

Genesis 1-3: Egalitarianism with and without Innocence

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1. Introduction: The Priority of Genesis and the World It Addresses

Genesis 1-3 represents the stories of creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall. Altogether, these chapters contain more doctrinal teaching concerning the nature of humanity and the state of the fallen world than possibly any other single text in the Old or New Testaments. Their position at the beginning of the Torah and at the beginning of Scripture as a whole means that they have a legitimate claim to serve as the starting point for the study of biblical teaching on any matter that they touch.

From the outset it may be affirmed that the record of Genesis 1-3 is a matter of revelation and of God's will to make known that which was important for his people so that they might live their lives in communion with him. The readership of Genesis 1-3, the people for whom it was written, was ancient Israel.

These chapters are first and foremost directed toward the people who emerged in the hill country of Canaan in the latter part of the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 B.C.) and those generations who followed them in building a society that struggled with their covenantal life before God.

2. Genesis 1: Creation in God's Image

In the first chapter of Genesis, vv. 26-28 describe God's creation of the man and the woman. As is clear from the parallel lines of v. 27, both are subsumed under the general rubric, *'ādām*, which describes the name of the species of humanity.

God created the *'ādām* in his image.

In the image of God, he created him.

Male and female, he created them.

In the first three chapters of Genesis, *'ādām* has two different uses. It refers to people in ch. 1, and to "the man" in the Garden in chs. 2 and 3. The first clearly attested usage of *'ādām* denoting the personal name, Adam, occurs in Gen. 4:25.¹ Note that the Classical Hebrew language of the Old Testament has no

¹ Richard S. Hess, "Splitting the Adam: The Usage of *'ādām* in Genesis i-v," *Studies in the Pentateuch*, ed. J. A. Emerton, (Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* XLI, Leiden, Brill, 1991), pp. 1-15.

common term for "people" or "humanity" other than *'ādām*.² This term was part of the Hebrew and West Semitic lexicon before Genesis 1-3 was revealed and written in the form in which it occurs. Therefore, it is inaccurate to suggest that there was a conscious divine decision to use a masculine term to describe the human race. There was no other term available nor did the text of Genesis invent new words. It should also be noted that Hebrew has two genders, masculine and feminine. There is no neuter gender. All words are masculine or feminine. The choice of gender for any noun is not predictable. Further, the evolution of a word from a common noun ("humanity" in ch. 1) to a title ("the man" in chs. 2-3) and finally to a personal name (Adam in Gen. 4:25) is hardly unique to *'ādām*. It is a common linguistic phenomenon shared by many languages.³ The nature of revelation, the usage of the Hebrew language, the vocabulary inventory of Classical Hebrew, the semantic range of *'ādām*, and the common linguistic development of words all argue against any presumption that "God's naming of the race "man" whispers male headship".⁴

In v. 26, "Let us make *'ādām* in our image," may simply be the plural of majesty, used in the Bible to refer to human masters.⁵ Nevertheless, the absence

² A term such as *'am*, "people," denotes a smaller group within the larger class of humanity. This often refers to a group related by kinship or to residents of a particular geographical area.

³ Hess, "Splitting the Adam," pp. 7-10; John Lyons, *Semantics II*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 179-181.

⁴ Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. J. Piper and W. Grudem, (Wheaton, Crossway, 1991), p. 98. This is also why Ortlund's statement referring to God's revelation makes no sense, "He does not even devise a neutral term like "persons."" There is no neuter gender in Hebrew and so no term could satisfy the demand that it be neither masculine or feminine in gender. Of course, the speakers of Classical Hebrew did not assume that every masculine noun in their vocabulary "whispered" of male headship, any more than they assumed that the other half of the vocabulary, the feminine terms, indicated female subordination.

⁵ Judg. 3:25; 13:8; 19:11,12, 26, 27; 1 Sam. 20:38; 25:10; et al.

of a plural reference to God elsewhere in the opening chapters of Genesis suggests that something special is intended in this passage. As God is somehow plural in relationship, so the created *'ādām* are to enjoy the relationships that come from plurality. Although this is potentially true of virtually all creatures, with *'ādām* it becomes especially significant. In this way, the reference here anticipates the story of Genesis 2 and the harmony enjoyed by the man and the woman.

However, it is equally important that, while the text on the one hand affirms that *'ādām* is created by God who holds plurality (and thus relationship?) as a part of his nature, on the other hand it does not explicitly identify this as part of the image of God that all people possess. Therefore, it is not correct to assume that marriage or even social activity is somehow essential to the image of God. The text never equates them with the divine image.

What then is the meaning of the terms used here to describe the image of God? The Hebrew terms for "image" and "likeness" are *šelem* and *d^cmût*. In the ancient Near East kings erected or carved out images in order to represent their power and rulership over far-reaching areas of their empires.⁶ These represented the dominion of the ruler when the sovereign was not present in the region. See also Dan. 3:1.

The emphasis in Genesis is on rulership of creation through stewardship of it. Bird argues that the gender distinction does not belong to the image of God or to dominion but to the theme of fertility that is found throughout the first chapter

⁶ Hans W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, (Trans. M. Kohl, London, SCM, 1974), p. 160.

of Genesis.⁷ Fruitfulness and reproduction is part of the plant and animal world (Gen. 1:12, 22-25) and thus is not distinct to the image of God in 'ādām. The usage of the term, "image of God," is one that appears in the surrounding culture applied only to royalty. In contrast, Genesis 1 emphasizes the role of all humanity as in dominion over creation. Bird suggests that the command to be fruitful and multiply is a polemic against Canaanite fertility rituals:⁸ "...the power of created life to replenish itself is a power given to each species at its creation and therefore not dependent upon subsequent rites or petitions for its effect."

