the perplexities found in the Pauline corpus.

The apostle actually uses an arsenal of arguments to present his position to the church at Corinth: the general moral code (1 Cor. 14:35), the tradition of the church (1 Cor. 14:33b, 36), the Old Testament (1 Cor. 14:34), and most important “a command of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37) (Hauke 1988:364-365).

Though 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 are addressed to different congregations in differing situations with different responses, “common stylistic and conceptual elements” are found. For example, consider the use of the unusual Greek verb ἐπιτρέπειν, lit. “to permit” and often associated with a pre-given command within rabbinical technique (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12), “subordination” (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-14), “keeping silent” (σιγατωσαν, 1 Cor. 14:34; ἡθουχια, 1 Tim. 2:11, 12), and “learning” (μανθανειν, 1 Cor. 14:31, 35; 1 Tim. 2:11; 3:6). Certainly the last characteristic would distinguish the Pauline directives from rabbinic teaching (Hauke 1988:400).

4.6 A Warning — 1 Timothy 2:8-15

On a cursory reading of Paul’s words, some have assumed that he is suggesting that women are to be totally excluded from participating in church leadership. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 14 suggest reservations about women “teaching” even when they were allowed to “prophesy” (Young 1994:113). First Corinthians 14, 1 Timothy 2, and Titus 2 — all from the pen of the apostle Paul — deal with what women are allowed to do in the church. In the first

passage the reference is to “speaking” without specifying the nature of that vocal communication, but the latter two specifically address head-on the matter of “teaching” by women. Its clear directive cannot be lightly dismissed on the basis of silence or cultural considerations.

A clear directive appears in 1 Timothy 2, in which the apostle notes that though women are to learn, in silence and submission, they are not to teach or have authority over a man. Such strong statements, even reinforced by corroboration adduced from the Genesis creation account, would allow for the deduction that women were attempting to exercise leadership in the congregation. However, one must be cautious not to push beyond the divine directive given to make it more restrictive, a ploy often used to prepare for disobedience by making the commandment appear foolish to consider, severe beyond reason, or impossible to obey. Titus 2 straightforwardly identifies the guidelines for the teaching ministry of women.

Actually, Paul admonishes women to receive instruction quietly with a demeanor that would encourage both spiritual growth and intellectual acumen. He then forbids women to teach or to exercise authority over men (two different functions strangely bound but with neither task exclusively forbidden, since women can teach and lead, but both to be exercised within boundaries defined in Scripture).

An additional problem surfaces in that the Pauline exhortation implies confidence in the intellectual capabilities of women, since they, in fact, are admonished to “learn.” However, the injunction to

learn is then used by some to suggest that the ensuing prohibition to women teachers was only due to their lack of education and/or their being swept away by false teachers. However, one must note that the focus of the command is not as much on the learning as on the manner and method of learning, i.e., silently and with a submissive spirit. The freedom for women to learn is not questioned, but is rather commended. Nevertheless, women are not given *carte blanche* to go about the task of learning in any way they choose. It would also seem a bit presumptuous to conclude that permission, or even encouragement, to learn is tantamount to a mandate, or even an open door, to teach in any setting (Köstenberger 1995:122-123).

4.6.1 Addressing the Prohibition

Some suggest that this passage is a clear prohibition for any woman to engage in any teaching of anyone and for any woman to hold any position of authority over men (Bilezikian 1985:174). Such an interpretation puts Scripture against Scripture — a dangerous and unnecessary ploy. It is perfectly consistent to consider a composite of the passages addressing this issue and conclude that Paul did indeed place a restraint on the didactic ministry of women in the church, while noting that the restraint is specifically addressed and limited to prohibiting the teaching of men (see 1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Tim. 2:12). Women are admonished to teach women (Tit. 2:3-5).

The apostle's reasoning, in fact, from the man's priority in creation underscores that premise. Hurley expresses the distinction well:

Paul did not forbid women to bring any teaching whatsoever. We have seen that all may bring a word of

instruction. What he spoke of was the continuing, authoritative teaching which structures the faith of the church (Hurley 1981:248).

Hurley would consider "structuring of the faith of the people" a job for the elders of the church (1 Tim. 3:1-5), except in the most extraordinary circumstances (Hurley 1981:250). The scope of discussion within this paper does not seek to address the question of what might be entailed in such "extraordinary circumstances." In any case, the point to be made here is that one dare not go beyond Scripture in what is prohibited any more than in what is permitted. Women were not only allowed, but also were encouraged, to teach other women. Even the prohibition for teaching men lies clearly within the setting of the local assembly, if one accepts the contextual boundaries; and the directive should not be extended beyond this boundary except as the "spirit" of the passage might dictate on an individual basis.

Bilezekian, on the other hand, notes that prior to the writing of the New Testament teachers were "dispensers of Christian truth" with "absolute and normative" authority, "provided that they were duly trained and authorized." He suggests that the locus of authority was displaced from the teacher to what the teacher taught once the New Testament canon was in place, saying

The authority resides in the text of the Bible and not in the person teaching the Bible. A teacher today is only a person *sharing* knowledge and insights from Scripture. A sexless teaching machine may do as much without making any authority claims (Bilezekian 1985:184).

Whereas one can certainly agree with Bilezekian that the text, not the teacher of the text, holds the authority; for that very reason

what is required by the words of the text cannot be dismissed or diminished. One cannot assume that any restriction, even if it does exclude women from certain aspects of religious leadership on the basis of gender alone, is a new or unusual way for God to work. Note the requirements among men for the priesthood in the Old Testament (Lev. 10:8-11; 21:1-15).

Again, Hurley warns that a human definition can overthrow a biblical purpose (Hurley 1981:246). God sovereignly and arbitrarily sets the general boundaries for religious leadership. His specified criterion does not include the individual's ability to perform the service under consideration. An interesting Old Testament analogy has been projected in an erudite article comparing the revolt of Korah against Moses and Aaron (see Num. 16 — 18) to this present debate:

Under the old covenant the exclusion from the priesthood on the basis of gender/family/physical wholeness appears to be contradictory to the inclusive statement that 'all Israel was to be a kingdom of priests' [Ex. 19:6]. Likewise under the new covenant exclusive limitations, such as those found in 1 Tim. 2:11-15, seem to fly in the face of the inclusive statement that 'there is neither male nor female' in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28) (Pierce 1987:3-10).

4.6.2 Cultural Manifestation vs. Biblical Principle in Church Order

Biblical feminists often use the process of deculturalization as an excuse to disregard directives found in Scripture. This process does not erase the meaning of the text, however. Consider first that a general discussion of conduct and demeanor in church gatherings and especially of public prayer — its subjects, purposes, and motive —

precedes 1 Timothy 2:11. For example, the phrase “holy hands” illustrates the principle governing an acceptable prayer in the assembly. This posture suggests an obvious symbolism of the spiritual condition of complete separation unto God as would be manifested in a life of righteousness (Vine 1966:42).

In his remarks concerning the manner of dress for women attending worship services, Paul says nothing to women to discourage enhancing their attractiveness. In fact, quite the contrary, the words used are κοσμιος, translated “modest,” and κοσμειν, translated “adorn,” which have both been transliterated into English as “cosmetics.” The issue in this text, as is also true in the close parallel of 1 Peter 3:4, is the *attitude* of women rather than their *appearance*. This interpretation is in harmony with the whole of Scripture. For example, in Proverbs 31:22 the woman of strength is described as making “tapestry” for herself and wearing clothing of “fine linen and purple,” which would have been the best available. However, she is also reminded that “strength and honor” are to be her clothing (Prov. 31:25) and that more important than charm or beauty (which would include all outer adornment) would be her fear of the Lord (Prov. 31:30). Rather than merely issuing guidelines for wearing apparel, Paul, as Peter, ultimately issues to women a clarion call for godliness.⁸ Note the comment of Wayne Grudem,

Although the RSV speaks of *fine clothing* (similarly NIV), the Greek text does not include an adjective modifying *clothing* (*himation*) and the text literally says, ‘Let not your adorning be the outward adorning of braiding of hair and wearing of gold or

⁸See section 3.2, pp. 170-171, for additional discussion on godliness versus glamour.

putting on of clothing,' It is incorrect, therefore, to use this text to prohibit women from braiding their hair or wearing gold jewelry, for by the same reasoning one would have to prohibit 'putting on of clothing.' Peter's point is not that any of these are forbidden, but that they should not be a woman's 'adorning,' her source of beauty (Grudem 1988:140).

In Paul's day, hair was often braided with gold threads and ornaments and accented with costly combs and pins. Similarly showy jewelry and garments could be worn in a vain display of wealth. Just as in parallel passages, the emphasis of these words is upon commendation of modesty and propriety rather than upon a ban of tasteful accessories (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Swidler accused the apostle of expressing "a hostile attitude toward women's physical beauty" (Swidler 1979:336). However, the underlying principle upon which women are to focus — i.e., the inner self and the development of godliness with its pursuant outward manifestation of good works — is a timely word for the women of any generation.

