

The following paper is presented as part of the Church of God Doctrine and Polity series and addresses Women in Church Leadership. For the purpose of comparison, the author has attempted to address the topic from a theological perspective with scripture references pertinent to both sides of the issue. Neither paper (part 2 to be published later), from either perspective, is intended to be regarded as a position paper by the International Executive Committee or the denomination.

The Doctrine & Polity Committee of the Church of God

Headship and Women in Leadership: Part II A Study on the Created Order of Male-Female Relationships by Terry L. Cross, PhD

Introduction

In Part II of this study on “Headship and Women in Leadership,” we turn to foundational issues related to the creation of man and woman and what these mean for our lives together today. Although the word “headship” does not appear in the Bible, the concept of “head” is certainly there.¹ Whether or not “head” has the connotations that we associate with that English word in modern society is an important part of this discussion. However, even deeper than the inquiry into the *linguistic* meaning of “head” in Scriptures is the *theological* understanding of what God intended by creating human beings as male and female. As we shall see, how one approaches this latter issue of theology will shape how one views the entire question of women in the role of leadership in the church.

Essentially, there are two views that have been offered in the past fifty years or so of scholarly activity on this topic.² We shall consider them below as “Side A” and “Side B.” For the purpose of providing a clear and concise sketch of the views and rationales behind them, we will offer four theses or principles raised by scholars’ writings on Side A and then immediately after each thesis we will provide the counter argument from scholars’ writings on Side B. This study will conclude with some summary thoughts that relate our present inquiry to the question of women in church leadership today.

¹See Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 285. He notes that the word “headship” never occurs in the New Testament. It also does not occur in the Old Testament. For a discussion of the meaning of “head” in the NT, see “Headship and Women in Leadership: Part I” in this series of studies.

²While not everyone neatly falls into this either/or camp, the strokes of each side are broad enough to allow for a number of individual opinions to arise. However, for the most part the sides sketched below will fit most views into one or the other camp. While Side A will clearly follow what many call the “complementarian” view concerning male/female relationships, Side B will follow what has been called the “egalitarian” view. However, we will avoid naming them such in the text itself, primarily because each side is more than these labels. For a good discussion on how each of these terms reflects some “emotionally charged” language as well as some inaccuracy of the nuances of each group, see Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian or Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 170-72.

GENESIS AND THE CREATED ORDER OF THINGS

Side A

1. **Thesis One: From Genesis 1 and 2, we learn that God has given the “man” primary responsibility for the spiritual and moral direction of the home. (However, male headship does not equal male domination).**³

This thesis is the foundation for everything else that Side A will state in this study. Taking their cue from Genesis 1-2, scholars on Side A assert that male headship *was not* a result of the Fall (Gen. 3), but was established in Genesis 1 and 2 by the fact that God made the man *first* and the woman *second*. In Genesis 1 we find that *both* male and female are made in the image of God *and* both are intended to rule over the earth.⁴ However, in Genesis 2:18-25 we find another dimension of complexity layered over the male-female relationship, namely, the fact that God “made the male the head and the female the helper.”⁵ It is this Hebrew phrase “helper suitable for him” [*kenegedô* ‘ēzer | עֵזֶר וְעֹשֶׂת] that demonstrates the intention of God to establish male headship over the woman *before the fall*. To be a “helper” clearly indicates a *supportive role* for the woman. The man was not created to “help” the woman, but the reverse.⁶ In Genesis 1, they are created equal before God; in Genesis 2, they stand equally before God as human beings (in their essence), yet they stand differently in relation to each other—the male is the leader and the female the helper. Their roles are part of what differentiates them at the moment of their creation.⁷

Side A contends that “God did *not* name the human race ‘woman.’ ... He does not even devise a neutral term like ‘persons.’ He called us ‘man,’ which anticipates the male headship brought out clearly in chapter two, just as ‘male and female’ in verse 27 foreshadows marriage in chapter two.”⁸ Wayne Grudem notes that God names the human race “man” in Genesis 5:2, so that implies male leadership.⁹ To be sure, this does not mean inferiority of the woman before God since scholars who support male headship affirm both male and female bear the image of God and thus are equal in their essence before God. However, there is a clear “hint” in Genesis 1 that foreshadows the marriage discussion of Genesis 2. As Raymond Ortlund says, “But God’s naming of the race ‘man’ whispers male headship, which Moses will bring forward boldly in chapter two.”¹⁰

Therefore, we may infer from the fact that man was created first that God intended him to lead. Further, the woman came *from* the man and *for* the man, thereby placing her in a dependent, subordinate position in terms of leadership.¹¹ If God only wanted to make the point that the man

³ Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 95.

⁴ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 97.

⁵ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 99.

⁶ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 102.

⁷ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 102.

⁸ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 98. (Emphasis his).

⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 34-36.

¹⁰ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 98.

