

*A Re-examination of Genesis 1-3*

## 5

## GENESIS 1-3

One already interprets a text through "cultural glasses" as soon as one reads from the Bible—especially from one of the English translations.<sup>1</sup> It may well be that the most important factor in biblical interpretation is the role of culture both for the ancient biblical writers and for the modern interpreter. As Noll<sup>2</sup> observes,

It is all too easy to allow forms of thought which appear to be only common sense in our century, but which are largely foreign to the world of Scripture, to dictate interpretations of what the biblical writers must have intended. But it is also a temptation for scholars to let the valid fruits of their empathetic research languish for fear of upsetting the dearly held commonsensical opinions of the wider evangelical community.

Far from being foolproof, the attempt to understand texts in their ancient literary and historical settings is still basic to interpreting the Bible. In this connection, we cannot permit prejudices to determine biblical interpretation. We must, however, work with the principles in mind that we have just discussed. So open your Bible and let's reexamine principal biblical texts having to do with women in the church.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stewart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982): 15-27.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Noll, "Evangelicals and the Study of the Bible," *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (ed. G. Marsden; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984): 118.

<sup>3</sup>See Carroll Osburn, ed., *Essays on Woman in Earliest Christianity* (2 vols.; Joplin, MO: College Press, 1993, 1995), for detailed discussion of most of the biblical and early Christian texts.

One might get the impression from current literature that the principal texts pertaining to women in the church are Gal 3:28, 1 Cor 14:34-35, and 1 Tim 2:13-14. However, there are other principal texts. How one understands Gen 1-3, for instance, is crucial in discussion of this topic. As might be expected, the opening chapters of Genesis are understood variously, and differences in views on this text between evangelical feminists and complementarians are of great significance.

1. *Genesis 1-3—The Evangelical Feminist Perspective*

Evangelical feminists<sup>4</sup> suggest that God's intent for the relationship between men and women centers on Gen 1-2 and Jesus Christ. Gen 1:26-31 reveals the pattern God used in creating men and women, their work and responsibilities, and God's response to them. Both men and women are made "in his own image."<sup>5</sup> God gave to both men and women the same responsibilities and commands. "Women like men were to have 'dominion'. . . . Women like men, were to 'subdue' the earth."<sup>6</sup> The term translated "man" in Gen 1:26-27 comes from the Hebrew 'adam (Adam) and refers to "mankind." In Gen 2, the term is also translated "man," but refers to one specific male who in most translations of Gen 3 is named Adam. In Gen 5:2, the term (translated "man") refers to both the first man and the first woman—Adam and Eve.

Gen 2 relates a separate creation story. God placed man in a garden and told him to work the garden and to name the

<sup>4</sup>See Alvera and Berkeley Mickelsen, "Male and Female in the Garden of Eden," *The Standard* (1983): 32, 34.

<sup>5</sup>Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975): 21, 33-40. Aída Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse—Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1985). 20-23, concludes, "The image of God is a double image."

<sup>6</sup>Mickelsens, "Male and Female . . .," *The Standard*, 32.

animals.<sup>7</sup> However, man's incompleteness soon becomes apparent. The purpose of parading the animals before Adam was to demonstrate that no lower form of life would adequately complete him.<sup>8</sup> So God says in 2:18, "I will make a helper suitable for him." Taking some of man's own body, God "built" the woman. Gen 2:23 reads, "she shall be called Woman (Heb., *ishah*) because she was taken out of man (Heb., *ish*)." Made of the "same stuff," she was the equal that God knew man needed to share in the responsibilities. These two individuals would "become one flesh" (marriage). Nothing suggests that "helper" indicates woman was created as "secondary" to man in a hierarchy.<sup>9</sup> "Helper" (Heb., *ezer*) often refers to God as "helper," but one cannot infer from this that God is "under the authority of" or "secondary" to humans. "Helper" rather denotes "precision" in fitting the needs and deficiencies in man.<sup>10</sup>

How, then, did the sinful world that followed arrive at a male dominance that pervades nearly every non-Christian religion and much of Christianity and which has brought incalculable suffering to women through the centuries? This becomes clear in Gen 3, where sin enters God's created world—damaging the relationship between God and humans and between male and female. Driven from the garden, and

<sup>7</sup>Scott E. McClelland, "The New Reality in Christ: Perspectives from Biblical Studies," *Gender Matters—Women's Studies for the Christian Community* (ed. J. S. Hagen; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990): 55-56, argues that priority of creation does not denote superiority, for animals preceded humans, but are not said to be superior, and that when Paul used an "order of creation" argument in 1 Cor 11:8-9, he quickly added a point to assert the mutuality of man and woman in vv. 11-12.