He is appealing for spiritual good taste, which does not accentuate the sensual but magnifies the simplicity which attends all true beauty (Trentham 1959:33).

In both 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12, the prescription for a woman's demeanor in church seems to differ from a man's. Though a woman's general decorum in the church is to be marked by "a quiet spirit," other passages allow for prophecy and prayer (Joel 2:28; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:4-5). However, Cook and Lee take a leap from these statements that can be documented in Scripture to suggest that Huldah "taught the word of the Lord to the priests and king's officials when King Josiah could not understand the 'words of the Book of the Law'" (Cook 1992:35). Actually 2 Kings

22:11 reads that “the king heard the words of the Book of the Law” (“heard” שמע). Huldah did indeed deliver God’s word to the court and the people, but nothing in the text states that she “taught” anything. Women can be on the “frontlines of the spiritual battlefield” in whatever task God assigns, since “frontline” positions are not limited to teaching and ruling in the church. However, women can also be used successfully in leadership even when that leadership violates biblical principles, since nowhere in Scripture is there the assurance that any endeavor outside of God’s perfect will is automatically doomed to failure. Women can be equally called, even as men, but they are not necessarily called to the same tasks.

Having moved from outer appearance, which was to be an outward manifestation of what lay within, the apostle continues with the directive concerning the behavior of women within the church. Two distinct, yet related, activities are addressed in verse 12, preceded by a general positive note that sets the stage for the restrictions to follow. Following the appeal for a modest appearance and faithful good works is a call for “silence” and “submission.”

The Greek word translated “silence” (ἡσυχία) seems to denote “quietness” more than the idea of absence of sound, through both renderings are found in lexicons (Thayer 1889:281). However, the injunction does not suggest a surrender of mind or conscience or private judgment; rather, it denotes a gentle and tranquil manner that goes hand in hand with “submission” (ὑποταγε, lit. “appointing,” “ordering,” or “arranging under”). Submission is not an attitude that can be forced, as can obedience, but is rather a willingness on the part of one to acquiesce to the will of another. Biblical submission is

forever a self-imposed discipline.⁹ In fact, the “ministry of silence” has been described as a vehicle for the proclamation of submission on the part of a woman.

It would be wrong to see this demand as an unfriendly gesture on the part of the apostle. . . . It is the silence of awe before the resurrected one, the Lord of the church. That the women should and can carry out this ministry is connected with the symbolism of their position in nature (Neuer 1991:118).

To equate feminine submission with slavery or racial injustice is an emotional red herring at best and blatant distortion at worst. There is no theological or exegetical requirement in the text of Scripture for the continuation of slavery or racial discrimination.¹⁰ However, the opposite is true concerning the submission of women since Scripture declares that women are to be submissive *because of* the order of creation (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-13; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).

Even in the matter of posture for prayer and wearing apparel, a timeless principle is obviously illustrated in a natural way. That natural manifestation could vary from generation to generation, but the principle should be considered an immutable word from God so that it cannot be labeled “selective literalism” (Mickelsen 1984:39). Rather it is an effort to preserve the pure word of God as enduring across cultures and throughout history, appropriating itself in every age.

Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger have written a fascinating interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in which they give most of their

⁹See more extensive discussion of submission in sections 3.3.1 — 3.4, pp. 192-224.

¹⁰See more extensive discussion of slavery in section 3.3.3, pp. 195-198.

attention to ancient Ephesus, including the church there. In their treatise, the Kroegers build a case for suggesting that Paul was addressing heretical and/or permissive Ephesian women who were leading the church astray.¹¹

The Kroegers suggest,

The writer has made it clear that women were somehow involved in the false teaching (1 Tim. 4:7; 5:11-13; 2 Tim. 3:6-7; Titus 1:11), and it is in keeping with the other uses of *didaskhein* to find in this directive a condemnation of their heterodoxy. We believe that the verb here forbids women to teach a wrong doctrine, just as 1 Timothy 1:3-4 and Titus 1:9-14 also forbid false teaching (Kroeger 1992:81).

However, questions remain. Albert Wolters suggests that the Kroegers have shown philological adeptness at “making a Greek text say what they would like it to say,” noting in his review examples of linguistic blunders (Wolters 1993:208-213).

Where do the Kroegers find examples of διδάσκειν used with the meaning “to teach a wrong doctrine”? Why would Paul limit his prohibition against teaching false doctrine only to women? Why did

¹¹The Kroegers are not alone in suggesting that women should not be allowed to teach men by alleging that these Ephesian women either were lacking in proper educational background to teach or were promulgating doctrinal heresy (Kroeger 1992:113, 117, 120-125). This view is also suggested by Sharon Marie Hodgins Gritz in her thesis entitled A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century, though she makes her final conclusions based on the thesis that the situation is confined to wives and husbands, maintaining that in any case, “A wife’s commitment and obligations to her husband should shape her public ministry” (Gritz 1986: 231-233); in Alvera Mickelsen’s anthology, the article “1 Timothy 2:9-15 & the Place of Women in the Church’s Ministry” by David M. Scholer maintains that the passage is limited to a particular situation of false teaching by women in the church in Ephesus (Mickelsen 1986:193-219). Scholer’s treatment is by far the better argument for the historically limited relevance of this passage, but in subsequent pages of the same volume, it is thoroughly answered by Walter L. Liefeld (Mickelsen 1986:219-224) just as the Kroegers receive a lengthy and thorough rebuttal from the volume edited by Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Köstenberger 1995:107-114).

Paul appeal to the created order to validate a directive against heresy? The apostle could at least have plainly reasoned that women were prohibited from teaching because they were lacking in theological education or because they were spreading false doctrine, and it certainly would seem more appropriate to include men in such a general directive. Doctrinal problems could have existed in any setting and especially in the pagan city of Ephesus. Yet in other situations, when heresy (see Gal. 1:6-9) or permissiveness (see 1 Cor. 6:12-20) threatened the church, Paul certainly gave direct warnings.

Raymond Ortlund notes that to put the focus on women *in relation to false teachings* seems to acknowledge only that part of the passage that will favor the desired conclusion. Furthermore, Ortlund comments that the reason for Paul's leaving Timothy in Ephesus is an historical fact (1 Tim. 1:3), but the apostle's reason for writing the letter is an exegetical fact (1 Tim. 3:14-15) and should thus be expected to be more relevant and carry greater importance in explaining what the text is saying (Ortlund 1990:2).

In this passage Paul's statement is just as direct, and it may not have been any more welcome to women then than now: He forbids women to teach or to have authority over men. This role of teaching/authority embodied in spiritual leadership within the church seems thus to be restricted to men. Paul's appeal to the priority of creation is not only clearly stated (1 Tim. 2:12) but also is found in presenting the male-female relationships in the church elsewhere (1 Cor. 11:8-9). In both of these aforementioned texts, the order in which Adam and Eve were created is noted as indicating an important difference in their respective roles (Köstenberger

1995:135-137). Again, there seems to be much virtue in adopting the simplest reading of the text.

Though Paul's crafting of the injunction ("I do not permit") is interpreted by some as if it were the apostle's own command, he follows with sound theological reasoning that gives clear evidence that the words are delivered with divine authority. Hauke notes,

In Corinth Paul was exposed to severe attacks on his person and office. If he had claimed support from a nonexistent command of Jesus, then sooner or later he would have been convicted of untruth (Hauke 1988:389).

To limit the prohibition to the Ephesian church demands the reconstruction of an historical situation as to what might have been by making some general observations about conditions in ancient Ephesus, then speculating that former cult prostitutes were in view here, and finally calling this the historical context in order to restrict the text's application to pedagogically ambitious ex-prostitutes, oblivious to the apparently straightforward teaching.¹²

Kroeger even suggests that this enjoinder from the apostle Paul might "have been a warning to women who sometimes disrobed during worship" based on frescoes in Pompeii showing female worshipers of Dionysius being immodest in their religious revelry (Kroeger 1992:74). Again, one would think that if such radical practices as disrobing during worship were in view, the apostle would speak much more directly to the problem. Mixing cultural and religious practices from various centuries, even millennia, in what sometimes appears to be an indiscriminate manner, calls for more

¹²For a full discussion, see "Did Paul Say Women Could Never Teach Men" (Piper 1984:34-40).

discipline in methodology and wisdom in harmonizing data from careful scholars.

Ortlund points to a similar methodology used by Gordon Fee in which 1 Timothy 5:11-15 is linked to 2:11-15 with the suggestion that Paul's concerns for the young widows in the former passage are based on their doctrinal problems (Fee 1990:33-34). Ortlund notes that Fee must "*assume* the very points that need to be *proved*." The plain sense of identifying the issue in chapter 5 seems to be "the problem of young women who need to be married" so that their energies may be channeled most effectively rather than a problem of young women who are spreading false doctrine from church to church (Ortlund [s a]:2-3).

4.6.3 Paul's Statement on Teaching by Women

Paul is not contending that Christian women are to avoid teaching under all circumstances. The text does not suggest in any way that Paul believes women to be inherently unable to lead. Quite the contrary, the apostle directs women to exercise managerial leadership within their homes, a directive he would not have given if he thought women to be incapable of leadership (see 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:5).