Instead, the only divine statement regarding the creation of 'ādām that can apply to the image of God is the command to have dominion over the earth. Thus 'ādām is different from creation (as possessing the image of God and the role of dominion), though part of creation (as sexually differentiated and capable of reproduction). Cf. Psalm 8.

The dominion is set in the context of the ideal world of ch. 1. It is not altered with the sins of the following chapters (cf. 5:1-3; 9:1-6), but its original context suggests a harmony. As the sun and moon rule over day and night so humanity, through its multiplication rules over the earth by its presence throughout the world.⁹ Thus the verbs *kbš* "to rule" and *rdh* "to dominate" suggest, just as *kābaš* is used in Joshua 18:1, the taking of the land and its stewardship.¹⁰

⁷ Phyllis A. Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them: Gen. 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *Harvard Theological Review*, 74, 1981, p. 134.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 147.

⁹ Bernard W. Anderson, *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. B. W. Anderson (Issues in Religion and Theology 6, London, SPCK, 1984), p. 159; H. P. Santmire, "The Genesis Creation Narratives Revisited, Themes for a Global Age," *Interpretation*, 45, October 1991, pp. 374-375.

¹⁰ Richard J. Clifford, Review of U. Rüterwörden, *Dominium Terrae: Studien zur Genese einer alttestamentlichen Vorstellung*, (Beihefte zur alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 125, Berlin, de Gruyter,

Such stewardship is exemplified by the way in which the man takes care of the Garden of Eden and names the animal in Genesis 2. However, its ramifications go beyond gardening and zoology to include the ongoing activity of God's ordering and creating in the world and in civilization.

Does Gen. 1:26-28 address the question of the relationship between male and female? Clines emphasizes that the reference to male and female in v. 27 says nothing of their equality but reflects the two kinds of human beings, just as all other creatures are made "according to their kind."¹¹ Thus for Clines no equality is suggested by the phrase. However, this seems a forced way to understand the verse. Clines nowhere demonstrates that male and female ever are understood as the "kinds" (Hebrew *mîn*) used of different species in vv. 21 and 24. Nowhere in Genesis is 'ādām so described. Elsewhere, the reference to 'ādām seems rather to be to the species as a whole. However, there is nothing in this first chapter to suggest anything other than an equality of the woman and the man as both created in the image of God.

3. Genesis 2: The Home, Work, and Partner of the Man

A second account of creation begins in Genesis 2:4(b). This does not contradict that of chapter 1 but provides a different emphasis. Whereas Genesis 1

1993), in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, 1994, pp. 701-702.

¹¹ David J. A. Clines, "What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Irredeemably Androcentric Orientations in Genesis 1-3," *What Does Eve Do to Help? and Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, ed. D. Clines, (JSOT Supplement 94, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), pp. 25-48.

describes God as creator of the cosmos and all of life, chapter 2 focuses on the creation of the man along with his home, his work, and his companion.¹² The two accounts of creation, a literary doublet, anticipate the usage of this style in the structure of Genesis 1-11 and of the book as a whole.¹³

The creation of the man in this account occurs in a context of the divine planting of the Garden of Eden. In this chapter, "man" 'āḏām, always occurs with a definite article, i.e., "the man."¹⁴ Even more so than in English, a definite article is never used in Hebrew with a personal name. Therefore, this is not a name and is better understood as a title. To what does the title refer? In Gen. 2:5 the 'āḏām is created from the 'āḏāmâ, "the ground." The wordplay between these two terms is intentional. On the one hand, it affirms the 'āḏām's intimate association with the dust of the earth and thereby humanity's physical and carnal nature. On the other hand, it prepares the reader for the 'āḏām's responsibility in taking care of the Garden of Eden, an earthy task. In fact, the designation, "the 'āḏām" is an appropriate one to describe this responsibility of "the man."¹⁵ In the ancient Near East, a leader of a city or region was often designated so by the title, "the man of X." This occurs in 2 Sam. 10:6 (cf. v. 8) where "the man of Tob" appears in parallel

¹² There have been other attempts to understand these two accounts. The traditional critical approach, in which Genesis 1:1-2:4a represents the P (priestly) source and Genesis 2:4bff. represents the J (Yahwist) source, is exemplified by Carol L. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, (Oxford, Clarendon, 1988); idem., *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, Oxford, (Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹³ Richard S. Hess, "Genesis 1-2 in Its Literary Context," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 41, 1990, pp. 143-153.

¹⁴ Or with the possibility for a definite article in the consonantal Hebrew text.

¹⁵ Hess, "Splitting the Adam." A similar usage is attested for the equivalent of 'man' in Sumerian, lú. See Thorkild Jacobsen, "Notes on the Word lú," *Kinattūtu ša dārāti. Raphael Kutscher Memorial Volume*, ed. A. F. Rainey, (Tel Aviv Occasional Publications No. 1, Tel Aviv, Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, 1993), pp. 69-79.

with the "king of Maacah," among those who brought forces to a battle.¹⁶ The term, "the man," in Genesis 2 does not merely designate the first created person in this account. It also describes the governorship of the man and woman over the Garden of Eden; a responsibility anticipated with the injunction of dominion in Genesis 1 and now realized in the second chapter. The command, "to work it and to take care of it" (Gen. 2:15), refers to the role of the first man as one who cultivates the soil of Eden.¹⁷ Thus the name, *'ādām*, describes the man's role and anticipates the name of the woman, which will also describe a role of hers.

