

I
MAN AND WOMAN IN GENESIS 1-3
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The opening chapters of Genesis (1-3) are of crucial importance for both the origins of our world and also the origin, beginnings, and determining relationships of man and woman. As such they set the stage for a biblical concept of man's interrelationships, without which any understanding of the mutuality between man and woman is impaired and one-sided.

An investigation of the status of man and woman in Gen 1-3 is warranted and mandatory on account of both the new set of questions raised with regard to the status of women in the church and the contradictory assessment of the evidence in Gen 1-3. Some interpreters claim that "man assists passively in her [woman's] creation" and that since "woman [is] drawn forth from man [she] owes all her existence to him."¹ Accordingly woman is said to exist in a state of inferiority in relation to man. Other interpreters infer from Gen 2 that woman is inferior and subordinate to man because of "the fact that she is the helper of man, and is named by him. . . ."² Another view holds that whereas Gen 1 recognizes the equality of man and woman, Gen 2 makes woman a second, subordinate, and inferior being.³ It is observed that Gen 1:26-28 "dignifies woman as an important factor in the creation, equal in power and glory with man," while Gen 2 "makes her a mere afterthought."⁴ On the other hand, there are those suggesting on the basis of Gen 1-3 that man and woman are created equal, that woman is not an afterthought of Creation and does not constitute a decline in God's creativity. To them woman as the last of all Creation is its climax and culmination. Woman is the crown of Creation.⁵ These contradictory views, all claiming to derive from the material in Gen 1-3, warrant a careful investigation of the evidence provided in the opening chapters of the Bible. This is all the more important because these chapters describe man's perfect state before sin and the far-reaching changes introduced by sin, perpetuated, and expanded to immense proportions since then.

Man and Woman in Genesis 1

The inspired record reveals that on the sixth day of Creation week, after everything else had been created,

"God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over

¹E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, 1958), p. 173; cf. S. H. Hooke, "Genesis," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, eds. H. H. Rowley, M. Black (London, 1962), p. 179.

²John A. Bailey, "Initiation and the Primal Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3," *JBL*, 89 (1970): 143; cf. A. van den Born, "Frau," *Bibel-Lexikon*, ed. H. Haag, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln, 1968), col. 492; Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), pp. 315-16.

³Eugene E. Maley, "Genesis," *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, ed. Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968), p. 12, concludes that "woman's existence, psychologically and in the social order, is dependent on man."

⁴Elizabeth C. Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York, 1895), 1:20; cf. Elsie Adams and Mary L. Briscoe, *Up Against the Wall, Mother* (Beverly Hills, 1971), p. 4; Sheila D. Collins, "Toward a Feminist Theology," *Christian Century* (Aug. 2, 1972), p. 798.

⁵So Bailey, *JBL* 89 (1970): 150; John L. McKenzie, "The Literary Characteristics of Gen. 2-3" *Theological Studies* 15 (1954): 559; Walther Eichrodt, *Das Menschenverständnis des Alten Testaments* (Zurich, 1947), p. 35, et. Al.

every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen 1:26-27, NASB).”

This sublime account of the creation of man is part of the summary narrative of Creation (Gen 1:1-2:3), complemented with more specific details about man and his setting in the following chapter (Gen 2).⁶ It expresses in most compact form the essentials of the creation of man.

The first point is that “man” (*’ādām*)⁷ is a term which includes both “male and female” (1:27). As such, *’ādām* (“man”) is a generic term for mankind.⁸

Next it is to be stressed that in Gen 1 man is created as both “male and female” (vs. 27). There is no distinction between the sexes in terms of superiority or subordination. “Man” has existence as a total and complete creature uniquely as man and woman. The full meaning of *’ādām* is realized only when there is man and woman.⁹

Man was created to live in constant communion with each other. Though male was the first creature formed (Gen 2:7), which is already implied by the mention of the term “male” before “female” in Gen 1:27, and put into the Edenic garden “to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen 2:15, NASB), a job identified with the male (Gen 3:17-19), he is not yet the perfect and complete creature for which God aims in the creation of mankind. God’s own evaluation of the situation after the creation of the male was, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2:18, NASB). Only with the creation of woman does man exist in complete and harmonious partnership and communion. With the coming into existence of both man and woman, creation is complete—a fact stressed again in Gen 2.

In the definition of mankind as bisexual the Creator does not suggest any superiority of one sex above the other.¹⁰ Woman is not subordinate to man; man is not subordinate to woman. Neither one holds an inferior place, nor is the role of one lower than that of the other. Relevant

⁶The assessment of traditional liberal scholarship that there are two different Creation accounts which manifest “irreconcilable” contradictions (so H. H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament* [New York, 1963, p. 18] and many others cannot be maintained. The difference in the usage of divine names is best explained on account of the different semantic aspects associated with each (see M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch* [Jerusalem, 1967], pp. 32, 103ff; U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* [Jerusalem, 1961], pp. 15-41). The difference of style is paralleled by the commonplace stylistic differences in extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern texts (see Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* [Chicago, 1968], pp. 116-17). The supposed differences in the conception of God are overdrawn (see Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* [Chicago, 1960], p. 207; E. J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids, 1964], p. 51). The alleged difference in the order of events, namely that the animals were created *before* their naming and *after* the creation of man (Gen 2:19), vanishes on the basis that the word “formed” in Gen 2:19 can be equally well translated “had formed” because the perfect tense of the Hebrew verb does double duty for both past tense and pluperfect (see G. C. Aalders, *A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch* [London, 1949], p. 44; Gleason Leonard Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* [Chicago, 1964], pp. 118-19; Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, p. 118, n. 19).