¹¹ Thomas Schreiner, “Women in Ministry: Another Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 2nd rev. ed., ed. James R. Beck, Counterpoint Series: Exploring Theology, ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 290.

and woman were created equal and stood before him equally, then what better way to do this than to have Adam and Eve *created at the same time* in the narrative of Genesis 2. Since this did not happen, we must conclude that God intended to convey something more concerning the relationship of the man and woman. The early history of Israel makes clear that the rule of priority and authority is placed on the first-born male. This rule of the primogenitor would be recognized when later generations would read the Genesis 2 account.¹²

Further, Adam was given the task of naming all the creatures. He extends that task into giving her a name as well: The man [*'ish* | אִישׁ] declares that “She shall be called ‘woman’ [*'ishah* | אִשָּׁה]. . .” (Gen. 2: 23). By naming the creatures, Adam brought “the earthly creation under his dominion.”¹³ This act of naming is reflective of Adam’s headship in which he exercised his rule over the creatures.¹⁴ This would also make clear to Eve that Adam was her head. Yet Eve’s role as helper does not diminish her equality with Adam as a human being. It simply points to God’s plan of male headship and female submission to her head. As Thomas Schreiner states, “The naming of the woman occurs in 2:23, suggesting that Adam had the responsibility for leadership in the relationship.”¹⁵

It is important to note here that male headship does not imply male domination. A hierarchy of headship does imply submission on the part of the female, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.¹⁶ Wives are to submit to their husbands as a “divine calling” to honor him, “not in an absolute surrender of her will,” but with a “disposition to yield to her husband’s guidance and her inclination to follow his leadership.”¹⁷ What is required in Christian marriages is a loving leadership on the part of the male so that the female will find fulfillment in his attention to her needs.¹⁸ Abusive male leaders have no place in Christian relationships.

In summary, then, “male-female equality and male headship, properly defined, are woven into the very fabric of Genesis 1-3.”¹⁹

Side B

Most of the arguments from Side A for this first thesis rest on assumptions and inferences from the text.²⁰ Where in Genesis 1-2 does the text speak of “headship” or more precisely of submission on the part of the female to her husband? One must do extensive re-reading *into* the meaning of the text from outside of it. Where is the instruction that the man holds the “primary responsibility” for the “spiritual and moral direction” of the home?

Does the title “helper suitable for him” imply subordination of the woman to the man? First, the word “helper” [*'ēzer* | עֵזֶר.] does not automatically imply that a helper is a servant.

¹² Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 291.

¹³ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 102.

¹⁴ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 291.

¹⁵ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 295.

¹⁶ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 302.

¹⁷ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 61.

¹⁸ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 105.

¹⁹ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 111.

²⁰ Craig S. Keener, “A Response to Thomas Schreiner,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 338.

In no other occurrence in the OT does this noun refer to an inferior, but always to a superior or an equal.”²¹ Indeed, God is declared to be our helper—our savior, rescuer, protector, or strength.²² God “comes alongside us in our helplessness.”²³ Instead of implying subordination or an “over/under” hierarchy to which the female submits, this word “helper” points to someone who is in the yoke of life *together*, working toward a same goal. The following preposition underscores this point: a helper who is “suitable for him” or comparable to him or “in front of” him or “helper corresponding to” [‘*ezer ke negedō* | עֲזֵר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ].²⁴

Does the order of timing of creation for the man and then for the woman really establish male headship? Did the narrative really need to say that Adam and Eve were created *at the same time* in order to make them equal before God (and each other)? Doesn’t Genesis 1 already establish that? So what is Genesis 2 doing with this story?

What’s in a name? Here we need to do some careful inquiry into the use of the Hebrew language, especially since English translations do not always note necessary distinctions for readers. First, in Genesis 1-3, there are two different ways the word for “man” [‘*ādām* | אָדָם] is used. In Genesis 1 it refers to “humanity” (male and female) and in Genesis 2-3 it refers to “the man” in the Garden of Eden.²⁵ Richard Hess notes that the first time [‘*ādām* | אָדָם] is used “to denote the personal name Adam occurs in Genesis 4:25.”²⁶ Further, since Hebrew has “no common term for ‘humanity’ other than ‘*adam*,” it is “somewhat inaccurate to suggest that there was a conscious divine decision to use a masculine term to describe the human race,” since no “other term was available” to the writer of Genesis.²⁷ Moreover, Hebrew only has two genders—masculine and feminine—for its words; there is *no neuter* gender.²⁸ Thus, naming the human race “man” does not “whisper” male headship, as Side A contends. The language operates this way.

Does the naming of the human race “man” in Genesis 5:2 imply male headship? Actually, in Genesis 5:2 the identification of “man” [‘*ādām* | אָדָם] as “male and female” indicates the reverse of what Side A contends. The text reads, “When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them ‘Mankind’ [‘*ādām* | אָדָם] when they were created (Gen. 5:1-2 NIV). The use of ‘*adam* here for “man” [‘*ādām* | אָדָם] in Genesis 5:1 and also in Genesis 1:26-27 clearly “refers to man as ‘male and female.’”²⁹ Therefore, as Philip Payne says, “God’s giving ‘male and female’ humanity the same name highlights their oneness and supports their equality.”³⁰

²¹ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 44.