<sup>8</sup>Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1987): 154-155.

<sup>9</sup>See Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983): 14-17; and Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 23-29, for argument that Gen 2 focuses on the mutuality of the two sexes as co-sovereigns.

<sup>10</sup>Hull, *Equal to Serve*, 180-183; Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 24-40.

thus from God's presence, the harmony God intended between man and woman becomes disharmony. Male domination enters the picture.

Although hierarchalists assume that Satan approached Eve because of her weakness and gullibility, one must remember that God gave the original prohibition concerning the tree to Adam, not Eve (Gen 2:17). However, hierarchalists believe that Eve's inadequate understanding led her to doubt the prohibition. Adam, though, seems not to have hesitated for a moment (Gen 3:6), and Paul holds Adam responsible for the entrance of sin into the world (Rom 5:12-14; 1 Cor 15:21-22). Rather than not asserting his "headship," evangelical feminists argue that the problem is that Adam improperly taught the prohibition to Eve.<sup>11</sup>

The essence of the first sin in Eden is the desire for power (Gen 3:5). Nothing suggests that they violated some so-called "divine order of male dominance"—rather, their sin was disobedience and wanting to be like God (3:5-6, 11). The desire for dominance over others is the root of much moral evil—war, slavery, murder, theft, cruelty, etc. "He shall rule over you" (Gen 3:16) comes as a result of the Fall and was not part of God's original intention.

According to evangelical feminists, Christ came to free humankind from all such bondage. No separate moral principles, commands, rewards, or promises are given for men and women. All are called to servanthood and to be submissive to one another. Gen 1-2 clearly teaches that every person is made in the image of God, and shares the same commands and responsibilities in this world. Christ came to redeem people from the curse of sin that began in Gen 3. Evangelical feminists, then, say that Gen 3 is "descriptive" of the human dilemma, an unfortunate result of the fall of humanity and not at all designed by God.

<sup>11</sup>McClelland, "The New Reality in Christ," *Gender Matters*, 57-58, further argues that Adam's sin was not in "listening to his wife" as a female (Gen 3:17), but in "listening" to the *content* of what she said

## 2. Hierarchal Complementarian View of Gen 1-3

Piper<sup>12</sup> contends that inherent in maleness and femaleness are different responsibilities of leadership. By virtue of maleness, men have greater responsibility for leadership in relation to women than women do to men (Gen 1-3).<sup>13</sup> While Gen 1:27 indicates that man and woman are both created in God's image and neither is a lesser being,<sup>14</sup> Gen 2-3 shows God's pre-Fall intent was that man should provide leadership and woman should honor that leadership as man's submissive helper.<sup>15</sup>

Ortlund argues first that man was created before woman (Gen 2:7; see 1 Tim 2:13).<sup>16</sup> Second, God gave man moral instruction that was not repeated for Eve, leaving Adam responsible for providing leadership (Gen 2:15-17). Third, woman was created as a "helper," a suitable assistant in the

<sup>12</sup>John Piper, "Satan's Design in Reversing Male Leadership Role," *The Standard* (1983): 33, 35.

<sup>13</sup>Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship—Genesis 1-3," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991): 102.

<sup>14</sup>Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1979): 51, 59. Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship—Genesis 1-3," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 98, detects "hints" and "whispers" of male headship in Gen 1, but James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981): 206, notes, "The interpreter may not seek to read into the text any implications about the headship, subordination, or equality of the sexes. To make Genesis 1 speak about such issues is a matter of projection of prejudice rather than of extraction of textual meaning."

<sup>15</sup>Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship—Genesis 1-3," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 95, says, "... as Genesis 1-3 go, so goes the whole Biblical debate."

<sup>16</sup>Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 61, argues that "though the woman's being created second and from and for the man does not indicate inferiority, it does indicate a difference in the way they are to function. The woman is created to be a help to her husband; her function is dependent upon him." See also Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 207-209.

garden—implying man's leadership (2:20). Fourth, man "names" woman (Gen 2:23), implying male leadership.<sup>17</sup> Fifth, Satan's temptation of the woman involved urging her to usurp the role of spokesman and leader (Gen 3:1), and further that the man was present during the temptation, but abdicated his role as leader. So, it was not so much the content of her thinking that is the issue, but that she was assuming the role of leadership that was specifically his (Gen 3:17).<sup>18</sup> Sixth, the curse of Gen 3:16, "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you," is explained in terms of Cain subduing Abel in Gen 4:7—i.e., the curse is neither woman's sexual desire for man nor her personal desire for companionship, but rather her desire to subdue man.<sup>19</sup>