Vv. 16-17 form an interlude that anticipates the events of Genesis 3. God commands the man not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He cannot command the woman in this account because she has not yet been created.¹⁸ Vv. 18-25 serve to further themes already introduced. First, as already noted, naming the creatures continues the theme of reflecting the image of God through ordering creation; just as God had ordered the major areas of the world in the first three days of ch. 1's creation account. Second, this naming identifies the ideal harmony that the world enjoys. God, the man, and the world continue in

¹⁶ "The man of Tob" does appear in the Hebrew, although it is eviscerated from the text by translations such as the NIV, which eschews the word for "man" and connects "Tob" with the army of 12,000 that the man of Tob mustered.

¹⁷Eleanor F. Beach and Frederic L. Pryor, "How Did Adam & Eve Make a Living?" *Bible Review*, 11/2, April 1995, pp. 38-42, argue that this phrase means that the first man was a "servant guardian" and not involved in tilling the garden. However, this requires them to omit the feminine suffixes on the verbs (translated "it") as a later addition. These suffixes refer either to Eden or to the soil (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, [Word Biblical Commentary 1, Waco, Word, 1987], p. 47). The natural sense of the text is that the man's role involved taking care of the Garden in its various aspects, cultivating as well as guarding.

¹⁸ There are those who assert that because God spoke to the man here, rather than the woman, this is proof that the man was given responsibility for leadership. For example, Thomas R. Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, p. 203, who holds this view, must then argue possibilities, that "God likely commissioned Adam to instruct Eve about this command". Not only is this lacking in the text, its absence is a key point in the narrative. See the discussion that follows, below under the Fall Narrative.

perfect relationship. Third, the process of encountering each and every animal that God has created accentuates the loneliness of the man for a "helper" (Hebrew *'ezer*) like himself.¹⁹ It is for this reason that the man and the woman were not created simultaneously in the Genesis 2 account. The point was to demonstrate the need they have for each other, not to justify an implicit hierarchy.²⁰

This term has evoked discussion. Clines attempted to argue that the word must refer to someone who is in a subordinate position.²¹ He dismissed the evidence of the many occurrences in the Bible in which God is the "helper" for Israel or for an individual who appeals to him.²² Clines preferred to focus on the English usage of the word, "helper," and its association with someone helping an individual as placing them in a subordinate position. Of course, this is a reversal of proper exegesis. One does not examine the usage of a word translated into another language (English) to determine what its meaning was in the context of the original language (Hebrew). In fact, the occurrences of the term in Hebrew leave no doubt that "helper" can refer to anyone who provides assistance, whatever their hierarchical relationship to the one whom they aid.²³

¹⁹ This is the purpose of the woman's "help" or "assistance," to overcome loneliness. If it were, as Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," p. 204, suggests, "to help Adam with the task of ruling over creation"; then logic would require that she be created before naming the animals. The goal of overcoming loneliness is stressed in Gen. 2:23-24, but there is no place, subsequent to her creation, where the woman becomes explicitly involved in ruling over creation.

²⁰ Rebecca Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), p. 137.

²¹ Clines, "What Does Eve Do to Help?"

²² See the reaffirmation of this argument in some detail in G. Bilzekian's helpful contribution to this volume, and in the essay by Linda L. Belleville, "Women in Ministry," *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, pp. 142-143. Texts that use this Hebrew root, *'zr*, such as Gen. 49:25 (the only text in Genesis, other than 2:18 and 20, to use this root); Exod. 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29, et passim, demonstrate that God is the frequent "helper" of Israel.

²³ Further, Clines' argument ("What Does Eve Do to Help?" pp. 27-37; also Ian Hart, "Genesis 1:1-2:3 as a Prologue to the Book of Genesis," *Tyndale Bulletin*, 46, 1995, pp. 315-336, especially p. 333), that the patriarchal author's view on how Eve is a "helper" means that she is subordinate and

The solution to the loneliness comes when God builds the woman from the man's side. The "rib" (Hebrew *šēlā'*) actually refers to the side of the man and describes a part of the person that is neither above or below the man.²⁴ The term also describes the sides of the ark and of the Tabernacle (Exod. 25:12, 14 et al.). Thus, this represents a constituent part of the man that is used for the woman. The point is a basic building pattern that can be drawn from the man and used to create a second person like the first.²⁵ The man's exclamation and designation of the woman are, following Ramsey, "a cry of discovery, of recognition."²⁶ The only figure in the narrative who perceives what has happened (other than God who does not do naming after his creative work) is the man. Therefore, it is logical and necessary that the man names the woman. It is not a statement of power or

serving the purely biological purpose of procreation, overlooks the main point of the text. That is overcoming loneliness or aloneness. Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality," pp. 102-104, introduces the categories of ontological equivalence but functional hierarchy into the discussion. These are alien to Genesis 1-3 where hierarchy is explicitly ontological and functional between God, people, and creation. See Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8; and Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, p. 126.