⁷See on this term esp. E. Lussier, “Adam in Gen 1:1-3:24,” *CBQ*, 18 (1956): 137-39; S. Amsler, “Adam le terreux dans Genèse 2-4,” *Revue de Théol. et Phil.* 2 (1958):107-112; J. de Fraine, *Adam et son lineage* (Paris, 1959); J. Jeremias, “‘Aoau,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964), 1:141-43; F. Vattioni, “La sapienza e la formation del corpo umano (Gen 1:26),” *Augustinianum* 6 (1966): 317-23; C. Westermann, “‘ādām Mensch,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann (München, 1971), 1:41-57.

⁸There is no difference of opinion on this point among interpreters.

⁹Maly, p. 11.

¹⁰Eichrodt, *Menschenverständnis*, p. 35, speaks of the “noteworthy equality between man and woman before God . . . in that she is designated by God as the equal supplementation of man [Gen 2:18], in that she is also created in the image of God whereby she has part in the special place assigned to man over against nature.”

points in Gen 1 indicate that male and female are created equal, that neither is superior nor inferior to the other in creation.¹¹

It is striking that both “male and female” are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). The whole man in his bisexuality, which does not so much stress the nature of man as a being with a divinely given sex drive but rather his unity and mutual communion, is created in the image of God.¹² There is not distinction in terms of superiority or inferiority. To the contrary, woman is also created, like man, in the image of God.¹³ Both man and woman are thus set apart from the rest of creation as constituting a new and distinct order.¹⁴ They are equal in their distinct superiority to the rest of creation, because both share equally in the image of God.

The blessing of God is bestowed upon both of “them” (*’ōtām*). The divine blessing comes to man (*’ādām*) as man and woman. Both equally share the blessing. Both are equal recipients of God’s blessing (Gen 1:28). The “blessing” (*brk*) bestowed by God upon both man and woman is the power to be fruitful and multiply and thus perpetuate the species.¹⁵ The responsibility for propagating and perpetuating mankind rests equally upon both man and woman.

The task of “subduing” (*kbš*) the earth (Gen 1:28) and “ruling” (*rdh*) over the animal world (Gen 1:26, 28) is laid upon both man and woman. When God purposed to create man (*’ādām*), He had already designed that both should exercise the “ruling” function (1:26). The verb *rdh* means in Joel 3:13 “to tread in the wine-press.”¹⁶ In Num 24:19 and Lev 26:17 it is used of “to rule over” and is employed frequently of the ruling or governing activity of the king.¹⁷ It has been suggested that the basic meaning of *rdh* is “to tread (down),”¹⁸ but this is hardly the meaning here. It seems that man as “the crowning work of the Creator”¹⁹ maintains his royal

¹¹“When God created Eve, He designated that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting” (1875).—3T 484.

¹²Despite the clarity of language in Gen 1:26-27, the opinion has been revived recently (Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *JAAR*, 41 [1973]: 36), without reference to earlier supporters (such as F. Schwally, *ARW* 9 [1906]: 172ff.), that the first man (Gen 1:26-27) was androgynous, a single hermaphrodite being. However, the rendering in 1:27c, “male and female created he *them* (*’ōtām* [emphasis supplied]),” militates against this view. This theory is also militated against by the use of the terms “male” (*zākār*) and “female” (*nēqēbāh*) which denote later in the Pentateuch not the adjectives “male” and “female” but concretely the male and female parts of the species (Gen 17:10ff; Lev 12:5; etc.); cf. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1967), 2:12b, n. 2.

¹³It has been inferred from the phrase “in the image of God he created him” (1:27b, RSV) that the “him” (*’ōtō*) “excludes the idea that also woman had a part in the image of God and the rulership of the world” (J. Bohmer, “Wieviel Menschen sind am letzten Tage des Hexaemeron geschaffen worden?” *ZAW* 34 [1914]: 33). In actual fact the antecedent of “him” (*’ōtō*) is the collective noun *’ādām* in 1:27a; “him” is thus a grammatical singular which should be understood, like its antecedent, in the collective sense. The plural “them” (*’ōtām*) in 1:27c refers to the bisexual expression “male and female,” so that the singular suffix and the plural suffix both have their proper grammatical form and refer to the same idea. Cf. W. H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967), p. 145, n. 1; p. 147, n. 1.

¹⁴“All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made ‘in the image of God,’ and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth”—Ellen G. White Comments, 1BC 1081.

¹⁵Westermann, p. 221; C. A. Keller and G. Wehmeier, “*brk* pi, segnen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum AT* 1:369.

¹⁶William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1971), p. 333.

¹⁷Cf. 1 Kgs 5:4; Pss 110:2; 72:8; Isa 14:6; Ezek 34:4.

¹⁸H. Wildberger, “Das Abbild Gottes, Gen 1, 26-30” *TZ* 21 (1965): 481-83.

¹⁹PP 44.

position in his rulership over the animal kingdom.²⁰ The exercise of rulership does not mean exploitation, because this would mean to lose his divinely given position of lordship. Both man and woman have a share in this task on equal basis. Both are elevated to an equally noble status over creature and creation in their exercise of dominion over the created world. Man as male and female is God's sovereign emblem and representative on earth, summoned to maintain God's claim over the earth, having received dominion over the world as part of God's special domain of sovereignty.

In short, in Gen 1 man (*'ādām*) is created last male and female, and is thus truly the crown of creation.²¹ Both man and woman share their creation in "the image of God" which lifts them above all other creatures and places them together in a special relationship to God. Both man and woman find their full meaning neither in male alone nor in female alone, but in their mutual relationship and communion. Both man and woman receive the divine blessing with the power to propagate and perpetuate the human species; both man and woman are given the task to "subdue" the earth and "rule" over the animal kingdom, indicating their common position as vicegerents over God's creation. This heaping up of aspects in the creation, nature, and responsibilities of *'ādām* ("man") indicates that both male and female were created by God as equals. Neither man nor woman was superior or inferior to the other; neither was subordinated to the other. Man and woman were equals, each certainly with his own individuality.