²² All of these terms are clearly portrayed in the context of various OT examples, such as Joshua 1:14, 2 Sam. 8:5; 1 Chron. 12:17, and Ezra 8:22. See Payne, *Man and Woman*, 44.

²³ Alice Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God: Rethinking what We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 39. Matthews notes there are sixteen references in the OT to God as our help.

²⁴ Richard S. Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed., ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2005), 86.

²⁵ Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” 79-80.

²⁶ Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” 80.

²⁷ Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” 80.

²⁸ Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” 80.

²⁹ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 52.

³⁰ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 52.

Does the system of the primogeniture really need to be read back into this story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2? The rule of the “firstborn” is so variously applied throughout Scripture that it is quite difficult to make it the pattern set into the creation order. Indeed, this cultural understanding of primogeniture is nowhere mentioned or even implied in Genesis 1-3.³¹

Does the process of Adam “naming” the animals really demonstrate his “rule” over them? Does that extend to the naming of the woman? To agree with Side A on this point is to read *into* the narrative something that is not there. Is there any hint in the text that “naming” equals “exercising authority over,” as Schreiner and others claim? Other than simply declaring it to be so, the scholars supporting this idea cannot establish any “obvious way in which the man exercised any authority over either the animals or the woman” in naming them.³²

Does the Genesis narrative really provide substance for Side A’s claim that wives are to be submissive to their husbands?³³ Nowhere in this text do the words “headship,” or “authority,” or “submission” occur. There is nothing that can be inferred from the story to substantiate this claim that wives are to be subject to their husbands. It may be possible to see the curse in Genesis 3 as outlining a “rule over” the female by the male, but this is a result of sin, not of God’s intention in creation.

Of course Side A wants to assert that male headship does not imply male domination, but the history of humans for the past millennia has shown that often sin warps power into dominating control—even among those who are Christians.³⁴ Is it possible that merely pointing to male headship as *the created intention* of God for male and female sets up an “over/under” authority that was never intended by God’s plan but was instead part of the devastation of sin entering the world?

To be sure, submission is not a dirty word for Christians, but “over/under” domination that creates servitude through subordination is. It is the attitude we all (male and female) must bring to life as taught us by the Master. Being a servant to all means that we are laying down our lives for the sake of the other. It cannot mean domination—as it has so much in the past history of the church. As Rebecca Merrill Groothuis makes clear, *functional* subordination applies to an individual’s abilities or lack of them (or for completing a specific task). Coworkers working on a task given to a committee may illustrate this. One worker is the chair of the committee for the given duration of the task; the other is a member of the committee under the supervision of the coworker that is chair. This is functional subordination, which differs from female subordination as Side A has described it. “Unlike functional subordination, female subordination is not contingent. Because a woman is always and necessarily female, she is always and necessarily subordinate. No condition or context in this life nullifies her subordination to male authority.”³⁵ How does this apply to the situation of women in church leadership today? Pentecostal scholar, Lisa P. Stephenson, has noted that the forbidding of

³¹ Matthews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 41-2.

³² Richard S. Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence: Genesis 1-3,” 87.

³³ Keener, “A Response to Thomas Schreiner,” 338. In his words, “Where is subordination implied here?” in reference to the term “helper” or in naming the animals.

³⁴ As Rebecca Merrill Groothuis notes, “People’s actual treatment of women often belies their professed belief that only the role is inferior, not the person. It is, after all, not possible to live out an implausible belief...it is illogical to maintain that there is no basis for the role in the nature of the person when the role is one of moral necessity given the nature of the person, and when the role is perceived as defining one’s personal gender identity and as having been established by God at creation.” The result is that a woman being held as “functionally subordinate” due to her “role” usually experiences a clear placement of inferiority on her “being” as well. See Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 325.

³⁵ Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 317.

certain roles in the church—such as preaching, teaching, or leadership—results in limiting women’s roles in the church based on their very being as women, *not* on some supposed functional limitation. It may seem that Side A is differentiating between what women *do* (function) and who women *are* (essence), but in reality by limiting what they can do *as females* automatically makes them inferior in their being (not simply in their function).³⁶

Therefore, Side B will attempt to demonstrate later in this study that *mutual submission* (Eph. 5:21) is the key to understanding how to live the Christian life in line with the love poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in this new age inaugurated by the Holy Spirit through the cross-resurrection event. Female submission/subordination to a domineering male is a result of sin, not of God’s intention.