In the New Testament, women taught children (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15; Prov. 1:8) and instructed other women (Tit. 2:3-4). On at least one occasion a woman participated in sharing testimony and understandings of divine truth with a man on a personal level, as did Priscilla with her husband Aquila, with Apollos (Acts 18:26). However, to assert, as does Grenz, that Priscilla represents a "clear indication of authoritative teaching by a woman in the church" and

thus conclude that the New Testament “nowhere directly prohibits the appointment of women to office,” i.e., to serve as pastor/elder (Grenz 1995:83, 90) is an assertion that does not give adequate consideration to the fact that not only is there no textual evidence that Priscilla functioned in an official or permanent or authoritative teaching role in a local congregation, but also there is a clear prohibition for such in 1 Timothy.¹³

Actually the survey of biblical and theological data in Grenz’s volume is characterized by a phenomenological approach that interprets the biblical data through the lens of its significance for the issue of women in ministry. In fact, it appears to be an apology for justifying egalitarianism. For example, consider his ambiguous conclusion: “Scripture offers no evidence that the Israelites ever rejected a woman’s leadership simply on the basis of gender” (Grenz 1995:67). He ignores the fact that all priests in the Old Testament were male. He also fails to consider the significance of the lack of women among Jesus twelve apostles (Köstenberger [s a]).

The most natural grammatical structure in 1 Timothy 2 — whether in English or Greek — indicates two prohibitions for a woman rather than two manifestations of one prohibition: A woman should not teach men, **nor** should she exercise authority over men. Such teaching and authority are believed by many to be a reference to the pastoral office (see 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5: 17; Heb. 13:7, 17). This prohibition then is based on gender — not in the sense of innate giftedness but as concerns assigned function.

¹³See sections 4.6 through 4.6.6, pp. 265-290, for discussion of the prohibition in 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

Another point of note is the use of διδασκειν, which linguistically and theologically seems to indicate a uniquely faithful proclamation of God's Word that involves authority and is beyond a general sense of merely sharing general information. Though διδασδω was used to describe the "teaching" done by Apollos (Acts 18:25), a different word (ἐκτιθημι, lit. "to set forth, explain"), translated "explained," is used to describe the interchange of Priscilla and her husband Aquila with Apollos (Acts 18:26). Can this distinction be summarily dismissed, or would one do well to note the difference in words?

In Titus 2, for example, διδασκειν is used when women are admonished to teach other women. Even if ἐκτιθημι and διδασδω are treated as virtually synonymous, which would be allowed by some interpreters, it is nonetheless true that the text in question records no official ecclesiastical status to the expounding done by Priscilla and Aquila to Apollos. Although one cannot build a system of theological understanding or base a thorough exegesis on the use of different words or on the nuances of meanings found therein, the selection of a specific word and the nuances of its meaning and even the fact that the text indicates both Priscilla and Aquila were expounding the Word to Apollos are factors to be considered. This researcher again would point to the fact that it is no one passage, and certainly not one word, that builds a case for ferreting out a theology of biblical womanhood; rather it is the challenge of fitting all the pieces together and finding many diverse factors that can indeed be harmonized — perhaps not to the satisfaction of all but at least to the acceptance of some.

Priscilla must have been one of the most gifted women in the New Testament record. Paul commends both Priscilla and Aquila as “my helpers in Christ Jesus.” She was doubtless a diligent and discerning student of the Word of God (Acts 18:2-3, 18, 26). Otherwise, she would never have been able to expound the things of the Lord in such a way as to make an impression upon the learned and eloquent Apollos.

The Greek word *αυθεντειν*, a *hapax legomenon*, is more difficult to define in the New Testament context. Piper explains the word:

. . . a right and power given by the Spirit and confirmed by the church to give forceful instruction and exhortation to the church in doctrinal and ethical matters based on God’s Word (Piper 1984:38).

Moulton and Milligan suggest that the word’s usage in 1 Timothy “comes quite naturally out of the word ‘master, autocrat’” (Moulton 1974:91).

Catherine Kroeger has suggested obscure but varied definitions for the term in her writings. In 1979, she asserted that *αυθεντειν* was an erotic term associated with fertility practices, meaning “to thrust oneself” (Kroeger 1979:12-15). This position was convincingly overturned by Carroll Osburn, who labeled the translation as “more curious than substantive” (Osburn 1982:1-12). Some years later Kroeger and her husband published an extensive study on 1 Timothy 2:12, in which they concluded that the word has a wide range of meanings: (1) to begin something, (2) to rule or dominate, (3) to usurp power or rights from another, (4) to claim ownership, sovereignty, or authorship. Within this discussion, they suggest that the word has implications ranging from “killing” to “beginning” and

"copulating" (Kroeger 1992:84-104, 185-188).

The earliest usages of *authentain* and related words mean to be responsible for something, usually murder (Kroeger 1992:85).

One thing that appears to be lacking in the Kroegers' extensive discussion of this *hapax* is the firm linguistic footing one would expect from an extended word study. Yarbrough reminds the researcher,

But the question is what the word as a verb means in this specific literary, historical, cultural, and theological context, not what a related form means as another part of speech or cognate form in other contexts It is surely unlikely, for example, that 1 Timothy 2:12 is forbidding cultic murder ['ritual castration' per Kroeger 1992:94] of men by women, even though *αυθεντειν* does mean murder or suicide in certain contexts (Yarbrough 1992:2).

Baldwin presents a thorough analysis of the word, going beyond theory on the etymology of the word to include how people actually used the language. The usage of the word is relatively rare so that the eighty-two references he examined are sufficient to evaluate its meaning. Baldwin confirms "that the one unifying concept is that of authority" (Köstenberger 1995:72-80).

Schreiner comments on the timeliness and relevance of the apostle's directive in 1 Timothy,

. . . It is probable that all New Testament books were addressed to particular communities facing special circumstances. Universal principles are tucked into books written to respond to specific circumstances (Köstenberger 1995:108).

In any case, Paul does not leave one to conjecture if this is a directive for the first century alone. The theological basis for this order in

worship is again the order of creation, establishing a man's natural and spiritual headship, in which he is admonished to provide, to protect, and to lead (Gen. 2:15-17) the woman God created to be his "helper" (Gen. 2:18). The passages in Genesis 2 and 1 Timothy 2 are so inexorably linked that to suggest that the role relationships between men and women in the church are simply to be fashioned by the culture would seem to dismiss the analogous role relationship between husband and wife in marriage as also cultural (Knight 1975:89).

The theological matrix for these guidelines in worship is the order of creation (Gen. 1, in which the close relationship of the creation with the Creator is made clear in the phrase "in His image," and Gen. 2, in which the close relationship between the male and female is described and prescribed). The order of creation presented in Genesis and later affirmed by the apostle Paul in his epistles is the basis for the establishment of the man's natural and spiritual headship. By any logic, such reasoning would preclude the conclusion that headship/submission in role relationships between men and women is the direct result of the Fall. The reference to the man as being "formed" ($\pi\lambda\alpha\sigma\sigma\omega$) first (1 Tim. 2:13) is also tied to the creation account in that the same Greek word is used in the Septuagint (Gen. 2:7, LXX).

Mollenkott rejects Paul's argument from the order of creation on the basis that it cannot be substantiated. She suggests that because Adam was asleep during Eve's creation, he had nothing to do with that creative activity (Mollenkott 1977:97-98). Evangelicals would agree that God is the creator of both Adam and Eve. However,

just because Adam did not fashion Eve does not mean that he had no part in her creation since, after all, God chose to use Adam's "rib" (lit. "side") in the creation of the woman (Gen. 2:21-22). Although Mollenkott argues, in support of her position, that, according to Genesis 1, the male and female were created "simultaneously and both in the image of God" (Mollenkott 1977:101), actually Genesis 1 speaks of the creation of the male and female in one sentence, and it does clearly indicate that both are in God's image. However, neither the word "simultaneously" nor one of its synonyms is used in the text.

This position precludes the view of those who hold that male/female roles are a direct result of the Fall. Paul then proceeds to show the disastrous effect of Eve's rejection of Adam's headship and reversal of the divine assignments given in the garden (Gen. 3:1-7). The apostle certainly does not absolve Adam of guilt (Rom. 5:12-17; 1 Cor. 15:20-22), but he points to Eve's prior sin (1 Tim. 2:14), which was not only a violation to the divine command given to the man concerning the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:16-17) but also a reversal of the divine order based on the priority of the man in the creative order and the respective assignments given to each at the time of creation (Gen. 3:17).¹⁴

Both complementarians and egalitarians hold that the man and the woman were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27-28), making them equal in their position in Christ (Gal. 3:28) and thus equally responsible before God (1 Pet. 3:7). However, complementarians do

¹⁴See section 2.6.2, pp. 149-150, for further discussion of the divine order as presented in creation.

not define equality of personhood and position in Christ as meaning uniformity in the sense of having the same role and function. They see the differences between the man and the woman as being fleshed out in their respective role assignments in the home and church just as illustrated in the triunity within the godhead.