Man and Woman in Genesis 2

The narrative of Gen 2:4-25 describes in more detail aspects of the carefully written and most compactly constructed Creation story of Gen 1, complementing it on crucial points.²² In Gen 2:7 "the man" (*hā'ādām*) is the first creature formed²³ from the dust of the ground. God breathed into him (Adam)²⁴ the "breath of life" (*nišmat-bayyîm*) and "man became a living being" (NASB).²⁵

"The man [Adam]" was taken by God and settled in the Garden of Eden in order to till and to tend it (Gen 2:15). It seems that this statement refers to the male, because the tilling and keeping of the garden is an activity identified with the male (cf. Gen 3:17-19).²⁶ Meaningful and complete existence can be experienced by man only in connection with work.

²⁰Westermann, pp. 221-22.

²¹Note the similarity of expression between Ellen G. White, who calls man "the crowning work of the Creator" (PP 44) and a recent writer who states that "male and female [man] are indeed the last and truly the crown of all creatures"—Trible, p. 36.

²²See n. 6.

²³Commentators have often suggested on the basis of the word "formed" (*yšr*) in 2:7 that the creative activity is like that of a potter (so Gunkel, Procksch, Kohler, Humbert, etc.). However, it is hardly correct to maintain that the verb *yšr* implies in a special way the memory of the potter's craft and God as potter, because the term "dust" (*ḥr*) does not allow it. The specific word for "clay: or "mud" is *homer* (with B. Jacob, Cassuto, Vriezen, Westermann, W. H. Schmidt).

²⁴In Gen 2 *hā'ādām* ("the man") is not often used in a collective sense but as a general description of the first male. Cf. Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 2nd ed. (Newton, MA, 1970), p. 406; et al.

²⁵Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 283: "Man is created as *nps hyh*. A 'living soul' is not put in his body. Man is understood as a unity in his being made alive. An understanding of man as consisting of body and soul is excluded." Vriezen, *An Outline of OT Theology*, p. 407: "This infusion of the breath [of life] by God does not mean that man has received a divine soul or spirit."

²⁶So correctly with Trible, p. 35, against Westermann, p. 301.

The divine instruction to “the man” (*hā-’ādām*) not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must have been given to both man and woman (Gen 2:16-17), because woman refers to the divine instruction and the prohibition to eat from this one tree (Gen 3:2ff.). Since woman is included under the term *hā-’ādām* in 2:16 but the report of her creation is not given until thereafter (2:18ff.), there may be here a possible indication that Gen 2:4ff is not a separate Creation account as critical scholarship maintains.²⁷ Genesis 2:16-17 obviously presupposes Gen 1:26-27.

Woman was created after man had been engaged in the naming of the animals (Gen 2:20). A far-reaching observation grew out of this experience: there is no “helper suitable for him” (vs. 20, NASB). Then comes God’s pronouncement, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him” (2:18, NASB).

It is mandatory to investigate the meaning of the term (*æzer*) rendered as “help meet” (KJV), “helper” (RSV, NIV, NASB), “partner” (NEB, NAB) and “aid” (Speiser, Anchor Bible), as well as the idea of “fit for him” (RSV) or “suitable for him” (NAB, NASB). This investigation should clear up the matter as to whether these thoughts stress equality or inferiority.

The expression *æzer* (“helper”) has many different usages in the OT. It is distinguished from the feminine noun *æzrah* meaning “help, support.”²⁸ The usage of the masculine noun *æzer* shows that the writer of Gen 2:18 chose a more neutral term, avoiding the idea of making woman a mere “help” or “support” for man.²⁹ The translation “aid”³⁰ does not fit the meaning of the original term. The traditional translation “help meet” (KJV) is made up of two English words. The term “meet” is an archaism, meaning “adapted” or “suitable,”³¹ and has little to do with the term “helpmeet” which is a ghost word where “*help meet* for him” has been mistakenly read as a single word.³² Therefore, to speak of woman as a “helpmeet” in the sense that she is a mate aiding her husband in his work “is an error implying strange ignorance of the English language.”³³

The noun *æzer* (“helper”) is employed primarily for God,³⁴ which indicates that it does not imply inferiority or of necessity lower status. The Lord (Yahweh) is the “helper” for Israel. As “helper,” God creates and saves,³⁵ which shows that this term designates a beneficial relationship. It can be a personal name for a male.³⁶ In Isa 30:5 the whole people is designated as “helper.” In Hos 13:9 the question is raised as to who will be Israel’s “helper” when destruction comes to her. In all OT instances the term “helper” is employed in contexts which refer to a beneficial relationship. The term itself does not specify positions within relationships, nor does it by itself imply inferiority. Since the term pertains to God, people, and animals (Gen 2:20), position must be determined from the context or additional content. This additional content is provided in Gen 2:18 with the word (*kenegdô*) which means literally, “like his counterpart.”³⁷

²⁷Ser n. 6.

²⁸Cf. Pss 60:12; 108:13; Isa 10:3; Holladay, p. 270.

²⁹Schmidt, p. 200; Westermann, p. 309.

³⁰So poorly E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, “Anchor Bible” (Garden City, NJ, 1964), p. 15.

³¹S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 3rd ed. (London, 1904), p. 41.

³²*Webster’s New World Dictionary*.

³³Driver, p. 41.

³⁴Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7; Pss 20:3; 33:20; 115:9-11; 121:2; 124:8; 146:5; Dan 11:34.