²⁴ While her view that the *'ādām* was originally a sexually undifferentiated creature cannot be accepted due to a lack of explicit evidence (see Hess, "Splitting the Adam," pp. 13-15 and other authors cited there), Phyllis Trible (*God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, [Philadelphia, Fortress, 1978], p. 90) is correct when she writes that woman is "a companion, one who is neither subordinate nor superior; one who alleviates isolation through identity." For other attempts at identifying "the man" of Genesis 2 as a hybrid, see Mary Phil Korshak, "Genesis: A New Look," *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. A. Brenner, (The Feminist Companion to the Bible 2, Sheffield, JSOT, 1993), pp. 39-52, who proposes the translation, "groundling." Azila Talit Reisenberger, "The Creation of Adam as Hermaphrodite - and Its Implications for Feminist Theology," *Judaism*, 42, 1993, pp. 447-452, goes farther and suggests a hermaphrodite. Ellen van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds. Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11*, (Biblical Interpretations Series 6, Leiden, Brill, 1994), pp. 13-31 proposes a similar theory (though for different reasons), but extends it to all references to the *'ādām* in chs. 2-3. This is even more difficult to accept given the clear distinction between the *'ādām* and the woman in Gen. 3:19 and 21, in addition to the lack of any difference in the *'ādām* before and after the woman's creation in Genesis 2.

²⁵ The verb, "made" in the phrase, "made a woman" (NIV), of Gen. 2:22 is *bnh*, "to build."

²⁶ G. W. Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 50, 1988, pp. 24-35, especially p. 35. Ilana Pardes ("Beyond Genesis 3: The Politics of Maternal Naming," *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. A. Brenner, [The Feminist Companion to the Bible 2, Sheffield, JSOT, 1993], pp. 173-193, especially p. 175 n 1) provides statistics that demonstrate 17 cases in the Hebrew Bible where the male names the child and 27 cases where the female names the child.

authority. In fact, what the man did was to recognize the woman as one exactly like himself by choosing two words for "man" and "woman" that are so closely related that the only difference in the sound of their pronunciation was the characteristic feminine ending (Hebrew, *-â*) on the word for woman.²⁷

The newly created person is called woman, Hebrew *'iššâ*, because she was taken from man, Hebrew *'îš*. *'îš* and *'iššâ* are the customary words to differentiate male and female humans. The other word for "man," used up until Gen. 2:23, is *'ādām*. However, the feminine form of *'ādām* would be *'ādāmâ* which means "ground," and has already been played upon in the creation of the *'ādām* from the *'ādāmâ*. So it is not used to designate the female. Rather, there is a corresponding wordplay between man "*'îš*" and woman "*'iššâ*."

The point of v. 24 about the "leaving and cleaving" is not to indicate that ancient Israel was originally matriarchal, nor to justify the institution of marriage (assumed in the Bible), nor to suggest a male/female hierarchy. Rather, it is to

²⁷ It appears that Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," pp. 206-208, attempts to argue that when the man named the animals he exercised authority over them. Therefore, when he named the woman in a similar manner he exercised authority over her. However, the premise is difficult to maintain. First, it is nowhere stated that the man exercised authority over the animals by naming them. Rather, he classified them and thereby continued the work of the first three days of creation in Genesis 1 where God divided the elements of matter. Second, there is no obvious way in which the man exercised any authority over either the animals or the woman. Third, Gen. 2:23, where the man designates the woman, begins with an affirmation of harmonious equality, "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (NIV; see Belleville, "Women in Ministry," p. 143). Fourth, the second part of this verse is a chiasm (concentric structure) of seven words in the Hebrew text, in which the words for "woman" and "man" are positioned at the center suggesting a corresponding and equal relationship to one another. See J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis*, (Second edition, The Biblical Seminar 12, Sheffield, JSOT, 1991), p. 37.

Linguistically, *'îš* (pronounced, "eesh") and *'iššâ* (pronounced, "ishah") probably have two separate and unrelated origins. It is linguistically accidental that they come to appear similar in Hebrew. However, that is not relevant because the Bible does not argue a linguistic association. The similar sound of the words provides a wordplay designed to relate them, just as the narrative explicitly connects the two.

observe that in marriage the reunion of what God divided in the creation of woman is achieved, that is, by using the flesh of the man to create the woman, God created a division that is restored when the two become one flesh again. Thus the woman "was taken from" the man's body when God created her; and the man reunites the two when he joins to her in marriage. This unity may certainly involve more than physical, for Hebrew concepts of person does not recognize a distinction between the physical and the spiritual before sin and death, but it implies nothing at all about a hierarchical status between the man and the woman.

In Gen. 2:25, themes of nakedness and lack of shame are introduced. They prepare the reader for what is to come. The unity of ch. 2 would face corruption in ch. 3.

4. Genesis 3:1-13: The Fall Narrative²⁸

The snake, who initiates the dialogue, approaches the woman. Why not the man? Is this evidence of the snake's subversion of God's intended hierarchy in which the snake should have given deference to the man before addressing the woman?²⁹ Several points should be made. First, if name giving is not intended to symbolize some sort of domination, but a kind of discernment and wisdom in determining the nature of a creature, then the man's role as caretaker of the

²⁸See Richard S. Hess, "The Roles of the Woman and the Man in Genesis 3," *Themelios*, 18, April 1993, pp. 15-19.