So, Gen 1-3 does not support the notion that male leadership is an evil result of the Fall.<sup>20</sup> Rather, Gen 2 presents man as leader and woman as helper, follower, and subordinate.<sup>21</sup> When sin came, both roles were corrupted

<sup>17</sup>Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship—Genesis 1-3," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 100, says woman "found her own identity in relation to the man . . . by the man's definition." See also Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 210-214, that naming demonstrates control. Piper, "Satan's Design in Reversing Male Leadership Role," *The Standard* (1983): 33, cites Gen 32:28, where God names Jacob.

<sup>18</sup>Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 64, mentions "usurpation of authority." See also Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship—Genesis 1-3," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 107-108; and Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 214-216.

<sup>19</sup>Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 67-68; Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 216-219; and H. Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1990): 27.

<sup>20</sup>Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship—Genesis 1-3," *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 109; George W. Knight III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977): 43-44.

<sup>21</sup>Piper, *The Standard* (1983): 35. Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 61, stresses that 1 Cor 11:8-9 and 1 Tim 2:13 demonstrate convincingly the order of creation in Gen 1-3, as does House, *The Role of*

by pride and self-sufficiency. Men abdicate their responsibility of leadership either in silence or by belittling and/or abusing women. Male brutality is a post-Fall matter. Women debase themselves by feigning subservience or rejecting male leadership altogether.<sup>22</sup> Hierarchal complementarians, then, advocate a "prescriptive" view of Gen 3 in which God intended hierarchalism from the very beginning.

While Jesus evidenced a very high view of women, complementarians do not view him as overturning the divine order of creation. Thus, with Jesus, the roles of headship and submission are not obliterated, but returned to their original purity. One can see this continued, they say, in Paul's statement, "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph 5:22-23).

### 3. Critique

Several similarities exist in these two views of Gen 1-3. For instance, Gen 1:27 is understood as stating clearly that both man and woman are created in the image of God and that no superiority is attached to maleness, nor is any inferiority attached to femaleness. Both views understand from Gen 2:19-20 that man was incomplete (lonely), and that woman was created to complete or complement man. Both view Adam and Eve as present at the temptation by Satan and understand the primal sin to involve "power."

However, major differences exist. On one hand, the intent of evangelical feminist exegesis is to provide alternative understandings of texts supportive of hierarchalism. In so doing, they have correctly understood "helper" in Gen 2 not as "under the authority of" or "secondary to," but as

*Women in Ministry Today*, 27. George W. Knight III, "The Ordination of Women: NO," *Christianity Today* 25 (1981): 260-261, who sees 1 Cor 11:8-9 as Paul's "exegesis and application of Gen 2:21-23."

<sup>22</sup>Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 69.

"complementary." Likewise, their view of the first sin being one of "power," in the sense of "trying to be like God," is textually sound. However, their postulation of Adam's naming the animals as indicative of man's incompleteness, while an intriguing view, does not emerge from adequate exegetical analysis. Similarly, their view of Adam's sin as essentially his not instructing Eve very well is based on an assumption, not on compelling exegetical analysis. In general, one gets the impression that some evangelical feminist exegesis of Gen 1-3 is basically an exercise in which feminist prejudices become evangelical feminist biblical conclusions, and not always truly objective exegesis. It is not surprising that evangelical feminists conclude that "he shall rule over you" is a post-Fall *descriptive* statement (giving the result of sin) stating the human dilemma that involves the unfortunate legacy of male dominance.

On the other hand, hierarchal complementarian exegesis is a direct response to evangelical feminism. Taking Adam's naming of the animals to indicate "authority over" them, and his naming of Eve as indicating "authority over," is simply an inference that does not reflect solid exegetical analysis. Also, that Eve's sin was that of "usurping male authority" is merely another inference from hierarchical prejudice. That "helper" in Gen 2 means that woman is subordinate to man will not withstand rigorous analysis. It is not surprising that complementarians conclude that "he shall rule over you" is *prescriptive* and that Gen 2-3 presents God's pre-Fall intent of male leadership and female submission.