³⁵Pss 121:2; 124:8; 146:5-6; Deut 33:7, 26, 29.

³⁶1 Chr 4:4; 12:9; Neh 3:19.

³⁷Ludwig Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Li* (Leiden, 1958), p. 591; Holladay, p.

The idea is that woman is a helper “corresponding to him” or “alongside him.”³⁸ Inasmuch as woman is made a helper alongside and corresponding to man, she is his suitable counterpart and fitting companion.³⁹ Thus in Gen 2:18, 20 the kind of relationship which is entailed is one of equality, because the word *neged* (“counterpart”) which joins *ʔzer* (“helper”) indicates that woman is a suitable helper fit for man.

We must keep in mind that the animals are also helpers but, as Adam observes, they fail to fit man (*ʔdām*). They are formed (*yāsar*) from the ground (*ʔdāmāh*) as Gen 2:19 indicates. Yet their similarity in the way they are made and in the stuff they are made of is not equality. Adam names the animals and thereby exercises power over them; but no suitable, helping counterpart is found among them for him (2:20). Thus the report moves to the creation of woman. In short, animals are helpers *inferior* to man. Woman is suitable partner *alongside* and *corresponding* to man, his *equal* companion.⁴⁰

The account of the creation of the woman (Gen 2:21-22) concludes the story of the creation of man. In the creation of female God Himself is the only one active, just as in the creation of male. For the last act of creation, its climax, “the Lord God caused a deep sleep [*tardēmāh*] to fall upon the man” (2:21, NASB). Aside from the description of the actual processes of the creation of woman, this sentence appears to emphasize that man himself had no part whatever in the creation of woman. He neither participates in, nor looks on, her creation.⁴¹ He is likewise not consulted. Woman owes her origin as solely to God as does man.

Both man and woman were created from raw material. Neither man nor woman was spoken into existence. Man was made from dust (2:7); woman was made from a rib (2:21).⁴² The “rib” (*selah*)⁴³ is evidently taken from Adam, not to explain something with regard to him,⁴⁴ but to

³⁸So Speiser, p. 17.

³⁹L. Kohler, *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 246, n. 103, translates appropriately “a partner who suits him.”

⁴⁰Man is created by God in such a way that he requires mutual help. The writer of Ecclesiastes expresses this concept as follows: “For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up” (4:10, NASB). Man cannot fulfill his purpose except in mutual support.

⁴¹This point is made correctly by J. G. Thomson, “Sleep: An Aspect of Jewish Anthropology,” VT 5 (1955): 421-35.

⁴²Though the raw material itself is not identical, this does not do away with the fact that male and female are made from a divinely chosen raw material.

⁴³It has recently been supposed that “the reference to the rib has probably its ground in a Sumerian play upon words” (so now Westermann, p. 314, following J. B. Pritchard, “Man’s Predicament in Eden,” *RevRel* 13 [1948/49]: 15). Attention has thus been drawn to the creation or the goddess Nin-ti, whose name can mean both “lady of the rib” and “lady who makes live” because *ti* in Sumerian means “rib” and also “to make live” (S. N. Kramer, *History Begins Sumer* [Garden City, NY, 1959], p. 146; D. J. Wiseman, *Illustrations From Biblical Archaeology* [London, 1958], p. 9). However, the fact that “rib” is verbally linked to “life-making” in Sumerian—whereas in Hebrew the words for “rib” and “to make alive” have nothing in common—indicates that it is hardly possible that the reference to the rib in the biblical creation story has its origin in Sumerian mythology. This is further strengthened by the fact that the themes of the story of creation of woman and the Sumerian myth “Enki and Ninhursag” have virtually nothing in common (cf. ANET, pp. 37-41).

⁴⁴There is no scholarly agreement on what the conception of creation from the rib means. It has been suggested that “rib” was a euphemism for the birth canal which is lacking in males (so J. Boehmer, “Die geschlechtliche Stellung des Weibes in Gen. 2 und 3,” *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 79 [1939]: 292). It has been asserted that the “rib” explains the existence of the navel in the first man (so P. Humbert, *Etudes sur le récit du Paradis* [Neuchâtel, 1940], pp. 57-58) or answers the question why the ribs cover the upper but not the lower part of the body (so G. von Rad, *Genesis* [Philadelphia, 1961], p. 82) or that man can continue to live even at the loss of a rib (so O. Procksch, *Die Genesis*, 3rd ed. [Leipzig, 1924], ad loc).

express something of their mutual relationship.⁴⁵ “The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man. . . .”⁴⁶ The creation of woman from the rib of man does not imply a position of subordination on her part.⁴⁷ To the contrary, it stresses woman’s status as equal with man,⁴⁸ superior with man to the animals and inferior with him to God. To call woman “Adam’s rib” is to misread the text which explicitly states that the extracted rib was but the raw material out of which God built (*bnh*)⁴⁹ woman.

After the creation of woman God takes her to the man who acknowledges her equality and Jubilantly cries out in the poem of 2:23:

This at last⁵⁰ bone of my bones,
and flesh of my flesh;
This one shall be called woman (*ššāh*),
for this one has been taken out of man (*š*).

The first two lines (“bone of my bones, . . . flesh of my flesh”) joyously express that finally a fitting companion and suitable partner, the “counterpart corresponding to him” (2:18, 20) is brought. Man himself stresses that his partner is of the same stuff as he is.⁵¹

The last two lines introduce for the first time the terms “man” as male (*š*) and “woman” as female (*ššāh*). This change of terminology seems to indicate that man as male exists only in relationship with woman as female. Woman exists in correlation to man and vice versa. With the creation of woman (*ššāh*) occurs the first specific term for man as male (*š*).⁵² The linguistic pun of *š* (man) and *ššāh* (“woman”) in 2:23b proclaims both equality and differentiation in terms of male and female. The Genesis creation account carefully avoids any hint at inferiority or superiority. Equality between man and woman is both maintained and emphasized.