Side A

2. Thesis Two: “Equality of personhood does not rule out differences in role.”³⁷

Modernity says that equality must involve “equality of *function*.”³⁸ However, this is not necessarily a biblical view. One can be *equal in essence yet distinct in function*. As “The Danvers Statement” from the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood proposes, “Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.”³⁹ This is illustrated by the fact that priests in the old covenant could only come from the tribe of Levi. While all the Israelites had equal worth in God’s sight, only Levites could perform the duties of priest. In a similar vein, “the pastoral role is reserved for men only.”⁴⁰ Differences in function in the Bible do not necessitate differences in worth before God.

Eve was Adam’s *spiritual* equal in that she bore the image of God. “But she was not his equal in that she was his ‘helper.’”⁴¹ The fact that God created Adam and Eve with differences demonstrates that “their mere maleness and femaleness identify their respective roles.”⁴² The man is called by God to *lead*, while the woman is called to *support or help*. What emerges from Genesis 2 is that “male-female equality does not constitute an undifferentiated sameness.”⁴³

God created “male and female in His image equally, but He also made the male the head and the female the helper.”⁴⁴ This idea reflects the message of Genesis 2. Raymond Ortlund describes male headship in this way: “In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction.”⁴⁵ Just because male and female are equal before God, does not mean that they exist in

³⁶ Lisa P. Stephenson, “Made in the Image of God: A Theological Apologetic for Women Preachers,” in *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Preaching*, ed. Lee Roy Martin (Cleveland, TN: CPT, 2015), 143-44.

³⁷ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 288.

³⁸ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 288.

³⁹ Affirmation 2 in “The Danvers Statement (1987): The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Appendix 2, 470.

⁴⁰ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 289.

⁴¹ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 102.

⁴² Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 102.

⁴³ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 99.

⁴⁴ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 99.

⁴⁵ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 99.

“an undifferentiated sameness.”⁴⁶ The woman is called a “helper” for the man, but the man is not called a “helper.” Their tasks, therefore, are not equal.

Such differentiation of roles and functions in the home must also be applied to the church—God’s *family*. The church is called “God’s household of faith” (1 Tim. 3:15) and therefore the structures of the Christian household become the structures of the church. Since God established male headship in the family, he certainly requires male headship in the church. This means that “the fundamental principles regarding the structures of the human family are to be applied to the church as God’s household (1 Tim. 3:15).”⁴⁷ As is clear from Ephesians 5:22-6:4 and Colossians 3:18-21, families have a “God-ordained structure of leadership and authority” that now must be applied to the church.⁴⁸ Wives are told to submit to their husbands and husbands are told to love their wives the way Christ loved the church. Indeed, marriage itself is a picture of the mystery of the relation between Christ (the head) and his church (the body). Furthermore, the fact that God is called Father “demands the observance of household order” in the church.⁴⁹

The logical conclusion of this connection between family and the church is that the pattern of leadership (male) and submission (female) must remain in effect in the household of God. As George W. Knight remarks, “Paul is not insisting that every relationship between a woman and a man is one of submission and headship, but that where leadership is an ingredient of the situation, as in marriage, the woman should submit to that leadership (headship) of the man. Similarly, for example, in the family of God, the church, where leadership is involved, Paul insists that women not take on that role but submit to the leadership of men.”⁵⁰

Side B

Side B argues against Side A by pointing to the lack of logic in their reasoning. Rebecca Groothuis states that a “woman is equal *in* her being yet unequal *by virtue of* her being is incoherent.”⁵¹ Proponents of Side A, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, admit that the key to understanding their perspective is not only to focus on “behavioral roles of men and women,” but also on the “underlying nature of manhood and womanhood themselves.”⁵² Therefore, they assert that equality exists in the *nature* of being human for both male and female. Nonetheless, they also assert that inequality exists in the *function* of being male and female. Yet here’s the rub: as Side A claims, it is not just about the different “behavioral roles of men and women,” but the “underlying nature of manhood and womanhood.” Thus, they make a distinction in terms of *roles*

⁴⁶ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 99.

⁴⁷ Vern S. Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 239.

⁴⁸ Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” 238.

⁴⁹ Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” 241.

⁵⁰ George W. Knight, III, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 169.

⁵¹ Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role: Exploring the Logic of Women’s Subordination,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 310.

⁵² John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 60.

based on the nature of who they are—male or female. According to their view, if you are born female, the very nature of your femaleness demands that you operate in a role that is subordinate. This is what makes their argument incoherent.

The doctrine of male rule “presupposes that woman is uniquely designed by God *not* to perform certain distinctively human activities.”⁵³ According to Side B, this sounds more like Aristotle than the Bible: “...the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind” (*Politics* 1254.b.10). Further, Aristotle notes that “household management” has three parts—the rule of a master over the slave, the rule of a father over children, and the rule of a husband over the wife (*Politics* 1259.a.37-40). The rule of the husband over his wife is “constitutional,” that is, it is established by the *nature* of being a male versus female, for “the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the elder and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature” (*Politics* 1259.b.1-5). Although supporters of male hierarchy claim that they believe in the intelligence and giftedness of females, their proposal that God has placed the male in position of leadership priority and the female in the position of *not* leading (by virtue of her being born a female) ends up sounding like Aristotle’s *constitutional* reasoning. The very fact that males are “made” by God to be leaders in their *nature* makes them better fit for command than the females, who by *nature* are better fit for submission to that command.