²⁹Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality," pp. 107-108; Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," p. 209.

garden in Genesis 2:19-20 would have included the naming of the snake.³⁰ This would have implied the wisdom to see in the snake the characteristic of shrewdness. How this information was obtained we are not told, but there is no indication that the woman was party to it nor that she was informed by the man. Thus, when she first encounters the snake it is not in the situation of Genesis 2, where God presents the animals (was it in the manner of presentation that the man was given the discernment to know what to name the animals?), but it is on the snake's own ground, as it were. Therefore, she is susceptible to the snake's persuasive powers. Second, the reader never learns how the woman received the information that she cites in Genesis 3. It is a distortion of what God said in Gen. 2:16-17, but it is not clear whether the distortion is hers or whether it comes from the way in which the man told her what God had said. This is intentional, designed to allow both the the woman and the man, "who was with her" (Gen. 3:6) to share in the guilt. If the serpent and the man dialogued and sin followed, there would never be certainty as to the guilt of the woman. However, the text wishes to make clear that both the woman and the man participated in the guilt and both shared in the results.³¹ Third, the text does not anywhere suggest that the reason the snake approached the woman was to subvert the man's putative authority over her. There is no such authority given. There is no mention of it by any of the characters. There is no basis for deriving this complex

³⁰ Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?"

³¹ This means that both are guilty, for in either case both knew that eating the fruit was forbidden. On gaps or omissions, see, e.g., David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible*, (The Oxford Bible Series, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 14-17, 20-21, 27, 91, 185, 203-204.

interpretation and motivation from the existing text. The challenge of the snake is not directed against the man's authority. It is against God's authority.

Following the dialogue between the woman and the serpent, the narrative resumes in a series of actions (vv. 6-8). The passive attitude of the man in contrast to the woman is evident in the initial verbs and in their subjects. The fact that he is "with her" suggests the harmonious relationship that these partners shared and for which both were created; and it implies that the man knew what had happened in the preceding verses and thus fully shared in the guilt. In order for this to suggest that the man's headship over the woman was here subverted, it is necessary to ask whence came that headship. It is not in the text, nor is it necessary to the narrative.³² The expression, "who was with her," serves a completely different purpose.

The ironies of the couple listening to the snake rather than to God and of the trees designed as a context for God to meet the couple, now used as a means of separating the two parties, enhance the effect that this rebellion creates.³³ This sin begins the alienation and breakdown of the harmony that God had so effectively created in Genesis 2. There is no longer an ideal relationship of trust and love. Everything takes a downward slide to suspicion and isolation.

The argument, that God approached the man and addressed him first because he was the head of the two, has little merit.³⁴ It is derived from a predisposition to see hierarchy in the text rather than from a study of the text

³² Contra Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality," pp. 107-108.

³³ The reader does not know how the woman presented the fruit to the man. A traditional view that she enticed the man to sin is not clear from the text.

³⁴ Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality," pp. 107-108; Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," p. 209.

itself. In fact, God questions the man first and separately for three reasons. First, the man first received the injunction not to eat. Second, the interrogation of vv. 9-13 reverses the sequence in which the characters are introduced in vv. 1-8. Such concentric or chiasmic constructions are prominent in Hebrew narrative and especially in Genesis.³⁵ The chiasm is completed in vv. 9-13 with the reverse appearance in sequence of the man, woman, and snake. In the center of this chiasm is the figure of God upon whom the narrative and subsequent interrogation hinge. Third, God must question the man and the woman separately in order for them to demonstrate the degree to which their sin has caused a loss of harmony in their partnership. In Hebrew, the first word of both responses of the man and of the woman is the person or animal they want to blame (the woman! the snake!). Thus the breakdown of the creation order that sin brought was not an abdication of divinely instituted hierarchy, but the loss of loving harmony between the man and the woman.

5. Genesis 3:14-19: Judgements, not Curses

The relevant text for the question of the relationship of the man and the woman is Gen. 3:16. It describes the judgment that God gives to the woman. The traditional understanding of this text suggests it describes the origin of pain in childbirth and of an inferior status for women in relation to men or at least to their husbands. However, an alternative interpretation has been advanced. Meyers

³⁵ See Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*.

argues that the "toil" (Hebrew *ʿiṣṣābôn*) in this verse is not the labor of childbirth but rather the effort involved in assisting the cultivation of the land.³⁶ The rationale for this interpretation lies in the judgments for the man. In Gen. 3:17, the same Hebrew word appears to describe the "painful toil" (NIV) that will be required to extract nourishment from the cursed earth. The word for "toil" is not used elsewhere for childbirth. Thus, Meyers' translation of the first line of v. 16 makes sense of the syntax and of the word for "toil" that nowhere else is used as "pain", i.e., "I will greatly multiply your efforts and your childbearing". The second half of the first line would carry the same meaning, "With [in the sense of "in addition to"] work you will bear children."³⁷ Thus the woman is required both to work in the field and to bear children.

The verb, "to rule over" (Hebrew root *mšl*), preserves a meaning that is clear and should not be altered. The idea of mastery is addressed by Foh.³⁸ Comparing the usage of the Hebrew words, "desire" (Hebrew *ʾšûqâ*) and "to rule," that occur together only in Gen. 3:16 and 4:7, she suggests that woman's desire in this verse is not a sexual desire but a desire to dominate, just as sin has a "desire" to "rule over"

Cain in Gen. 4:7.³⁹ Applying the basic hermeneutical principle of translating an

³⁶ Carol L. Meyers, "Gender Roles and Genesis 3: 16 Revisited," *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, eds. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 337-354. See also idem, *Discovering Eve*; idem, *Rediscovering Eve*.

³⁷ Alternatively, this latter phrase could be legitimately translated as, "You will bear children with pain." This word for "pain" or "toil" is slightly different and open to either meaning in a way that the previous Hebrew word is not.

³⁸ Susan Foh, "What is Woman's Desire," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 37, 1975, pp. 376-383.