Some interpreters suggest that the phrase “this one shall be called woman” (2:23b) refers to the naming of female by male,⁵³ that thereby man has power and authority over her and that she

⁴⁵So correctly Westermann, p. 314.

⁴⁶C. F. Keil, *The First Book of Moses (Genesis)* (Grand Rapids, 1949), 1:89.

⁴⁷With Schmidt, p. 201.

⁴⁸“Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.”—PP 46. “The rib means solidarity and equality.”—Trible, p. 37.

⁴⁹The common verb *bnh* is employed in the OT for various kinds of activities which involve “building” (cf. R. Hulst, “*bnh* bauen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:325-27). It is employed only one more time (out of 376 total occurrences) for creative activity in the OT (Amos 9:6). It is a term expressing creative activity in Hebrew as its Akkadian cognate *bānû* which is the regular term describing the “creation” of human beings (W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-bāsis The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [London, 1969], p. 57; cf. Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* [Wiesbaden, 1959], p. 103), and its Ugaritic cognate *bny* which means “to create, procreate” (U. Cassuto, *Genesis* [Jerusalem, 1961], 1:134).

⁵⁰The common rendering of “now” for *ha-pa'um* is hardly sufficient. It should be translated as “at last” with NEB, NAB, NJV, and Holladay, p. 295.

⁵¹Cf. W. Reiser, “Die Verwandtschaftsformel in Gen 2, 23,” TZ 16 (1960): 1-4; W. Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gen 2:23a),” CBQ (1970), 532-42.

⁵²J. Kuhlewein, “*š* Mann,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:130-38.

⁵³So for example von Rad, p. 82; Bailey, JBL 89 (1970): 143; D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Chicago, 1967), p. 66; Westermann, p. 315; John H. Marks, “Genesis,” *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (New York, 1971), p. 5.

is subordinated to man.⁵⁴ Two considerations from a careful study of the respective passages indicate that the text does not support this inference. (1) The typical biblical formula for naming involves the verb “to call” (*qārā*), plus the explicit object, *name*. This is evident from the first naming in the Bible and is carried on consistently in Genesis. “And whatever the man *called* [*qārā*] a living creature, that was its *name* [*šēm*]. And the man *gave* [*qārā*] names [*šēm*] to all cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field” (2:19b-20a, NASB). In giving the animals names, first man establishes his divinely given authority and dominion as God’s representative over them (Gen 1:28) but comes to recognize that there is no suitable counterpart for him. We must keep in mind that in the OT the conferring of a name is an act of power and an assertion of ownership or some other form of control, just as the giving of a new name indicates a change of state or condition, the beginning of a new existence.⁵⁵ In Gen 4:17 Cain “built a city, and *called* [*qārā*] the *name* [*šēm*] of the city of Enoch, after the *name* [*šēm*] of his son” (NASB). In 4:25 another son is born to Adam who “*called* [*qārā*] his *name* [*šēm*] Seth.” To Seth also a son was born “and he *called* [*qārā*] his *name* [*šēm*] Enoch.”⁵⁶ These examples demonstrate that the clause “this one shall be called woman” (2:23) does not constitute the naming of Adam’s partner. This sentence has the verb “call” (*qārā*) but lacks the essential word “name” (*šēm*).⁵⁷ (2) This conclusion finds its support in the fact that the word “woman” (*ššāh*) is not a name or proper noun.⁵⁸ It designates the female counterpart to man with the recognition of sexuality. This recognition does not constitute an act of naming on the part of man to assert power and to assume superiority over woman.⁵⁹ Man and woman are equal sexes with neither one having power and authority over the other.⁶⁰

We have observed so far that Gen 1-2 would seem to indicate the equality of man and woman, that these chapters militate against the notions of superiority or inferiority on the part of either man or woman. There remains for us to turn to the suggestion that the creation of man before woman implies a divinely ordained subordination of woman. It is claimed that the order of sequence, man created first and woman second, establishes “the priority and superiority of the man . . . as an ordinance of divine creation.”⁶¹ Such a supposition would be in tension with the indicators of equality. It may be assumed that the inspired writer in writing the reports of the creation of man and woman wrote in such a way that the respective aspects of the total story would not be in tension with each other. Indeed the order of sequence of the creation of man and woman does not imply man’s superiority or woman’s inferiority. It serves a different function.

In Hebrew literature the central concerns of a unit often come at the beginning and at the end of the unit as an *inclusio* device.⁶² The complementary narrative of creation of Gen 2:4-25

⁵⁴Bailey, JBL 89 (1971): 143—“To be sure, the fact that she is . . . named by him, indicates a certain subordination on her part.”

⁵⁵The change of the name Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28) indicates his new existence and implies the nature and mission of the bearer. The assigning of the new names to Daniel and his three companions (Dan 1:7) establishes the authority and power of the Babylonians over the exiled youths.

⁵⁶Cf. Gen 17:5 for the renaming of Abram to Abraham and 17:15 of Sarai to Sarah.

⁵⁷At times the verb “call” is absent in the naming but the essential noun “name” is always present (cf. Gen 32:29).

⁵⁸J. Kuhlewein, “*ššā* Frau,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:247-51.

⁵⁹With Tribble, p. 38.

⁶⁰Westermann, pp. 316-18.

⁶¹Keil, p. 89; cf. nn. 1-4.