Moreover, Side A asks whether the case of the Levites in Israel sheds any light on the new covenant priesthood? The priests of the new covenant are *everyone*, not simply one tribe, not one race over another; not even ordained clergy versus laity.⁵⁵ The priesthood belongs to *every* believer as part of the total priesthood of believers described in the New Testament.⁵⁶ In the new covenant, there is no Levitical priesthood. The only priest is our High Priest, who is in the heavenly tabernacles making intercession for us. We do not need another other mediator—we may go together directly to Jesus Christ. “The New Testament portrayal of the church as a priesthood of believers implies that the parallel to the Levitical priesthood is not the ordained office (or leadership function) but the church as a whole.”⁵⁷ In this regard, women are priests in the new covenant

⁵³ Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 308.

⁵⁴ Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 313.

⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of the priesthood of all believers and proposals for what implementation of such a view might look like in today’s church, see the forthcoming book by Terry L. Cross, *Serving the People of God’s Presence: A Theology of Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020).

⁵⁶ Stanley J. Grenz, “Biblical Priesthood and Women in Ministry,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 273-77.

⁵⁷ Grenz, “Biblical Priesthood and Women in Ministry,” 275.

just as much as are men. Whatever was “pre-figured” in the Levitical priesthood has “now been fulfilled forever in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸

The priesthood of believers cannot coexist with a male hierarchy of spiritual command because the relationship that Christians (male *and* female) have with Jesus Christ, our High Priest, is one that is *direct*. If female Christians in the church (or home!) are required to go through a male head in order to have communion with God, the very nature of New Testament Christian faith is dismantled. Those supporting male headship “assign women a permanent inferior status in a hierarchy of spiritual authority, calling, responsibility and privilege.”⁵⁹

Side A

3. Thesis Three: “Male leadership is not the result of the fall, but it is God’s good and perfect will for man and woman.”⁶⁰

“The Danvers Statement” supports this thesis: “Adam’s headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.”⁶¹ Most Side B supporters of male-female *equality* in leadership presume that the “over/under” authority structure came into existence at the Fall into sin (Gen. 3). In other words, they believe that God did not establish male headship in the order of creation, but sin resulted in the man dominating the woman in the curse. While it is true that sin perverts God’s original order and causes strife between men and women, the role differences were God’s intention *at creation* and therefore are meant to be permanent in the created order of things. It is true that perceiving how the role distinctions are “part of the fabric of God’s good and perfect created order,” relies on inference and implication, but God’s intentions at creation become clear, especially if one attempts to harmonize the created order of things with statements from the New Testament.⁶²

It is true that sin and the curse have caused disruption in the male-female relationship, but this is only because the male either dominates or leads passively (as did Adam) and the female constantly attempts to usurp the male’s authority (as did Eve).⁶³ The “Danvers Statement” helps to clarify these issues related to the results of sin: “In the home, the husband’s loving, humble leadership tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife’s intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.”⁶⁴ The distortions of God’s plan as a result of sin create tension both in the home and the church. “In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.”⁶⁵ Both the home and the church suffer today from the sinful effects of the curse on Adam and Eve. Yet we cannot resolve the problem simply by announcing equality between male and female in terms of function. We must return to the created order of things that God intended. “Christian

⁵⁸ Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 313.

⁵⁹ Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 314.

⁶⁰ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 298.

⁶¹ Affirmation 3 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

⁶² Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 298.

⁶³ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 99.

⁶⁴ Affirmation 4 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

⁶⁵ Affirmation 3 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

redemption does not redefine creation; it restores creation, so that wives learn godly submission and husbands learn godly headship.”⁶⁶

Side B

In contrast to Side A’s position on the Fall, proponents of Side B propose that “over/under” headship authority is a direct result of the Fall and the curse in Genesis 3. Only at the point of the narrative in Genesis 3 does the language of “rule” and “dominion” have a newfound home in the human realm itself. While rule and dominion are used in Genesis 1:28 for the human care for the earth, after the curse of sin the husband will rule over the wife—one human being over another human being (Gen. 3:16). Side B wants to make clear that such dominion of one human over another *was not God’s plan in creation* (as is made clear by Genesis 1 and 2).