For example, Scripture is clear that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in being and personhood (John 1:1; 5:23; 10:30; 14:6, 7, 9, 11), and yet the Bible is just as consistent in affirming a difference in office and function, as the Son voluntarily becomes subject and even subordinate to the Father (John 5:19-20; 6:38; 8:28-29, 54; 1 Cor. 15:28; Phil. 2:5-11), and the Holy Spirit is sent by and thus under the direction of the Father with the expressed purpose to glorify the Son (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14). The hierarchy within the godhead does not pertain to worth, i.e., to being more or less God, but rather addresses function within the divine economy. The same is true of role assignments for men and women in the home and in the church.¹⁵

4.6.4 The Scope of Application

These verses express a prohibition for women that cannot be ignored as being merely cultural because divine order in the home was not established to conform to the cultural tradition of a particular people or to a specific era of history but rather to God's timeless principle for marriage. God established the home in the beginning as part of the creative order — before there was a well established culture or recorded history. Neither can this prohibition be restricted only to a wife in relation to her husband since the

¹⁵See also discussion in section 4.3, pp. 246-251, on subordinationism.

greater context gives no confirmation of such narrow limitation but rather some evidence of God's gender design for the man and the woman based upon their respective natures.

The reasons for the prohibition follow in the text: (1) the order of creation — the man was formed first (1 Tim. 2:13); (2) the purpose in creation — the man was assigned the task of providing, protecting (Gen. 2:15), and leading (Gen. 2:16-17), and the woman was created to be a helper fit to assist the man in his vast responsibilities in dominion (Gen. 2:18-24; see also 1 Tim. 2:13); (3) the marring of creation — the woman usurped the man's responsibility in leadership, ignoring the divine directive that had seemingly come to her through her husband and making a decision on her own to eat the fruit, and the man listened to her and followed her leadership by also eating of the fruit (Gen. 3:6), thereby abandoning his headship (Gen. 3:17). With deviation from God's perfect plan and ensuing role reversal, sin entered the world (Gen. 3:1-7; see also 1 Tim. 2:14). Both the man and the woman decided to go their own respective ways rather than God's way. However, Adam was vested with ultimate accountability for their disobedience because he received the prohibition concerning the fruit directly from God Himself (Gen. 2:15-17; see also 1 Tim. 2:14).¹⁶

Note carefully that this prohibition is not addressed to women

¹⁶The apostle Paul tied his directive on church order to the creation account. Thus, it is appropriate for one to examine the passages side by side to see if there are some connecting links that can make each passage more clear. The text makes no mention of the woman's presence at the time God gave to Adam the prohibition concerning the tree in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:17). In 1 Timothy, when Paul later referred to the testing of the woman in that same garden, he noted that she was deceived by the serpent, while mentioning also that Adam was not deceived. See section 2.5.1, pp. 136-138, for further discussion.

in general as a blanket command to eliminate feminine teaching and leadership. Rather it is a qualified prohibition clarifying and paralleling organization within the church and calling for assignments within the church to be in harmony with the divinely appointed relationships in the home. Paul may have been encouraging women to exercise their spiritual gifts without violating the headship of their respective husbands. Accordingly, a woman is neither to teach nor to exercise authority over a man in the church.

The question is often raised concerning how these directives affect the roles of women in civic and community life. In moving away from the setting of the home and church, one goes from what seems fairly clear, and even explicit, as the matter is addressed throughout Scripture from the account of creation to the apostolic discussion of church order, to what must be inferred from and thus determined without an explicit word from Scripture, and what is therefore more ambiguous and inferential (Piper 1991:88-89). However, as J. I. Packer has clearly expressed, "The man-woman relationship is intrinsically nonreversible."¹⁷

Paul's underlying concern throughout the book of 1 Timothy seems to be church order (1 Tim. 3:14-15). The harmony and consistency in syntax with corresponding pairs of terms adds strength to the passage and its context:

¹⁷Piper and Grudem have a lengthy and excellent discussion on the appropriate ways women respond in differing relationships, suggesting that a woman can "affirm and receive and nurture the strength and leadership of men *in some form* in all her relationships to men . . . even though she may find herself in roles that put some men in a subordinate role to her" (Piper 1991:50-52). For this writer, the spirit of clear passages in Scripture often affects decisions on such roles about which Scripture does not speak explicitly.

. . . 'Learning' in verse 11 corresponds to 'teaching' in verse 12, and 'full submission' in verse 11 relates to 'having authority' in verse 12. The writer first expresses his desire for a woman to learn in full submission. Conversely, he then registers his prohibition of the opposite, a woman's teaching or being in authority over a man. He closes by reiterating his desire for a woman to learn in submission (Köstenberger 1995:91).

4.6.5 An Addendum on the Role of Childbearing

In no way is it possible to extricate the impact of a woman's God-designed nature from the assignments and directives she is given in Scripture. References to the creation account affirm this. However, in 1 Timothy 2, the reminder comes from another quarter. One of the most difficult verses in Scripture to explain seems to be one of the most affirming verses for biblical womanhood, i.e., 1 Timothy 2:15. Kroeger says it well,

Women are acceptable to God within their childbearing function and need not change their sexual identity to find salvation. Those who find the task of rearing children to be tedious and frustrating will find within the pastoral Epistles a strong affirmation of the essential validity of their often thankless ministry (1 Tim. 5:9-14; 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:3-5) (Kroeger 1992:177).

The reference to childbearing is also appropriately presented because it represents one of the most vital aspects of the woman's domestic role, i.e., as a mother and nurturer of the next generation. Again, Kroeger says:

Especially we hail those engaged in the tremendously important task of childbearing and childrearing. Above all, it is they who teach the next generation and win the little ones to Christ. Verse 15, for all its difficulties, affirms the significance of mothers in God's scheme. They are the primary evangelists in the Christian church, and from their homes will come the replacements for the leaders of this generation (Kroeger

1992:181).

In this text, childbearing could be a synecdoche representing the appropriate role for women. Such would not suggest that every woman must literally bear children but rather that the bearing of children is the most notable example of the maternity that is an integral part of the feminine nature. The apostle would then be using a generalizing example taken from and representative of the experience of most women. The specific application to this passage would be that a woman should not violate her God-given role as wife and mother in order to pursue teaching or exercising authority over a man. The apostle would simply be affirming the function of giving birth as being a divinely bestowed ongoing different function for women rather than for men. Also childbearing is not limited to a particular culture but is rather permanent and transcultural and thus another indication that the differences in men and women are rooted in the created order (Köstenberger 1995:146-154).

4.6.6 Section Summary

This passage will continue to receive great scrutiny and diverse interpretation. The Kroegers suggest “difficulties inherent in a traditional understanding of 1 Timothy 2:12.” However, one will search in vain to find a scholarly evangelical interpretation that purports to define itself as maintaining that this verse “forbids women to teach or make decisions” (Kroeger 1992:17) — an interpretation that is a far cry from holding that the verse simply “prohibits women from teaching or exercising authority over men in the church” (Köstenberger 1995:10). In fact, evangelicals would agree with the examples used by the Kroegers that “women did indeed

teach men” (Kroeger 1992:17) if that is clarified and specified according to the text: Priscilla, together with her husband Aquila (a unique husband/wife duo), instructing Apollos (Acts 18:26); Lois and Eunice (grandmother and mother with grandson/son), nurturing Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5); and even Phoebe of Cenchrea may be included in this group as long as one notes that the text of Scripture identifies her merely as a “servant” and “helper” (διακονον and προστατις, without mention of the word ἐπισκοπος or “overseer”) in the church (Rom. 16:1-2). The Kroegers’ claim that ἐγεννηθον (lit. “has become” with common root meaning “to become, to be, to happen”) in this verse means “appointed or ordained” is without logic or support.

The Kroegers allude to “other points at which the traditional interpretation creates a theology at variance with the major teachings of Scripture” but do not mention these references; nor do they note the reference in which “believers are enjoined to teach and to learn from one another, without reference to gender” (Kroeger 1992:17). To argue that women in this culture and time should serve in the same roles as men would better and more accurately be done in some way other than attempting to read that “ideal” back into the biblical setting and early church history. Because the biblical directives recorded by the apostle Paul are founded on unchanging historical facts that have specific theological significance (1 Tim. 2:13-14), they are authoritative for all times and cultures (Foh 1979:123-124). Paul expresses a divinely-instituted order that is to be respected in the church.

D. Kjesbo projects the theory that church history moves from charismatic ministry, with full participation of women, to

institutional ministry, with the marginalization of ministry by women (Grenz 1995:36-42). Even if the historical documents would support such a thesis, they are not the standard by which biblical patterns are to be cut and measured. On the other hand, if one's sexuality is relevant at all in the order for home and church, it must be viewed as "part of a sovereign God's divine bestowal and enablement through which to serve Christ, rather than as a hindrance to evade or transcend" (Yarbrough 1992:30).