⁶²This term was used a long time ago by Eduard König. On this see now James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” JBL 88 (1969): 9-10; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, “Anchor Bible” (New York, 1966), 1:5; Tribble, p. 36.

evinces this structure. The creation of man first and woman last constitutes a “ring composition”⁶³ where the first and last (second) correspond to each other in importance. In terms of the thinking of the biblical writer, this does not mean that the first is more important or superior and the second less important or inferior. To the contrary, the existence of the creature created first is incomplete without the creation of the creature created last, as the divine declaration emphasized: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (2:18, NASB). Thus as the Gen 2 narrative of creation moves to its end it moves to its climax, and not its decline, in the creation of woman.⁶⁴ With the coming into existence of woman, creation has reached its completion and culmination. Her creation is not an afterthought. This is supported, as we have seen, by (1) the content and context of the narrative of the creation of woman in Gen 2 and (2) the content and context Gen 1 where *ʿādām*, as male and female, is truly the crown of all creation.⁶⁵

It may be parenthetically inserted that the remarkable importance of woman in the biblical reports of creation is all the more extraordinary when one realizes that the biblical account of the creation of woman as such has no parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature. It indicates the high position of woman in the OT and in biblical religion in contrast to woman’s low status in the ancient Near East in general.

Man and Woman in Genesis 3

The remarkable position of woman as an equal to man as a divine ordinance of creation (Gen 1-2) is not maintained much longer after the entry of sin. The consequences of sin are enormous even for the harmonious relationship and delicate equality between man and woman.

It is not necessary to rehearse the story of the serpent’s (Satan’s) approach to the woman, their dialogue, and the woman’s eating of the forbidden fruit (3:1-6a). In contemplating the tree in the middle of the garden, the woman recognizes the fruit as “good for food”; namely, it satisfies the physical drives. It is “a delight to the eyes,” showing that the fruit is aesthetically and emotionally desirable. The tree “was desirable as a source of wisdom [*haskil*]” (3:6) as the serpent had claimed (3:5). When the woman acts she is fully aware that she seeks not merely to satisfy divinely given drives,⁶⁶ but to attain a higher sphere of existence, approaching that of deity—to be “like God” (3:5). Under these impressions and aspirations she takes the fruit and eats. It is striking that the inspired writer shows in the way he writes of woman’s fall that the initiative and the decision to eat are hers alone without consultation with her husband, without seeking his advice or permission. In separating from her husband, she was “in greater danger than if both were together.”⁶⁷

After man joins his wife in eating of the fruit, both man and woman are one in the new knowledge of their nakedness (3:7). They are one in hiding from the Lord God (3:8) and in their fear of Him (3:10). In the acts of disobedience man and woman have broken the harmonious relationship with their God. Both male and female experience the same loss of harmonious relationship with God and each other.

⁶³Term used by Muilenburg, p. 9.

⁶⁴McKenzie, TS 15 (1954): 559. To make woman “the crown of creation” (so Bailey, JBL 89 [1970]: 143) is to overstate her importance.

⁶⁵Man is “the crowning work of creation.”—PP 52.

⁶⁶Westermann, p. 339.

⁶⁷SR 31.

God addresses to man the first questions (3:9, 11). Finally Adam admits, “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate” (3:12, NASB). Here is another indication of the broken harmony between male and female and man and God. Just as shame is a sign of the disturbance of interhuman relationships and fear a sign of disorder in divine-human relationships, so the disruption of these relationships in different spheres of existence is reflected in man’s defense after sin when he puts the blame on woman and, since she was given to him by the Creator, ultimately upon God.⁶⁸ The woman in turn blamed the serpent and, like her husband, ultimately God (3:13).

We must now turn to the judgments of God which come in curses and punishments. The record is explicit in its emphasis that divine curses are pronounced upon the serpent (3:14) and the ground (3:17); but the woman and the man are not cursed.⁶⁹

The declaration spoken to woman is of special concern. It consists of (1) the multiplication of pain in pregnancy and childbirth (3:16a)⁷⁰ and (2) that her husband shall “rule” over her (3:16b).

The judgment that there shall be an increase of “pain” (*‘iššābôn*)⁷¹ during pregnancy and in childbirth can hardly serve as a sound theological argument against attempts to reduce discomfort and pain during pregnancy and labor. Why? The same term (*‘iššābôn*) is employed for the “toil” (RV, RSV, NASB, NAB) or “labour” (NEB) imposed on Adam with regard to the travail in making his livelihood. As man’s travail in making a livelihood is reduced by inventions and technology, so woman’s travail in pregnancy and childbirth can be reduced by modern inventions and technological advances!

What does the troublesome statement that your husband (*iš*) “shall rule over you” (RSV) mean? At first sight one might be under the impression that as man’s dominion and rulership over the animals is established, so woman’s aspirations for a higher sphere of existence caused her to actually fall to an inferior position, equaling that of other creatures. But this means to misread the text. The inspired writer carefully distinguishes between man’s (*‘ādām*) rule over the animals and a husband’s rule over his wife. The Hebrew text employs two different verbs which are rendered into English (and other modern languages) by the same word. Man’s rulership over the animals is expressed with the verb *rdh* (1:26, 28), the meaning of which has been discussed already and need not be repeated. Man’s rulership over his wife is expressed with the verb *māšal* (3:16). In over 100 usages of forms of the root *mšl* in the OT, there is not a single example in which a form of *mšl* expresses man’s ruling over animals. Accordingly, by the choice of this word to express that man shall “rule” over woman, the inspired writer excluded the idea of woman being reduced through sin to a position equal to animals. The verb *māšal* is employed a number of times with Yahweh as the subject.⁷² When used of man, it is employed of man’s

⁶⁸With H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Gottingen, 1901), p. 16; von Rad, p. 89; and other against Tribble, p. 40: “Here man does not blame the woman; . . . he blames the Deity”; cf. PP 57: “he [Adam] endeavored to cast the blame upon his wife, and thus upon God Himself.”