³⁹ The word, "desire", occurs at two other places in the Bible, Gen. 4:7 and Song 7:10. In the latter passage it refers to the male lover's desire for his female beloved. Only in Gen. 3:16 and 4:7 do the verbs for "desire" and "rule over" appear in close proximity in the text. Adrian Janis Bledstein, "Are Women Cursed in Genesis 3.16?" *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. A. Brenner, (The Feminist Companion to the Bible 2, Sheffield, JSOT, 1993), pp. 142-145, attempts to identify the word "desire" with Akkadian *kuzbu* "sexual allurements", used of goddesses. However, there

expression in one context by the same expression in a nearby and related context, the text then depicts a struggle of the wills between men and women.⁴⁰ The question that Foh goes on to address is whether the final statement of this verse is a statement of fact ("you will want to dominate your husband but your husband *will* rule over you"), or one implying a determined order on God's part ("you will want to dominate your husband but your husband *should* rule over you").

However, the parallel with Gen. 4:7 and Cain receiving advice to "rule over" sin is not decisive for solving this question (contrary to Foh) because of the nature of the judgments of Genesis 3. The former interpretation would understand this verse as a description of the new order of things. It is to be preferred in keeping with the view that these statements of God are judgments of the world as the result of the fall. Here, as in the other judgments, the pronouncement describes how life will be lived in Israel rather than how life should be lived. It is no more a command for one sex to rule over another than are vv. 17-19 commands for all Israelite men to be farmers or a prohibition against the use of weed killer. They are not God's decisions as to how things must be so that violation of them would be sin.

Thus, the additional burden of childbearing would be placed upon women and there would be a struggle between the wills of the husband and wife. The

is no reason to connect these words as cognates nor is it easy to understand how sin in Gen. 4:7 can be sexually alluring to Cain, or make any attempt at intimacy.

⁴⁰Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, associates the reference of the man ruling over the woman with the agricultural work. This means an additional task for the woman which suggests that the man would "predominate" over her in the labor in the field; that is he would be able to do more agricultural work while she was bearing children, and be able to insist on sexual relations because of social and economic necessities for continuation of the tribe. She identifies this text with Late Bronze/Early Iron Age Israel and their initial settlement in the hill country. While her interpretation is possible, the evidence of the parallel text of Gen. 4:7 and the context of Genesis 1-3 in God's creation of harmony and the subsequent loss of that harmony all point toward a different understanding of the conflict of the wills.

predominance of the man over the woman may refer to the greater physical strength that the husband would would often possess in relation to his wife, and the sad situation of the exertion of physical force to establish the husband's will against that of his wife's desires. This is also the reason why it is only now that Adam can name his wife, Eve, according to her childbearing function (v. 20).⁴¹

The result of these judgments is the loss of harmony in relationships. The earth does not function in conjunction with the humans. Thus, the woman and the man must work against the tendency of the land to produce thorns and thistles. The woman and man, as well, now possess a natural inclination to fight one another, to seek to exercise their own wills against the wills of their companions. That these too easily degenerates into violence anticipates Genesis 4 and the resultant fratricide there.

6. Genesis 3:20-24: The Punishment of Expulsion

Eve's name (Hebrew *ḥawwâ*) can be associated with the Hebrew word, *ḥāy*, understood as "living", "alive" and as deriving from the root meaning, "to live,"

⁴¹ An alternative is suggested by Adrian Janis Bledstein, "Was Eve Cursed? (or Did a Woman Write Genesis?)," *Bible Review*, 9/1, February 1993, pp. 42-45, who observes that the phrase could also be translated, "you are attractive to your man, yet he can rule over you." With such an understanding, "the verse is concerned with men's arrogant abuse of power with regard to exploiting another person sexually." This is possible but not probable as the parallel use of this expression in Gen. 4:7 is best understood as "its (i.e., sin's) desire is for you" rather than "it is attractive to you." This is because it follows the same subject as the preceding phrase. Although it understands the cause of the struggle between man and woman differently, the reality of a potential struggle remains.

(Hebrew *ḥyh*).⁴² In the case of Eve it denotes the role of giving and nurturing life.⁴³ This parallels the explanation that follows it in Gen. 3:20 and provides a basis for the conclusion that the name Eve contains the Hebrew root, *ḥyh* "to live." Insofar as Gen. 3:16 involves the first assignment of the responsibility of childbirth to the woman, the giving of the name in 3:20 reflects an awareness of this role for the woman.⁴⁴ As with the *'ādām* (and it becomes the personal name, Adam, in 4:20), this name may function as a title. It occurs only after the judgments and describes the one aspect of woman's fate that differs from that of man, the bearing of children. This is why the name is given at this point.⁴⁵ It follows the first time the couple are informed of the role of the woman. The only other occurrence of the name, Eve, is found in Gen. 4:1 in a context that describes the conception and birth of her first son, Cain. This is followed by the conception and birth of a second son, Abel, in v. 2. The verbs in this verse also refer back to the Eve of v. 1. Thus, the distinctive role assigned the woman in Gen. 3:16 is shown in her name and in the use of that name when she first exercises that role in the Genesis narrative.

⁴² Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11*, (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 234, Kevelaer, Butzon & Bercker, Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener, 1993; reprinted, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), pp. 19-24; idem, "The Roles of the Woman and the Man in Genesis 3;" Scott C. Layton, "Remarks on the Canaanite Origin of Eve," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 59, 1997, pp. 22-32.

⁴³The actual form as vocalized in Hebrew may reflect a factitive expression of the root, i.e. "make alive." The form as it appears in the name is best understood as a nominal form, possessing a Hebrew noun formation often used to designate occupation or profession. One of the best known examples of this type of noun formation (*mishqal*) is *gannāb*, "thief."