4.7 An Exhortation — Titus 2:3-5

When Paul wrote to Titus concerning the church in Crete, together with giving instructions on the qualifications and duties of pastors and the general exhortation to godly living, he included a directive to women (Titus 2:3-5). That directive centers around the challenge to build character in order to provide an example of godly lifestyle, the admonition to concentrate one's energies and spiritual gifts upon establishing a godly home through which the love of Christ and His message of redemption can be channeled, and finally, to transmit this challenge and admonition woman-to-woman across the generations. The text notes three purposes for the urgency of this teaching: (1) to guard the sanctity of the home (Titus 2:4-5); (2) to prevent blasphemy of the Word (Titus 2:5); and (3) to give "the young women" (νεαῖς), a reference to age or to those who are new and fresh in the faith, the opportunity for exciting spiritual ministries (Titus 2:12-15).

Though gender may and does determine how truth is presented in everyday life, truth itself is immutable and settled not by circumstances or culture but by what God has revealed in

Scripture. An appeal to culture is a relativizing element based on current standards and customs, but such cannot override what is inferred from the theological foundations of creation itself.

God's Word is honorable regardless of the behavior of women, but seemingly the behavior of Christian women plays an important part in the honor that the world gives to God's Word (Patterson 1995:2025).

4.7.1 The Teachers and Those Taught

Women teaching women may be described as "spiritual mothering," a process by which spiritually mature women, through teaching and lifestyle, share with women who are new and fresh in the faith the importance of carrying into daily life an example of holiness as well as voluntarily submitting themselves to the divine order God has prescribed for the family. Every woman should be concerned, and even alarmed, at any implication that the teaching of men would have higher value or importance than the teaching of women, young people, and children.

4.7.2 The Curriculum

The curriculum of Titus 2 unfolds in six pairs with the first concerning the wife/mother in her relationships in the home (loving husbands, loving children), the second focusing on her own piety (prudent and pure, combining wisdom and holiness), and the third addressing her domain of activity with attitudes and actions toward those around her (busy at home and kind, balancing hard work with a good attitude). Interestingly the list begins and ends with the younger woman's relationship to her husband (Knight 1992:308).

4.7.3 Section Summary

Certainly the passage does not preclude single women, who are to be challenged to lifestyle Christianity, beginning with a Christlike character; who exercise the maternal nature that is a part of godly womanhood in their relationships to others; and who invest in the keeping of their homes just as do women with husbands and children (see also Prov. 31:10-31).

Mary and Martha opened their home to the Lord Himself (John 12:1-11) for rest and fellowship — a quiet place to sleep, nourishing meals to eat, comforting friends with whom to relax. The text of Scripture does not mention a husband or children for either of these women. Lydia, a prominent businesswoman, who must surely have given money and verbal witness to the kingdom cause and who must certainly have been respected and honored in the community for her education, position, and expertise was primarily commended for her hospitality (Acts 16:14-15, 40). Mary, the mother of John Mark, opened her home for a prayer meeting (Acts 12:12). The ministry of Dorcas, described as “full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36), was so valuable that at her untimely death God worked through Peter to restore her life because of the pleading of the people (Acts 9:36-43).

The apostle Paul mentions many women with favor and does not hesitate to employ women in the service of the gospel (Acts 16:14, 40; Rom. 16:1-4; Phil. 4:3). On the one hand, he emphasizes the perfect equality of the man and the woman in Christ. In Galatians 3:28, Paul described the man and woman as one in Christ with spiritual privileges belonging equally to men and women. This

spiritual equality is also affirmed by Peter, who refers to the husband and wife as “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7).¹⁸ On the other hand, Paul also wrote concerning the wife’s submission to her husband (Eph. 5:21-22; Col. 3:18-19). Equality of spiritual privilege does not nullify the principle of subordination, which was established in the home at its inception in Eden and was reiterated as applicable in both home and church structure in the New Testament.

4.8 An Excursus on Galatians 3:28

Paul Jewett chastises the church today for striving “to maintain the status quo of church life in the first century, as though it were normative for all time.” He cites Galatians 3:28 as a clarion call for the liberation of all mankind, both men and women (Jewett 1975:148). Bilezikian identifies the verse as “the hermeneutical benchmark for the interpretation of other New Testament texts on male/female relationships.” He labels the interpretation of complementarians as a “pop theory,” which he says “promises non-discrimination only to people in the process of entering the church through justification by faith” and is thus “grotesque.” He explains that “unbelievers are encouraged to make their commitment on the basis of nondiscriminatory acceptance, only to discover that once they are within the church they are faced with discriminatory distinctives” (Bilezikian 1985:276).

In response to Bilezikian, one must first question the manner in which he distorts the complementarian position and then take issue with his objections to what has been the traditional interpretation of

¹⁸See discussion on Galatians 3:28 in section 4.8, pp. 293-296.

this soteriological passage through the millennia of Christian history. That interpretation, well stated and respected long before there were egalitarian and complementarian labels, identifies this verse as pivotal in describing the nature of salvation, which supersedes and rises above proper social relationships in any setting. Unity and equality in Christ does not in itself imply functional interchangeability within all social groups, including the church. There is no distinction of race, rank, or sex at the foot of the cross; the dividing point is how one relates to Jesus Christ (John 17:11). One must be cautious about imposing contemporary views about the nature of equality upon the Bible, even when it concerns the nature of authority in the home and church.

Paul warns that differences, whether ethnic, social, or sexual, should not be a means of dividing the body of Christ or of calculating one's position in the body. Yet Witherington cautions,

This does not mean that the distinctions are obliterated by some sort of spiritual transformation, but that they no longer have any significance so far as salvation is concerned (Witherington 1990:163).

He also notes that one cannot fairly interpret the verse while ignoring the fact that Paul breaks the parallel structure of the verse, which is clear in the Greek text and is most literally translated “. . . no Jew nor [οὐδε] Greek, no slave nor [οὐδε] free, no male and [καὶ] female” (emphasis mine). This change within the couplets could be an allusion to Genesis 1:27 (“male and female he created them”), since the creation story (especially Gen. 2:18-25) is the heart of Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2. The verse does

indeed affirm that ethnic, social, and sexual distinctions cannot be used to determine whether or not one may enter a relationship with Christ or as a means for remaining secure in Him. Yet . . .

This does not lead to an agenda of obliterating or ignoring such distinctions and their relative advantages. Indeed Paul is willing to argue that there still are advantages to being Jewish (Rom. 9:4ff.), and that it is still important to publicly recognize gender differences (1 Cor. 11:2-16). It is just that these distinctions do not have the significance for one's spiritual status (Witherington 1990:164).

Some attempt to play equality against subordination by pitting the order of creation (Old Testament) against the order of redemption (New Testament).¹⁹ Marcion had such an approach. Hauke responds that "the orders of creation and redemption are not placed alongside one another . . . but are interwoven with each other" (Hauke 1988:350). For example, instruction about marriage and the church are closely linked. The relationship between Christ and the church becomes an emblem for the relationship of husband and wife within the marital bonds. Both, in reciprocity, are anchored in the order of creation and in the order of redemption. To reject the "hierarchical structure of marriage" is to distort and diminish the symbolism for the relationship between Christ and His church. For whatever reasons, God chose the metaphor of the home and relationships within the family to reveal Himself to His creation. The Epistle to the Ephesians describes both relationships — that between Christ and the church and that between husband and wife — as "being inseparably combined," each illuminating the other. If every

¹⁹See additional comments on pp. 303-304.

functional difference having to do with headship and subordination between them were to disappear, marriage would lose its symbolic power in portraying the relationship Christ seeks with His church (Hauke 1988:354-356).

Paul does affirm sexual distinctions within the context of Christian worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16) as a confirmation of the creation order that should rule the community of faith. Because of the creation order, differences exist between the sexes for the benefit and blessing of both men and women as well as for society as a whole.

First and foremost, Galatians 3:28 does affirm that women have equal standing before God and within the body of Christ. The headship of men is a channel for service, not a mechanism of oppression. Christianity went beyond Judaism in its appreciation for women. This new attitude was based on Christ's redemptive work, through which both men and women who trust Him are on equal footing as the children of God. The Holy Spirit effects among the children of God a new unity, but in so doing He "does not level out all differences in favor of a common equality." In fact, Paul describes the Christian community of faith as "a multimed membered body whose every member possesses its own special and inexchangeable function" (1 Cor. 12:13-18), and gifts "are not distributed according to the principle of equality." In other words, the Holy Spirit does not discard differences but encourages their development for the enrichment of the kingdom (Hauke 1988:346).