⁶⁹Against Schmidt, p. 216, who speaks of a “Fluchwort gegen den ‘Menschen’” in Gen 3:17-19.

⁷⁰The translation “your pain in childbearing” (RSV, NJV, NASB, NAB) captures admirably the meaning of the Hebrew idiom which is “a parade example of hendiadys” (Speiser, p. 24). A hendiadys is a literary and idiomatic method whereby two formally coordinate terms, either verbs, nouns, or adjectives, are joined by “and” to express a single concept in which one of the components defines the other. The literal text would read “your pangs and your childbearing.”

⁷¹A kindred noun is employed the second time the word “pain” appears in 3:16; namely, *weēb* (“pain”), which derives from the same root *weh* (Holladay, p. 280).

⁷²1 Chr 29:12; 2 Chr 20:6; Ps 22:28; 59:13; 66:7; 89:9; 103:19; Judg 8:23.

rulership over creation (Ps 8:7), his brothers and sisters (Gen 37:8), slaves (Exod 21:8), nations (Deut 15:6), or nations ruling another nation (Joel 2:17). Man can also “rule over” or “be in charge of” someone’s possessions (Gen 24:2; Ps 105:21). The verb can also refer to “self-control,” namely the ruling of oneself (Gen 4:7; Ps 19:14; Prov 16:32). A common usage is “to rule” in the political sphere.⁷³ It is obvious that the verb *māšal*, being used of an activity of God, man, woman, nation, etc., has multiple nuances. It seems certain that it implies subordination. Again the context and additional content must define the nature of the subordination of woman to man.

It is a fact of nature that woman is not subordinate to man in intellectual, mental, emotional, and other spheres of existence. A woman could take part in equal status with man in the public life of ancient Israel. Important women are known from the earliest to the latest period of Israel’s history. Miriam could serve as a counselor to government (Exod 2:4, 7-8; 15:20-21) and is known as a prophetess (Exod 15:20). Deborah is an Israelite heroine and served as a “judge” on equal par with other judges (Judg 4-5). Athaliah reigned as queen over Judah for six years (2 Kgs 11). Huldah the prophetess was consulted by the king’s ministers (2 Kgs 22:14). Isaiah’s wife was a “prophetess” (Isa 8:3). Both men and women could take the Nazarite vow and dedicate and separate themselves for God (Num 6:2). The book of Esther tells how the nation was saved by a woman. Regarding God’s choice of women for spiritual and political leadership, the OT provides ample evidence against an inferior ability of women to fulfill such tasks, though they do not appear as often as man. Women were employed by God to do a work for Him, just as were men.⁷⁴

In returning, to the question of the meaning of the statement that man shall “rule” (*māšal*) over woman, one needs to stress that this follows the statement that her “desire” (RV, RSV, NASB) or “urge” (NAB; NJV; NEB, margin) shall be for her husband (Gen 3:16). This “urge” or “desire” can hardly be described as “bordering upon disease”⁷⁵ or as a craving more violent in woman for her husband than in man for his wife. Why? The same Hebrew term (*tešûāh*) is also used of man’s “desire” or “urge” for his beloved (Cant 7:10-11). This seems to imply that the wife’s desire for her husband is just as natural and strong as is the husband’s desire for his wife. On this point the OT does not appear to make a distinction between man and woman. Both seem to share the same urge.

In any case, the inspired record shows that the divine declaration that man shall “rule” over woman is placed within the context of the man/woman relationship in marriage. This contextual setting of the divine announcement of man’s rule over woman must never be lost sight of.⁷⁶ Note that the first part of the declaration, that is, the multiplying of travail in pregnancy, is an experience that takes place in marriage. The second part, that is, pain in childbirth, is likewise an experience which takes place within the sphere at marriage. The third part stresses the wife’s “desire for your husband.” Then after this threefold reference to changes associated with the marriage institution comes the sentence, “he [your husband] shall rule over you” (3:16, NASB).

⁷³Gen 45:8, 26; Josh 12:2, 5; Judg 8:22-23; 9:2; 14:4; 15:11; 2 Sam 23:3; 1 Kgs 5:1; Isa 3:4, 12; 14:5; 16:1; etc.; cf. J. A. Soggin, “*mšl* herrschen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:930-33.

⁷⁴To deduce superiority on the part of man on account of statistics (women functioned less often than men) is precarious.

⁷⁵So Keil, p. 103.

⁷⁶Paul also speaks of the wives’ submitting to their husbands (Eph 5:24), but adds immediately (to avoid misunderstanding) that they should love their wives as Christ loved the church (5:25) and as they love their own bodies (5:28).

The contextual setting of the marriage institution provides a crucial aid in answering the question of the meaning of the statement, “he shall rule over you.” The ruling of man over woman is restricted to the sphere of marriage.⁷⁷ Accordingly, this divine declaration does not apply to all spheres of woman’s life and activity. This sentence cannot be used to support male domination and supremacy in all spheres of life. It is reading into this statement what the context denies. It is eisegesis and not exegesis.