A second concern arises in this regard for Side B. In the discussion from Side A above, Raymond Ortlund states, “Christian redemption does not redefine creation; it restores creation...” Side B agrees—but with an important difference. It does not see dominance (or headship) of males over females *until the Fall*. In other words, *sin* produces the “over/under” scheme of living from which Jesus Christ came to redeem us. If sin and the curse are the causes of “over/under” authority structures between men and women, then does the new creation in Christ reverse this curse of sin? Doesn’t salvation begin to “restore creation” in the *new age* ushered in by Christ. We live between the ages now—between the age to come (heaven) and this present age, but we are to live according to the standards of the freedom brought to us in Christ and the vision of justice/righteousness, which was God’s original intention in creation. Through the redemption we have received in Christ, believers have experienced a change in status before God and therefore have a responsibility to reflect that change in how we operate toward others as humans made in the image of God. “The Danvers Statement” suggests, “Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse,” but then goes on to describe things in the family and in the church as hardly experiencing a change at all.⁶⁷ In the family, the statement simply notes that Christian husbands should “forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives.”⁶⁸ Wives should “forsake resistance to their husbands’ authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands’ leadership.”⁶⁹ Side B asks, is there no removal of the potential for domination in the *structures* of over/under authority?

Further, in the church the Danvers Statement (Side A) says that Christ “gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation,” but “some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.”⁷⁰ Side B views such language as setting the stage for unhealthy domination, not mutual respect. To be sure, there are legitimate

⁶⁶ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 109.

⁶⁷ Affirmation 6 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

⁶⁸ Affirmation 6 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

⁶⁹ Affirmation 6 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

⁷⁰ Affirmation 6 in “The Danvers Statement,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 470.

qualifications for leaders required in the church, but these qualifications are not determined by gender. Instead, they should be determined by character (as in 1 Tim. 3:1-7) and spiritual gifting (as in Rom. 12:8).

Side A

4. Thesis Four: The divine institution of marriage as described in Genesis 2 clearly underscores the leadership role of the male in marriage—and by implication, in the church.

The responsibility for the home lies with the male, who is the head.⁷² Only the male is told to leave his home and cleave to his wife. *She* does not leave her family to start a new household—*he* does. Such instruction about marriage points to the initiative of leadership on the part of the man in setting up a new family. In marriage, “the man heads the home for God and the wife helps him to fulfill the divine calling.”⁷³ When the husband fulfills his leadership role as established by God, he “does so as a servant of God, and the leadership given to him in this role expresses God’s authority in the marriage.”⁷⁴ For this reason, wives are to submit to their husbands “as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

Moreover, Ephesians 5:21-33 brings further clarity to the importance of marriage for illustrating the relationship between Christ and the church. In this passage, the husband is given the leadership role and the wife is told to submit to him. Just as Christian wives are to “respect” Christ, they are also to “respect” their husbands (Eph. 5:33). Christian husbands are to love their wives as “Christ loved the church,” by giving himself up for it. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 here in Ephesians and then declares, “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32). Whatever this mystery might mean, it certainly points to the headship of the man as analogous to the headship of Christ.

Male headship, then, was established by God in creation and has been reinforced by Paul in the new creation as the analogous reference to the headship of Christ over the church. Therefore, role differences in the family were meant also to exist in God’s family, the household of faith.⁷⁵ Does the structure of the home really apply to the church? According to Vern Poythress it does. 1 Timothy 3:15 speaks of “God’s household, the church of the living God,” (NIV), thereby connecting the home and the church. The church is God’s family. Therefore, “the structure of family leadership is to be carried over into God’s household: qualified men are to be appointed as overseers, that is, fathers of the church. A woman, however capable and gifted she may be, can never become a father of a family. As a woman, she is simply not so constituted. Likewise, a woman may never become a father in God’s household.”⁷⁶

⁷² Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 103.

⁷³ Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 103.

⁷⁴ George W. Knight, III, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church,” 174.

⁷⁵ Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 291.

⁷⁶ Vern S. Poythress, “The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 239.

Side B

Does leadership transfer from the home to the church—and therefore if only males are leaders in the home, can only males be leaders in the church? If one believes that there is godly male headship of a husband over a wife *in the home*, does that automatically mean that there must be male headship of a man over women *in the church*? Side A seems to argue that it does. The basis for their belief is twofold:

1. Male headship in marriage is established in the divine order of things in creation.
2. The church is a family—a “household of God,” and therefore if it is a system good enough for blood-related families, then it must be good enough for God’s family.

We shall consider these points each in turn from the perspective of Side B. There are some serious problems with this reasoning. *First*, as we have noted, it is not evident that male headship is established in the divine order of things at creation. While there is an order of precedence—Adam created first, then Eve from Adam’s side—Genesis does not make this into an order of authority at all. Further, since an over/under authority system is established clearly only *after* the Fall, it seems more likely that such a system was due to sin and is part of the effect on our lives due to the curse. Proponents of Side B would argue that at least part of the task that lies before the church today is to model in front of the world what heaven will be like *after* the curse is fully lifted. Shouldn’t our church structures look more like relations in heaven than those on a cursed world? It may be that one important task that the church as a whole should do in this hour is to discern together just what aspects of the *shalom* of God’s future should be struggled for in this period between the two ages and what aspects were not meant for us to challenge and change. In other words, if a husband has authority over a wife, is that to be understood because of sin and the curse and therefore now their relationship is to be handled differently because of the redemption from sin? Or are we to continue in our marriage relationships to reflect the curse instead of the pure love and obedience to Christ and the mutual submission to one another that is the “mystery” between Christ and his church?