4.9 An Excursus on 1 Corinthians 7:3-4

Despite the argument of some rabbis to the contrary, marital

intercourse was not presented in the New Testament as merely a means to extend the generations by producing children but also as a special communion between husband and wife. In marriage, a husband and wife are indebted to one another sexually. Fee cautions, however, that this vital part of marriage is not to be viewed primarily as a duty, even though there are times when the aspect of duty needs to surface for the sake of the marriage. He also notes that sexual relations within Christian marriage are “on much higher ground than one finds in most cultures,” an allusion to the companionship that issues from the mutual and selfless love of one for the other. This fact illustrates again the transcendence of the biblical principle, in which sexual intimacy is both “unitive” (1 Cor. 6:16) and mutual (1 Cor. 7:3-4), over cultural patterns in which sex is viewed as the husband’s privilege and the wife’s obligation (Fee 1987:279-280).

Although a text like 1 Corinthians 7:3-4 could be misused by ungodly husbands who would abuse their wives by using this admonition as a license for unreasonable, or even lewd and humiliating, sexual demands, there is no grounds for such an attitude in the text. The wife is given the same authority, which includes the flip side of the issue, i.e., that the wife has authority over the husband’s body as well and could respond that she does not want her husband’s body used to do whatever is offensive to her. In other words, the text is absolutely not to be used as a license for sexual exploitation or indulgence in sin. Its focus is on the debt to be paid and not on personal rights to seize, admonishing husbands and wives to meet the needs of their respective spouses whenever it is in their

power to do so. These verses as elsewhere in discussions of the relationship within marriage are marked by the challenge to mutuality and reciprocity, which is too amazing and unique to have been designed by anyone other than the Creator God Himself (Piper 1991:87-88).

Clearly the wife was not to be treated as merely a sex object but as a beloved and treasured companion with “no devaluation of her personhood, her value in the family, her importance to the husband’s life, both physical and spiritual” (Witherington 1990:161). Gordon Fee expresses it well:

The way to correct an abuse of mutual relations is not to make demands on the offending party only, but to emphasize the mutual responsibility of each (Fee 1987:279).

However, the call to mutual yielding to sexual needs in 1 Corinthians 7 in no sense nullifies the husband’s responsibility for leadership in the marriage, nor does it put aside the wife’s responsibility for submission. Rather the New Testament redefines those roles so that the husband becomes the chief servant, even as did Christ in relationship to His church, and the wife responds with gracious submission, as does the church in relationship to Christ. Submission does not disappear into mutuality; rather both leadership and submission are shaped into biblical patterns by mutuality.

A wife’s fear of her husband is merely her recognition of and respect for his God-assigned role, i.e., his responsibility for leadership in their relationship. In other words, Paul saw how the marriage relationship could be modeled after the relationship between Christ and the church, and this permeated the teachings he presented

concerning ministries for women within the church.

Paul's view on women and their roles in relation to the physical family is consistent throughout his letters. They are intended to liberate women from the non-Christian aspects of their society so that they might be free to live their lives as full members of the Christian community (Witherington 1990:162).

4.10 Chapter Conclusion

The issue of what women can or cannot do in the church is not a question to be answered in isolation. First, one must determine how Scripture is to be considered: Does it say what God means to say? Does it mean what it says? Are its principles binding from generation to generation?

4.10.1 An Overview of Biblical Examples

Examples of women assuming positions of authority over men are almost non-existent in biblical history or the text of Scripture. Grenz surveys the Old Testament for women in leadership, noting Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah as examples of authoritative functions fulfilled by women in Old Testament history. He argues from silence that one "should not assume that the few women specifically named constitute the total number of women acting in such authoritative roles" and claims that "the Old Testament gives every indication that unnamed women and men served in authoritative capacities throughout Israel's history," but he mentions no references to these unnamed women. Drawing from this limited data, Grenz reaches the seemingly undemonstrable conclusion that "Scripture offers no evidence that the Israelites ever rejected a woman's leadership simply on the basis of gender" (Grenz 1995:67).

In the Old Testament, priests, kings, prophets, judges, and

authors of Scripture and in the New Testament apostles, pastors, evangelists, missionaries are overwhelmingly men. In fact, all Old Testament priests are males, but not even all males are eligible to be priests.

Some have suggested that the reference to Junias (Rom. 16:7) is an example of a female apostle. The verse, however, is too ambiguous to be used to establish female apostleship in the technical sense. Clearly the New Testament does not record the selection of a single female apostle by Jesus, and other apostolic figures in the New Testament are clearly male — Paul, James, and Barnabas. In the Greek New Testament, *-as* is not an unusual ending for masculine names (see Matt. 10:2; 11:14; John 1:23; Luke 1:5). In fact, *-as* has been identified as a shortened form for clearly masculine forms (Acts 15:22; see also 1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:12) by Greek grammarians like A. T. Robertson (Piper 1991:80). Based on these observations, one cannot be dogmatic on the gender of this name, since it was not commonly used as a woman's name in ancient Greek literature.

Others argue for Junias as an example of female apostleship on the basis of the pairing of names (Andronicus and Junias) in verse 7. However, a pair of names does not mandate reference to a husband/wife duo, as found in the case of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:3), since two women are also mentioned in this fashion (Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Rom. 16:12). Furthermore, the grammatical structure does not necessarily support the apostleship of Junias (male or female). Was this individual an outstanding apostle or outstanding in the eyes of the apostles? The phrase “of note among the apostles” could simply mean that these two (Andronicus

and Junias) were held in high esteem *by* the apostles (Piper 1991:80).

Another issue to be considered is this: How does apostleship exhibit itself as authoritative in the New Testament (see Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:15-26, in which apostles were bearing witness to Jesus' resurrection). In these examples the word is used in its broadest sense, denoting one who is a messenger (Phil. 2:25; 2 Cor. 8:23). One must determine whether the term "apostle" is used by Paul in this passage in a technical ("official") or non-technical ("messenger") way. In this case, the ministry of Junias (male or female) could have been as an itinerant witness without necessarily an authoritative function (see 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). In light of this evidence, one is reminded that this brief reference in itself is unclear and thus does not definitely establish female apostleship. If this is one's conclusion, whether Junia was a woman or a man is irrelevant.

In any case, no evidence in Scripture has been established to affirm that God acts according to "an egalitarian principle" in His dealings with human beings. Among the nations, He singled out Israel to be His chosen people, and He has been singling out people and nations ever since. His choices underscore the mystery associated with His acts. His choices are not transparently based upon equal merit or any merit at all. If this is true in salvation (Eph. 2:8-9), why not in other areas (Novak 1993:27).

For those who imply that Jesus accommodated His culture by choosing only men as apostles "in order not to shock the people of his time," Novak replies that Jesus "never shrank from shocking the conventional wisdom, priestly classes, customs, traditions, or even

common sense of His time.” Those in contemporary western culture are shocked that Jesus did not choose women as apostles and priests. It would have been just as believable then for Jesus to “shock” His generation by naming women as priests. Yet “the interchangeability of gender in the priestly role and equal representation of the sexes have no standing . . . in Scripture” (Novak 1993:27).

Exceptional assignments to women in the Old Testament would point to women like Miriam, Deborah, Abigail, and Huldah. Miriam led the Israelite women in praise (Ex. 15:20-21), which Grenz identifies as “a women’s chorus” and labels as leadership because of its “public nature” (Grenz 1995:67). Deborah did function as a judge over Israel, meaning that she, in some sense, did exercise authority over women and men of Israel and over Barak, a commander of Israel’s troops. However, the period of the judges was marked overall as a time in Israel’s history when there was anarchy and a lack of respect for anyone’s authority (Judg. 21:25).

It is interesting to note, however, that Deborah seems to be the only judge in the book of Judges who does not exercise a direct military function. Though she does have a part in Israel’s military victory, she, according to the word of the Lord, enlists Barak to lead the forces (Judg. 4:6-7). Even when she speaks to Barak, she does so privately and directly (Judg. 4:6, 14). The song of victory is also sung by Deborah and Barak together (Judg. 5:1). Deborah most certainly was a conduit for the word of the Lord, but she willingly handed over leadership of the military forces to a man.

Deborah seemed to exercise her gift of prophecy differently from the way men who possessed the gift used it. The text of

Scripture reads as if her prophecies were delivered privately and her instruction shared with individuals as they came to her for a word from the Lord (Judg. 4:5). There is no indication in the words themselves that her judgments were in the public forum. She obviously interacts with Barak as God's messenger, but more than this does not seem to be the norm since the incident stands almost in isolation (Judg. 4:5-6, 14).

Though Grenz aggressively rebukes Schreiner for his emphasis on the uniqueness of the situation and for his caution on harmonizing what is actually in the text with the whole of Scripture (Grenz 1995:238), one would do well to consider the time-honored hermeneutical tool of interpreting obscure passages in light of what is generally very clear. For example, though the scope of this study does not permit a careful analysis of all the judges, one can note these facts from the text concerning Deborah's tenure. Deborah, according to the text, "was judging" (Judg. 4:4) in contrast to God's calling her to assume the task (see Judg. 6:8-14 for an example of direct call from God to Gideon). Note carefully the explicit language in which Deborah "sent and called for Barak . . ." and then proceeded to deliver God's message to him; whereupon Barak asked Deborah to go with him (Judg. 4:3). The 10,000 men are under Barak's command, and Deborah merely accompanied him (Judg. 4:10); the enemy reported on Barak, not on Deborah (Judg. 4:12-13); in their song of victory, Deborah is called upon to "awake . . . and sing a song," and Barak is called to "arise . . . and lead . . . captives away" (Judg. 5:12). Deborah refers to herself not as a judge but as "a mother in Israel" (Judg. 4:7).