⁴⁴ Meyers, "Gender Roles and Genesis 3: 16 Revisited," pp. 344-349.

⁴⁵Lyn M. Bechtel, "Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2.4b-3.24," *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. A. Brenner, (The Feminist Companion to the Bible 2, Sheffield, JSOT, 1993), pp. 77-117, especially p. 110, suggests that this name giving is evidence of Eve's maturity (before the man's, whose name is not given until ch. 4). This seems correct in terms of her acceptance of life's responsibilities. See also idem, "Genesis 2.4b-3.24: A Myth about Human Maturation," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 67, 1995, pp. 3-26.

The expulsion from the Garden of Eden in vv. 21-23 can best be seen in light of the sanctuary imagery already proposed by Wenham. Thus, the tunics of skin are God's means of providing for the sin of the couple by an animal sacrifice, perhaps anticipating the sacrifice of the Tabernacle and Temple. It literally covers them, thereby hiding their shame. The use of animal skins introduces physical death for the first time and implicitly suggests the erection of a barrier between God and his people,⁴⁶ and perhaps also between people and nature and even between the persons themselves.

The consequences of the expulsion from the garden meant the cessation of the man's distinctive role as the caretaker of the garden; no longer would he cultivate it. Cast out from the presence of God and the opportunity to worship God at all times, man and woman would now need to fill their time with labor necessary to meet life's basic needs and to raise a family. The worship of God, while still possible, would take on new meaning requiring a separate and additional time of rest before God.

How does this fulfill God's promise of death to those who eat the fruit?⁴⁷ The "death" is a metaphor for "personal decay," as can be found with a similar usage of "death" in the warnings of Deut. 30:15,19. Thus the consequence, the

⁴⁶ Robert J. Ratner, "Garments of Skin (Genesis 3:21)," *Dor le Dor*, 18, 1989-1990, pp. 74-80.

⁴⁷ Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality," p. 110, write, "God told Adam alone that he would die. But Eve died, too. Why then did God pronounce the death sentence on Adam alone? Because, as the head goes, so goes the member." Of course, the man was alone when the death sentence was pronounced. However, the use of the second person common singular, "you," in Hebrew regularly appears with a collective sense. In this case, it was intended from the beginning to denote the entire human race. As noted, the term, "shall surely die," is a legal term that regularly appears in the singular in laws that are intended as universal, e.g., Exod. 21:12, 15, 16, 17, 18; et al. The woman was therefore correct to understand the punishment as applicable to her in Gen. 3:3.

"death" for the man and the woman, is primarily seen in the separation and alienation of the man and woman from the garden, from each other (blaming one another and the coats of animal skin), and now also from God (expulsion from the garden).⁴⁸ This is the real punishment for the sin of eating the fruit. It is not the creation of a hierarchy described between the man and the woman. It is much worse. It is the collapse of the ordered and harmonious world of the Garden of Eden, the loss of worship with God, the demands of a struggle for existence in the world, and the emergence of disharmony and conflict between the man and the woman.

7. Conclusion and the Order of Appearance

Many arguments regarding the relationship between the woman and the man of Genesis 1-3 have already been addressed, e.g., the man's naming of the woman, the creation of woman from the "side" of the man, and the so-called "curse" of 3:16. No hierarchical relationship is taught or assumed in Genesis at these points, or any others. One significant matter remains: the creation of the man in Genesis 2 before the woman.⁴⁹ Among Christian complementarians and others, 1 Tim. 2:11-15 is often cited to support the argument that the sequences in

⁴⁸ Alan J. Hauser, "Genesis 2-3: The Theme of Intimacy and Alienation," *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, eds. D. J. A. Clines, D. M. Gunn, and A. J. Hauser, (JSOT Supplement 19, Sheffield, JSOT, 1982), pp. 20-36. The view that the expression can mean, "you deserve to die", rather than, "you will die" (so Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*), is not supported by similar examples such as Jer. 26:8 and 1 Sam. 14:44. In these cases, the statement is made by individuals whose threat is stronger than their ability to carry it through. Further, it is not clear that the Bible makes a decision between deserving to die and dying, in terms of punishment.

⁴⁹ Schreiner, "Women in Ministry," pp. 201-203.

creation and in the temptation involves a teaching that man has authority over woman.

This is supported by appeals to so-called conventions of ancient Near Eastern culture, especially the rights of the first born son, i.e., primogeniture.⁵⁰ This itself is problematic for several reasons: (1) No rights of the first born as found in Scripture, provide a logical connection to creation order as establishing authority. That is to say, nowhere is the first born given authority over his siblings. Therefore, the parallel is fallacious. (2) Primogeniture is heavily qualified in the Old Testament. First, the norm among the patriarchs is not primogeniture but God's blessing the second or third born. Thus, younger Isaac is preferred over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over all his older brothers, and Ephraim over Manasseh. Second, the rights of the first born in Israel are initially rendered void by the command that they, like the first born of animals and the firstfruits, must be dedicated to the Lord (Exod. 13:2). Whatever was specifically envisioned at this point, it meant the loss of inheritance. This is clear when Num. 3:40-41 qualifies the earlier command by allowing the Levites to replace the first born of Israel. The dedication of the Levites meant they received no inheritance of land (Num. 18:23-24; 26:62; Deut. 18:2; Josh. 13:14, 33). Thus, the prior ideal that God set (of dedicating the first born to himself) overturned any cultural conventions of primogeniture. Third, no Israelite law gives the first born any special privileges.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Only Deut. 21:15-17 mentions this principle and it is in the context of the firstborn son of an unloved wife. There the basis for the right of the first born is found in the statement, "because he is the first sign of his father's strength." This, rather than some presumed convention, is the only biblical rationale given for first born. What, one may ask, does God's creation of the man before the woman in Genesis 2 have to do with being "the first sign of his father's strength"? Is this God's strength? If so, one may legitimately ask about the prior creation of the rest of the world in Genesis 1, before the creation of man and woman. Does this not demonstrate God's power and therefore render void the reasoning? The rest of creation is the first sign of God's strength, not the man or woman. Further, "the first sign of his father's strength" establishes rights of inheritance in a family context. This has nothing to do with God's creation order. God does not beget the man or woman, nor is the question of authority in human society part of any "inheritance" that God gives to the man. God does not give his inheritance because he does not die. He does give the man responsibilities in Genesis 2 but they do not include any statement about the man's relation to the woman.