Second, is the fact that the church is called a household of God in the New Testament strong enough evidence for using whatever patterns we may presume should exist in the home also to exist in the church? In addition to the family of God, the church is called the “bride of Christ,” the “people of God,” the “called out ones,” the “assembly,” and so forth. To raise one metaphor (family) to the level of primacy in order to allow for the family systems in our homes to become the systems of leadership in our churches is to do a disservice to the rich meaning of who the church is. There is no clear expectation in Scripture that how things are done in the home should be precisely how things are to be done in the church.

Side A

Engaging the text of Ephesians 5:21-33 (and its corollary text, Colossians 3:18-19) is important for our understanding of Paul’s point on the relation between marriage and the church. As we have noted above, Side A views this passage as pivotal for understanding the male-female relationship in marriage (and indirectly, then, in the church). Wives are clearly told here to “submit to” their husbands (Eph. 5:22 and 24; Col. 3:18). This appeal does not imply inferiority on the wife’s part. “Rather, it is an appeal to one who is equal by creation and redemption to submit to the authority God has ordained.”⁷⁷ Why are wives to submit to their own husbands? It is because the “husband is the head of the wife” (Eph. 5:23). Side A holds that this may not be a command by Paul for every woman to submit to every man, but only wives to

their own husbands. If leadership (headship) is involved, then the woman should submit to the man.⁷⁸ This seems to be the plain sense reading of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3.

Since God established the roles of wives and husbands *at creation*, they must be followed and obeyed. Hence, the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church. In both cases (namely, that of wives and that of believers), submission to the head is acknowledgment of a “divinely instituted form” of structure.⁷⁹

Side B

The interpretation of Ephesians 5 from Side A underscores the problem: they read into the text what they assume is the case at creation in Genesis 1. They view the roles of husband (leader) and wife (helper/follower) to be ordained by God. Since God’s plan includes such an “over/under” structure, who are we to suggest it is wrong? Side B argues that it has not been established that God created humans with these “over/under” structures in Genesis 1. Further, a question arises from Genesis 2: does the divine institution of marriage in Genesis 2 include the institution of roles that are “over/under”? To both of these questions from Genesis 1 and 2 the answer from Side B is “no.” The structure of over/under in human relations comes after the Fall.

Therefore, Side B attempts to read Ephesians 5 without the presumption that God created the over/under structure for males and females as part of his good creation. There are ways of understanding the text that do not follow Side A’s presuppositions, yet render reasonable possibilities for interpretation.

For example, Paul begins this section in Ephesians 5:18 by urging the recipients to be “filled with the Spirit.” Aligned with this statement are participial phrases (using “-ing” endings in English) that conclude with “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21).⁸⁰ Then Ephesians 5:22 continues in the Greek by stating (literally), “the

⁷⁷ George W. Knight, III, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 168.

⁷⁸ Knight, “Husbands and Wives,” 169.

⁷⁹ Knight, “Husbands and Wives,” 171.

⁸⁰ The participles are (in English): “*speaking* to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit; *singing* and *making music* from your heart to the Lord, always *giving thanks* to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:19-20). Then verse 21 begins, “submitting to one another....”

wives to their own husbands, as to the Lord.”⁸¹ The verb “submit” is not in verse 22 because it is to be filled in from verse 21 (“submitting...”). Mutual submission to one another precedes any familial obligation for submission from wives to husbands. This is no small point. It levels the playing field, so to speak. Yet it also should be noted that all of the participles (the “-ing” words in English) from verse 18 onward are connected to the command “Be filled with the Spirit.” Submitting to one another is one of the ways offered by Paul as a way to fulfill that command.⁸²

Further, Side B suggests that the concept of “head” here in Ephesians 5:23 needs clarification. “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (NIV). Paul uses an analogy to speak to the meaning of Christ as head of the church. During our study in Part I of 1 Corinthians 11 in relation to “head” we noted that it did not connote “authority over” in much of the ancient world, but instead meant “origin” or “source,” it seems less the case in this context.⁸³ However, the metaphor of head here is an *organic* one—the head attached to the body, which signifies the real relationship between Christ and the church. Christ is the source of the body’s sustenance—he is the source of its nutrition and life. In Colossians 2:19, the body must not lose connection with “the head,” from which it is “supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow” (Col. 2:19 NIV). Further, Paul notes that the body of Christ must “grow up into the head” (Eph. 4:15- 16). God has appointed Christ “to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way” (Eph. 1:22-23 NIV). All of these speak to the reliance on the head (Christ) for the life and nutrition of the body (the church). Instead of an “over/under” authority, then, the point here in Ephesians 5 is that “the husband is the person on whom the wife depends just as the church depends on Christ, and therefore submission is appropriate.”⁸⁴