The fact that an occasional woman is named a judge (see Judg. 4 — 5, Deborah) or ruler (2 Kin. 11:3, Athaliah) may demonstrate that female leadership is possible and that women have leadership qualities without abolishing the historical fact that the placement of women in places of official leadership and authority has not been the norm. In reference to Deborah or anyone out of the ordinary mode who is appointed to govern, John Calvin said,

Extraordinary acts done by God do not overturn the ordinary rules of government by which he intended that we should be bound (Calvin 1979:67).

Abigail, the wife of Nabal, acted humbly and wisely in interceding with David to save the lives of her husband and his household (1 Sam. 25:23-31). Huldah, the wife of Shallum and a prophetess (2 Kin. 22:14), participated in the spiritual renewal initiated by King Josiah of Judah by delivering a message from the Lord (2 King. 22:15-17, 19).

Grenz, in his comments on Galatians 3:28, maintains that a “position in Christ carries us beyond creation . . . by lifting creation to God’s redemptive intent” (Grenz 1995:105). Köstenberger counters that “redemption reaffirms God’s creative purposes rather than supplanting them, as if the Creator’s original design needed improvement or alteration” (Köstenberger 1996:11-12).

The suggestion by Grenz that the redemptive order is somehow in conflict with the order of creation is a leap void of supporting scriptural evidence. According to Scripture, the Law failed — not because it has flaws but because men and women could not implement it as a result of their sinfulness (Gal. 3:24). Creation did

not fail because of something wrong in the creative order. God's redemptive plan does not call for the nullification of anything in God's creative order.²⁰

Grenz also glosses over the fact that Jesus appointed twelve male apostles, considering the lack of women insignificant. In fact, he even hints at accommodation to ethnic heritage as more important than theological reasons: "Our Lord's selection was a symbolic act, understandable only in the context of Israel's history," linking the Jewishness of Old Testament covenant with Christ's new community (Grenz 1995:212). Such an interpretation, of course, flies in the face of the clear statement of the apostle himself that the directives given are based on theological reasons (1 Tim. 2:13). On the other hand, in the New Testament, women are especially charged with instructing other women. "Spiritual mothering" goes far beyond the family circle and is not confined to biological mothers or even to married women.

4.10.2 Reconciling the Words of Scripture with the Initiatives of the Spirit

Service to God within the church can never be a purely private matter. Jesus rebuked the Thyatiran church for letting Jezebel, who "called" herself a prophetess, teach (Rev. 2:20); whereas He commended the Ephesian church for testing those who claimed to be apostles but were liars (Rev. 2:2). Thus, when a woman "feels called" to do a work that on scriptural grounds is not only beyond God's design in creation but also in violation of His written Word, that work, of necessity, must be judged by the church according to the standard of Scripture. Ultimately, neither supreme intelligence,

²⁰See additional discussion on pp. 295-296.

unequaled logic, nor extraordinary gifts will settle this issue. What is relevant today may be irrelevant by the turn of the century. One cannot abandon the principles that have linked and governed God's two most important institutions (the home and the church) at the whim of a cultural revolution. Maleness and femaleness are the very foundation of God's created order, carefully chosen as the divine vehicle for maintaining His order and purpose. The individual, created by God, is not dependent upon her own subjective discernment. This same argument of subjective discernment has also been engaged to justify homosexuality, which is clearly forbidden in Scripture (Rom. 1:20-28).

Within the chapter the four passages under consideration are considered to be part of the Pauline corpus, since the language, style, and theology are consistent with other writings of the apostle and primarily because Paul identifies himself as the author. In his other writings (again labeled by the apostle as his own), he treats wives, as well as husbands, "as responsible human beings who deserve to be addressed, exhorted, and encouraged as full members of the Christian community," stressing the reciprocal nature of their privileges and responsibilities (1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33) and yet noting,

Though their roles or functions may sometimes differ, their commitment to each other 'in the Lord' is to be total. It is significant that Paul stresses that both husband and wife belong to each other bodily and have an obligation to meet each other's sexual needs (Witherington 1990:160-161).

The church seeks not to suppress but rather to ensure full and proper use of ministries in a divinely given framework based upon

natural order of creation and appropriateness of function. One must determine the difference between the authority of Scripture, which in personal interpretation is a private matter between the individual and God, on the one hand, and the authority of position, which is manifested when one moves beyond private interpretation to teach the Word to others. “. . . Women can teach with the authority of the Scriptures [Titus 2:3-5] but not necessarily with the authority of position” (1 Tim. 2:12) (Maxwell 1992:71).

One cannot separate the home and church in the divine order. They are inextricably bound together in principle and metaphor as well as in purpose and practice. One cannot accept the Bible as authoritative, while rejecting its authority concerning the divine order, which is presented as absolutely consistent in the home and the church. One cannot negate truths concerning the structure of home and church, such as the image of the relationship between God and Israel and between Christ and the church, just to satisfy cultural whim or to accommodate higher plateaus of enlightenment because of education and opportunity. The passages grounded in timeless, historical, theological arguments are not illustrations for a particular church or for a limited era but commands for Christians through the ages.

Some of the ministries of women are clearly identified: Dorcas who ministered to the poor (Acts 9:36); Lydia who extended hospitality to Paul himself and those traveling with him as well as to others in the assembly of believers (Acts 16:15); widows who offered hospitality and helped those in trouble (1 Tim. 5:9-10). The text of Scripture affirms that women with varied positions of service,

influence, leadership, and teaching functioned in the early church with modesty and order (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 14:40); yet these women did not teach or exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-15; 1 Cor. 14:33-35). Sharing the saving gospel of Jesus Christ is the responsibility of women and men.

Within the Pauline corpus, the important point is not so much an understanding of the historical context and culture out of which Paul spoke as it is a commitment to uphold the timeless directive of Scripture governing the relationship between the sexes for this generation as well as for the generation in which it was given and all generations to come (Barth IV₁ 1961:172-176).

Jewett properly summarizes the conclusion of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth:

God is a God of order; and peace can be maintained in the church only if this order, with the distinction it implies, is observed . . . distinctions of the relative, indirect, human order (the man is the 'head' of the woman) rest on those of the absolute, direct, divine order (the 'head' of every man is Christ) . . . the connection between the divine work of salvation and the order of human relationships (Jewett 1975:75).

The apostle Paul's appeal in 1 Timothy 2 to call women to a modest appearance and faithful good works is a call for "silence," denoting an attitude of "quietness" rather than an absence of sound, and for "submission." The latter, as has been discussed more extensively elsewhere, does not suggest a surrender of mind, the abandonment of personal conscience, or the dismissal of private judgments. In fact, the attitude described cannot be forced, as can obedience, but is rather the willingness of one to acquiesce to the will of another. Other passages make clear that the silence mandated in 1

Timothy 2 and in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 does not exclude vocal participation on the part of women in worship services. For example, in 1 Corinthians 11 both praying and prophesying are permitted (1 Cor. 11:5). The apostle's mandate directly to women in Titus 2:3-5 prescribes a woman-to-woman teaching and mentoring relationship.

One can embrace and hold in theological synthesis both the equality of men and women apart from gender distinctions and the leadership of men. In fact, the mindset juxtaposing "equality" and "subordination" as opposing views is largely a modern phenomenon. Even if there is justifiable resentment toward the elitism or attitude of superiority vs. inferiority that would often develop from such distinctions in a sinful society, one must beware of economic or social conformity, libertarian rejection of authority, and especially of the rejection of servanthood as a "demeaning" role, as being dangerous side-effects in egalitarianism.

In any case Paul, like the New Testament generally, holds together quite harmoniously an equality of value and diversity in rank and resolves the problems of diversity in a manner entirely different from modern egalitarianism The Apostle finds the key to the problem in Christology . . . (Philippians 2:6) Jesus the Son of God manifested his equality with God the Father precisely in fulfilling a role of subordination to him (Waltke 1992:27).

Catherine Booth maintained that in time the church would allow women to speak in its assemblies. She cited as reasons for this new day: common sense, public opinion, and "the blessed results of female agency."

Then, when the true light shines and God's works take the place of man's traditions, the doctor of divinity who shall teach that Paul commands woman to be silent when God's

Spirit urges her to speak, will be regarded much the same as we should regard an astronomer who should teach that the sun is the earth's satellite (Parkin [s a]:12).

Booth also appealed to the logic that a woman with "the necessary gifts" who felt herself called by the Spirit to preach must not be restrained from doing just that. She names Phoebe, Junia, Philip's four daughters and alludes to "many other women" who "actually did preach and speak in the primitive Churches," but there is no explanation for this broad sweeping statement, nor are the "many others" documented from the text of Scripture (Parkin [s a]:12). Strangely missing in Booth's apology for women preachers is the appeal to truth carefully extracted from Scripture and understandings taken directly from the written Word of God. Her appeal to a few isolated texts is cursory at best and without exegetical comments.