Now the sensitive questions arise with regard to the meaning of the husband’s ruling over his wife. Does this ruling mean male domination and supremacy in marriage? Does this imply that the female is to be reduced to a blindly obedient slave? Does this support man’s reign as a despot? Does this include the loss of the wife’s individuality, the surrendering of her will to her husband, etc.? Neither the OT nor the NT gives any indication of answering any of these questions in the affirmative. Sin disrupted the harmony of husband and wife. That man should rule over his wife means that the union and harmony of marriage can be preserved only by submission on the part of one to the other.⁷⁸ So man is the head of the woman as the Father is the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). As the Father and Christ are equal and yet God is the head of Christ, so husband and wife are equal⁷⁹ but the husband is the head. He is the first among equals. The submission on the part of one to the other can hardly be thought of as destroying the essence of a harmonious relationship; and yet one of the two rules and is head; whereas the other is in submission. The headship of the husband, his rulership in the sphere of marriage, is controlled by his love modeled after the love of Christ for His church, giving Himself up for her (Eph 5:25). A husband guided by the divine model will love his wife as his own body (Eph 5:28). These biblical concepts destroy any false understanding of the rulership function of the husband in marriage.

The usurpation of power and authority by man over woman contrary to the divine intention and God’s will is already illustrated in Gen 3. It appears to result from an increase of sin which corrupted the pattern established by God after sin vitiated man’s relationship with God and each other. The inspired record reports, “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living” (3:20, NASB). Adam named his wife. This is the second naming scene in the Bible. It has been shown above that the biblical formula for naming contains the verb *to call* (*qārāḥ*) and the object *name* (*šēm*). Both elements are present. In naming his wife, Adam asserts ownership and control over her. It is an act of power which seems to reflect the corruption of a relationship of mutuality and equality. Does the inspired writer intend to express the idea that Adam, who established his dominion and authority over animals in the act of naming them, is doing the same in naming his wife, establishing a supremacy fit for animals but not for his God-given equal? That the name Eve itself has a positive connotation, because it expresses the idea of life and that she is “the mother of all the living,” does not do away with her being named, which appears to fault man with corrupting a relationship of rulership

⁷⁷Ellen G. White clearly interprets Adam’s rule over Eve in terms of the husband/wife relationship in the home in the following way: “But after Eve’s sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in *subjection to her husband*, and this was part of the curse.”—3T 484, emphasis supplied. In PP 58, she writes, “they [Adam and Eve] would have ever been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by *submission on the part of the one [to] the other* . . . she had fallen into temptation by *separating from her companion*, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now *placed in subjection to her husband*.” (Emphasis supplied.)

⁷⁸See n. 77.

⁷⁹See 4T 36.

built on mutual esteem and self-giving love. Does it not appear as an act that mars the divinely established relationship between husband and wife? Is it significant that it is followed by expulsion from the Garden of Eden (3:22-24)?

Retrospect and Prospect

It remains now to summarize our conclusions and study their implications for the church at the time of the end. Genesis 1 appears to indicate equality between man and woman in the following ways: (1) “man” (*ādām*) being created as “male and female,” (2) their creation “in the image of God,” (3) their sharing in equal manner in the divine “blessing,” (4) their common power to “subdue” the earth, (5) their mutual assignment to “rule” over the animals, and (6) their common vocation to be God’s vice-regents on earth (Gen 1:26-21).

The more extensive story of the creation of man and woman in Gen 2 does not stand in tension or opposition to this picture, but corroborates the compressed statements of Gen 1, complementing them with additional details. That woman is created to be man’s “helper” (*ēzer*) expresses both a beneficial and a harmonious relationship between man and woman. Only woman is a suitable partner alongside and corresponding to man; she is his equal companion (2:18, 20). As God is man’s superior helper and animals are man’s interior helpers, so woman is man’s equal helper, one that fits him. Woman owes her creation as solely to God as does man who, although created first, is neither consulted nor participates in her creation. Her creation from Adam’s rib indicates the inseparable unity and fellowship of life between male and female as well as her status as equal with man (2:21). The jubilant outcry, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23a, RSV), expresses man’s recognition that finally there is a fitting companion equal to him. The fact of Adam’s creation before Eve’s does not imply any superiority on his part.

With the fall of man and the entry of sin into the world (Gen 3) the complete and total harmony between God and man, man and man/woman, and man and world is disrupted. The particular term chosen by the inspired writer to express the idea of the divine declaration that man shall “rule” (*māšal*) over his wife (3:16) indicates that she is not reduced to a slave or an animal to be “ruled” (*rādah*) as animals are (1:26, 28). The context of Gen 3:16 amply indicates that the sphere of woman’s submission is restricted to the marriage relationship. To maintain a harmonious union in marriage during the era of sin, God designed that while husband and wife should remain equal, he should “rule” over her or be the head of a relationship of equals as the Father is the head of Christ in the relationship of the equality of a triune God (1 Cor 11:3). The husband’s rulership is modeled after the self-giving love of Christ for the church (Eph 5:25, 28), which militates against any usurpation of powers and claims of authority over woman (Gen 3:20).

In addition to the important observation that the rulership of man over woman is valid in the sphere of marriage, it has been observed, if our careful investigation has not misled us, that the husband’s ruling function was explicitly assigned to him after the Fall.

The implications of these observations are of immense significance for the task of the proclamation of the gospel of God’s remnant church. If the plan of salvation and the message of the gospel are concerned with the reproduction of the image of God in men under the guidance of the Spirit of truth,⁸⁰ and if on the basis that Christ in His life and death has achieved even

⁸⁰DA 671.

more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin,⁸¹ is it then not the responsibility of the church to bring about the reproduction of the image of God in man, to restore harmony between God and man, and establish equality and unity in the human family where there is now inequality between men and women in such spheres of life and activity where the divine declaration of mans rulership over his wife and of the wife's submission to her husband (Gen 3:16; Eph 5:22-23; 1 Pet 3:1ff.) does not apply? Furthermore, does the urgency of the task and the shortness of time not require the total utilization of all our manpower and womanpower resources in the completion of the gospel commission given to the remnant church?

⁸¹Ibid., p. 25.