In addition, the explanation by Paul at the end of Ephesians 5:23 makes clear the way “head” is to be understood. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church—of which “he is the Savior.” In what way can the husband in this analogy be the wife’s “savior?” Clearly, this is a point of dissimilarity since no human husband can “save” a wife as Christ saved the church. Still, the word for “savior” [σωτήρ | *sōtēr*] is one that can mean a “provider.”⁸⁵ Instead of Paul saying, “Christ is the head of the body, *the authority over it*,” he makes “Savior” the explanatory apposition to explain who Christ is. Therefore, the meaning of “head” here must mean something other than “leader.”⁸⁶ It seems very probable that Paul is creating a new metaphor, enhancing the meaning of “source” with the apposition “savior.”⁸⁷ This is how a husband is to treat his wife—by loving her, by “nourishing” [ἐκτρέφει | *ektrephei*] her, and by “keeping her warm” or “cherishing” [θάλλει | *thalpei*] her (Eph. 5:25; 29). The word for

⁸¹ The Greek from verses 21-22 reads as follows: Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ, αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ | *Hypotassomenoi allēlois en phobō Christou, hai gynaiques tois idiois andrasin hōs tō kuriō.*

⁸² I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 196.

⁸³ Although Philip Payne makes a persuasive argument for “head” = “source” here in Ephesians 5. See Payne, *Man and Woman*, 286-87.

⁸⁴ I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 198. Marshall notes that this idea is from Gordon Fee.

⁸⁵ Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 198-99, esp. fn. 41.

⁸⁶ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 285.

⁸⁷ Payne calls it an “original living metaphor.” See Payne, *Man and Woman*, 287.

“nourish” has the sense of “nurturing or feeding to bring someone to maturity.” The word for “cherishing” comes from a word that means, “to keep warm” as in a mother hen keeping her chicks warm by brooding over them. The head described in Ephesians 5 is one who loves (the church/the wife) by nurturing her so that she reaches the full potential that Christ intends and by brooding over her—keeping her close to assist in her health and state of well-being.

Some Questions for Dialogue

This study has been careful to provide Sides A and B with as much fairness as possible from their own writings and argumentation. At the end of the day, what does this have to offer us concerning women in church leadership? Allow us to offer several questions that may assist the church in engaging this issue further.

Questions: The following are questions particularly poignant for our discussion in the Church of God concerning women in church leadership.

1. What is the role of spiritual gifts in relation to choosing/appointing leaders in the church? If we predetermine who becomes a leader in the church according to gender, then we are taking no account of the gifting of the Spirit on women as well as men?

2. To what extent are we to reflect the curse of sin in our relationships—both home and the church? Both Side A and Side B view domination in a negative sense as something resulting from the Fall. Gordon Fee notes two obstacles: first, we do not operate today with Paul’s “eschatological, new creation framework (the future as ‘already but not yet’);” second, in the ancient world, “position and status prevailed in every way,” which controlled every action that anyone would take.⁸⁹ Paul’s words crash through the “order of things” in the world by leveling race, status, and gender in the name of Christ. Paul did not expect the way things are in the world to change but announced that the reality of the future eschaton will be different. The question is, then, to what extent are we to reflect in our lives and relationships in the church today—the reality of the future already here in the present? Does not the world deserve to see a witness to the claim that in Christ “there is neither male nor female, slave nor free” (Gal. 3:28)? Does not the world deserve to see a witness to the claim that *in the Lord* “the woman is not apart from the man and the man is not apart from the woman” (1 Cor. 11:10).

3. In the Church of God, we have long recognized the value and validity of women preachers, yet when engaging in the further question of leadership for women we tend to borrow arguments from non-Pentecostal circles in order to substantiate a difference of function between male and female in terms of leadership. However, the sources from which we borrow to support this view are mainly arguing *against* women *in ministry*—against women preachers—as well as women leaders. Pentecostals have rather inconsistently taken one section of this approach as valid (the one arguing against women leaders) and declared the other to be invalid (the one arguing against women preachers). This inconsistency creates incoherence in our presentation of doctrine and practice. People against women in ministry and leadership view any type of preaching or teaching to be authoritative and therefore cannot be done by women. Yet in the Church of God, we have a clear tradition almost from the beginning that if God calls and gifts a woman to preach, she may do so. As Pentecostals, we did not feel constrained to restrict the gifts and callings to males. God could pour his Spirit out on all flesh—males and females. Among Pentecostals, preaching *is* a form of authority—it is speaking on behalf of God to the people. If women can be authorized (by God and by our church polity) to preach the gospel, then have we already established women in a leadership role of some type? The apparent inconsistency this question raises deserves further consideration and engagement by the ministers and members of the Church of God.