Having argued that primogeniture is an illegitimate model on which to ground man's supposed authority over woman in the context of the creation order, it is necessary to consider whether there is any basis in the Old Testament text itself for the assumption that creation order establishes authority. There are no parallel texts elsewhere in the Old Testament that might enlighten this issue, so it

is necessary to examine two other sources: the text of Genesis 1-3 and possible ancient Near Eastern parallels outside the Bible.

It has been noted that Genesis 1:1-2:4a may be viewed as a creation story distinct from Genesis 2:4bff. If so, then these accounts do not agree in terms of the sequence of creation. In Genesis 1, light is the first item created and man and woman are the last. In Genesis 2, the man is mentioned first. This is not a contradiction because the two accounts reflect the different emphases of the two chapters. The Genesis 1 creation story teaches that God is the creator of the universe, the world, and everything. No other deity has created it. Genesis 2, on the other hand, explains humanity's special relationship with God. It does this by focusing on the example of the first created male and exploring the harmonious relationships that he enjoys with his God, his work, his world, and his spouse. In Genesis 2 the man is given responsibility over the garden (except for one tree; further this responsibility is given to all men and women already in Gen. 1:26-28); he is not given authority over the woman. If he were, the narrative and commands of Gen. 1:26-28 and 2:15-16 would apply to the woman in the same way that this applies to the garden.

Genesis 2 nowhere suggests a hierarchical relationship between the man and the woman in the order that it portrays. Genesis 1 explicitly declares that the man and the woman have the same nature and the same responsibilities.

Some may assume that the sequence, man and woman, reflects the patriarchal nature of the society.

It is worthwhile to compare ancient Near Eastern cultural forms that parallel the biblical stories of the creation of humanity. A relevant creation story is that of Atrahasis. The earliest (almost) complete text dates c. 1630 B.C., from the same culture and about the same time as the production of the laws of Hammurabi. Its 1245 lines of writing on three tablets provide a closer parallel to the sequence in Genesis 2-11 of the creation of humanity in a paradise, subsequent rebellion, and a flood.⁵¹ Throughout much of the text humanity is simply designated in general without distinctions of gender. However, this is not the case at the point of the creation of humanity and the discussion of marriage. There the woman is described before the man.⁵² Further, whenever there is mention of the two genders in this context, the woman is mentioned first.⁵³ No one would deny that all the legal texts, contracts, and other sources for understanding the society of ancient Mesopotamia witness to a patriarchal and hierarchical society that exceeded ancient Israel in its value of the husband and its subservience of his wife.⁵⁴ Yet here the woman is mentioned first, in both the description of their marriage relationship before creation and in the epithet, "wife and her husband." Therefore the sequence, husband followed by wife or wife followed by husband, has no significance for implications of the society's view of or assumptions regarding hierarchy. Where it can be measured in the comparative literature just

⁵¹ With many parallels with Genesis 6-9; see Millard, "A New Babylonian Genesis Story."

⁵² Bernard F. Batto, "The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in *Atrahasis*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 62, 2000, p. 627; his lines 271-276 of tablet 1.

⁵³ E.g., *li-ih-ti-[ru aš-ša]-tum ù mu-sá* "let a wife and her husband choose one another," in line 300 of tablet 1; cf. also line 301; following Batto, "The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2."

⁵⁴ Sophie Lafont, *Femmes, droit et justice dans l'antiquité orientale: Contributions à l'étude du droit pénal au Proche-Orient ancien*, (Orbis biblicus et orientalis 165, Fribourg, Editions universitaires, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

cited, the Genesis 2 sequence of man followed by woman is reversed, but this indicates nothing about the society's view of male authority in marriage.

In conclusion, the view that the man's creation before the woman implies his authority over her cannot be sustained by either the study of the text of Genesis 2, the context of Genesis 1-3, the comparative literature of the ancient Near East, or the invocation of putative customs of primogeniture in ancient Israel. What then should the Christian make of 1 Timothy 2:11-15? However this text is to be understood, a high view of its inspiration must affirm that the writer did not intend to appeal to the sequence of creation in order to argue the authority of the male over the female. This would have introduced a false exegesis of Genesis 1-3. Whether this text is the quotation of a heretical teaching, a reference to some other source, or to be interpreted in another manner; the apostle used it for specific purposes other than those assumed by hierarchical interpretations.

For further study on this matter, see Richard S. Hess, "Some Reflections on Genesis 1-3 and a Critique of an Egalitarian Interpretation," accompanying this essay on oldtestamentquestions.com