Paul mentions many women with favor (Rom. 16:1-3); he encourages women to service for the sake of the gospel (Acts 16:14, 40; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 5:9, 10; 3:11); he emphasizes perfect equality for male and female in Christ (Gal. 3:28); he recommends marriage and praises Christian wifeness and motherhood (1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Tim. 2:15; 4:3; 5:14).

Women who work within the clear authority of Scripture are not primarily concerned with rights of self-determination. They seek neither ecclesiastical nor personal recognition, nor do they demand a high office. Rather they are concerned with making every effort to serve the Lord, while trusting Him to open opportunities appropriate to their respective gifts, thereby giving them usefulness beyond their own limitations and expectations.

APPENDIX 4 — A

Proscriptive Facts from Scripture Concerning Women
and Ministries Within the Kingdom

1. Paul commended learning for women (1 Tim. 2:11).
2. Spiritually-mature women are exhorted to instruct the younger women, and an explicit outline of what they are to teach is included (Titus 2:3-5).
3. Women share equal responsibility in lifestyle teaching (Deut. 6:7-9).
4. Women are to share the gospel (1 Pet. 3:15).
5. Women may pray and prophesy in the church (1 Cor. 11:5).
6. Women are uniquely prepared to be guardians of the home and nurturers of the children (Prov. 31: 10-31).
7. Women are given boundaries (1 Tim. 2:11-15) within which to exercise all their spiritual gifts. They are given only two restrictions (prohibition of teaching or ruling over men) within two spheres (home and church)

APPENDIX 4 — B

Descriptive Information from Scripture Concerning
Women and Ministries Within the Kingdom

1. Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, instructed Apollos in individual ministry (Acts 18:26).
2. Women like Mark's mother Mary and Lydia of Thyatira opened their homes for meetings of believers and practiced hospitality (Acts 12:12; 16:14-15).
3. God reserves the right to interdict history with the unexpected or extraordinary by His own divine fiat, such as calling Deborah to be a judge of Israel (Judg. 4 — 5).
4. Paul mentions women like the highly capable Phoebe with favor (Rom. 16:1-2) and employs women in the service of the gospel (Phil. 4:3).
5. Women offered themselves in special ministries to Jesus (John 12:1-11).
6. Women are mentioned as prophetesses: Miriam, who led the women of Israel (Ex. 15:20); Huldah, whose only prophecy in Scripture was to a man who consulted her at home (2 Kin. 22:14-20); Noadiah, who was labeled a false prophet (Neh. 6:1-14); Anna, who prophesied in the temple (Luke 2:36-40); and the daughters of Philip, whose prophesying, according to the text, is not placed in the assemblies (Acts 21:9).

APPENDIX 4 — C

HEAD COVERINGS FOR WOMEN (1 Cor. 11)	
Type of Covering	Description
Headband (Heb. <i>shabis</i>)	Probably a head ornament or front-band of gold or silver (Is. 3:18, 20; v. 18, "scarves" in NKJV).
Headdress (Heb. <i>pe'er</i>)	Ornamental head covering worn by wealthy women, probably wound about the head (Is. 3:20; Ezek. 24:17). Also used to describe the garland of the bridegroom or turban worn by men as well as the cap worn by priests (Is. 61:10; Ezek. 24:17, 23; 44:18).
Head covering (Gk. <i>peribolaios</i> , lit. "covering")	First Corinthians probably refers to some kind of hair covering—perhaps even a shawl. The wearing of long, loose hair by an adulteress confirms that such would be considered shameful (Num. 5:18). The importance of the covering seems to be twofold: to show clear distinction between the sexes and to affirm publicly a wife's commitment to her husband's leadership (1 Cor. 11:2-16). This custom may have been especially important to the Corinthians because of the pagan and immoral influence around them.
Veil (Heb. <i>tsaciph</i>) (Heb. <i>redid</i>) (Heb. <i>tsamah</i>) (Heb. <i>mispachoth</i>)	Rebekah put on a veil when she approached Isaac before her marriage, perhaps as a sign of her betrothal. The veil was to be removed at the time of marriage (Gen. 24:65). Tamar used the veil to trick Judah (Gen. 38:14, 19). This veil-like, thin garment was probably for summer (Song 5:7; Is. 3:23). This face veil (lit. "locks") was probably ornamental, perhaps a long train of adornment for women of high social standing (Song 4:1, 3; 6:7; Is. 47:2). This covering (probably a cap fitting close to the head) is associated with the activities of false prophetesses (Ezek. 13:18, 21).
Full veiling does not seem to be part of the Old Testament culture. However, head coverings were important to women in biblical days. They not only offered protection from the elements but also served as symbols of modesty and for a married woman, as a token of her commitment to her husband.	
The theological principle of divine order remains unchanged even though its specific manifestations, such as a woman's covering her head in Corinth, may differ from place to place and culture to culture (see chart, Theological Foundations for Headship). This order was evident in the chronological sequence of creation (1 Cor. 11:8, 9). Furthermore, woman was man's "glory" (v. 7). This concept refers to the act of "manifesting or pointing to the role of another." The woman, who pointed to the man, was to be covered in the presence of God; while man, who pointed to God, was not. The practice was also followed "because of the angels" (v. 10). Paul reasoned that angels, the most submissive of all creatures, would be offended by non-compliance. Furthermore, God had provided a natural analogy that emphasized the appropriateness of the head covering: "Nature" favors women over men in the provision of hair on the head (vv. 13-15). Finally, Paul appealed to the universality of Christian practice (v. 16). The principle of headship was important, and its symbol was to be observed in all the churches.	

This chart was prepared by Dorothy Patterson for The Woman's Study Bible and is used by permission of Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Conclusion

The long-standing definition of an egalitarian has been “one who believes in the equality of all people.” Of course, by that definition almost all theologians affirm human equality. But this definition has been revised, especially as adapted by feminists, to imply that “any difference means inequality.” By their definition, hierarchically structured relationships are by nature unequal. This revisionism of language is another attempt by feminists to rename themselves by redefining the term “equality” (Kassian 1992:206).

John Stott comments that the equality of men and women as created “in the image of God,” as well as their position in Christ, eliminates any possibility of inferiority of either to the other. Yet he also notes that because they are complementary, they cannot be identified one as the other. Equal dignity prohibits the despising of one by the other; complementary interaction of one with the other requires that differences be recognized and distinctives be honored. Thus men and women will be dependent upon one another and by God’s design should be complementary to one another (Stott 1990:263-264).

Stott cautions that headship should be affirmed in such a way as to “harmonize with, and not contradict, equality.”

Submission does not imply inferiority, and . . . distinct sexual identities and roles are not incompatible with equality of worth (Stott 1990:265-266).

He sees no necessity to surrender interpretation and harmonization when challenged by a difficult text. Nor is he saddled by arguing that to have equal redemption as “joint heirs” demands the same

opportunities for service. Complementarians do not reject equality, but they do accept equality and hierarchy as mutually inclusive and harmonious so that the subordination of women within marriage and in the governance of the church does not negate their full equality of personhood and worth. "Equality of *worth* is not identity of *role*" (Stott 1990:262). Worth cries out for equality on the one hand, and to have role assignment or function suggests the orderliness that can be found in a hierarchy of accountability.

Biblical feminists have sought to overcome sexism in the church in the same way secular feminists have tried to abolish the abuses to women in society, i.e., by eliminating any differences. Regarding biblical texts, they seek to reinterpret the Bible through the lens of feminism. Instead of using the Bible as the standard by which to scrutinize all new thinking, they use new thinking to adapt the Bible to the present age (Kassian 1992:241-242)

D. A. Carson has suggested that Christianity is "supra-rational" instead of "post-rational." This same designation is appropriate in explaining headship and submission. Just because justification for subordination and submission on the part of a wife to the headship of her imperfect husband seems incomprehensible to the human mind does not mean it is irrational; rather it is "supra-rational" in the sense that one's faith commitment issues out of God's revelation of Himself and His plan in Scripture through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit (Mohler 1997:71).

Alongside the recorded historical interaction between God and His creation is the providential care He fashions through His active and direct intervention in human affairs. He prepared the

manuscript for living in this world, including the final chapter, which has already been written, and He promises to guide His creation through the intervening chapters, ultimately upholding and working all things according to His will (Rom. 8:28) (Mohler 1997:78).

The Bible clearly affirms equality of being, personhood, and essence for men and women (Gen. 1:27; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7). Dependence or subordination indicates difference of function and not inferiority. The difference in function, responsibility, and assignment is not a happenstance. God told Adam "to tend and keep" the garden, and He gave Adam instructions concerning the one prohibition (Gen. 2:15-18). Assignments were made by God; the divine design gave spiritual efficiency to the new union; creation included distinct natures as well as equal worth. The abandonment of the Creator's plan will lead to tragedy and destruction for the home and family.

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