The impasse requires a refocusing of the discussion. The question of woman's role in the Genesis narrative is a good one, and certainly a proper understanding of Gen 1-3 is vital to any responsible view of women. However, to identify the sin in the Garden as centering on the relationship of men and women skews the emphasis in the text on humankind's desire to displace God. To address Gen 1-3 in terms of the questions and prejudices generated by current controversy places restrictions on interpretation that hinder accurate understanding of the major focus of the text, which is to introduce God, sin, and redemption as essential to the

larger context of Genesis. This developing theological thrust of Genesis should control any understanding of manhood and womanhood in Gen 1-3.<sup>23</sup> The roles of man, woman, and sin as prototypical at the beginning of Genesis must be related to the way all of this plays out in the developing narrative on through Gen 50:26.

#### 4. A Responsible Understanding of Gen 1-3

Recently Marrs<sup>24</sup> has published a solid exegesis of Gen 1-3. His theological analysis addresses wider concerns in the text and brings them to bear on the topic of women in a scholarly and dispassionate way.

Working carefully with the literary structure of Genesis, especially the relationship between 1-11 and 12-50, Marrs views Gen 1 as setting the stage for Gen 2-11. The overview of the creation of the world in Gen 1 emphasizes God's role in creation and serves as a backdrop for four episodes: 1) Adam and Eve, 2) Cain and Abel, 3) Noah and the flood, and 4) the Tower of Babel.<sup>25</sup> Marrs notes,

Scripture opens with a powerful affirmation of what it means to be human in a God-centered and God-ordered world. Humankind, consisting of male and female, reflect the very image of God. The sovereign Lord of the universe has entrusted to his sovereign subjects direct responsibility for the rest of creation. . . . Humankind as male and female finds its meaning, direction, and purpose only in relation to its benevolent and gracious creator (11-12).

It is frequently held that Gen 1 expresses an "order of creation" in which male superiority and female inferiority

<sup>23</sup>See Clark Pinnock's "Climbing out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts," *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 143-155, appeal to avoid prejudice in exegesis.

<sup>24</sup>Rick R. Marrs, "In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen 1-3)," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 2.1-36.

<sup>25</sup>See F. E. Deist, "Genesis 1:1-2:4a: World Picture and World View," *Scriptura* 22 (1987): 1-17, for discussion of the creation narrative in Gen 1 in its literary and cultural context.

were the will of God from the very beginning. In this regard, Marrs admits at the outset that there is an order in creation—not, however, a move from superiority to inferiority, but from incompleteness to completeness (19). This counters hierarchical assumptions of an "order of creation" involving superiority and inferiority in writers such as Stitzinger,<sup>26</sup> who admits that "there is nothing in the text of Gen 1 to suggest hierarchical relationship, but there is also nothing to deny it." On the other hand, Davidson<sup>27</sup> is on firmer ground in holding, "sexual differentiation is presented as a creation by God, and not part of the divine order itself." "Order of creation" involving male superiority and female sub-ordination should be viewed as the result of hierarchical prejudice.

Marrs, then, finds no stated or implied superiority or subordination in Gen 1 (8). This is in agreement with the Staggs,<sup>28</sup> who argue,

In the creation narrative of Gen 1:26-30 there is no subordination, unless this be inferred from the listing of "male" before "female" in v. 27. In v. 26 the Hebrew term 'adham is used generically, for male and female or "the human race." . . . Both are created together: "male and female he created them." Sexual distinction is here seen as a creation of God. This is of far-reaching implication. Gen 1:27, "he created them," excludes the idea that man originally was "androgynous," i.e., one self as both male and female, only later to be divided into separate sexes. . . . In this perspective, "man," i.e., the human being, was created heterosexual, male and female; and they were so created as to find fulfillment in relationship with each other.

<sup>26</sup>Michael F. Stitzinger, "Genesis 1-3 and the Male/Female Role Relationship," *Grace Theological Journal* 2 (1981): 26.

<sup>27</sup>Richard M. Davidson, "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26 (1988): 6-7.

<sup>28</sup>Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978): 19.

In this vein, Tribble<sup>29</sup> makes four important observations regarding Gen 1:27, which reads, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (NIV). First, she notes that the shift from the singular "him" to the plural "them" shows that "man" is "not one single creature who is both male and female but rather two creatures, one male and one female" (18). Second, the singular "man" shows that "male and female are not opposite but rather harmonious sexes" (18). Third, the parallelism between "man" and "male and female" shows that "sexual differentiation does not mean hierarchy but rather equality . . . male and female are not superior and subordinate" (18). She notes further that 1:26 reads "Let us make man in our image," regarding both male and female, and "let *them* rule over" the earth, a terminology that continues in 1:28-29. Fourth, she says that one should be cautious "against assigning 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes to the words *male* and *female* 'regarding tasks involved in having dominion over the earth' (19).<sup>30</sup>

Davidson<sup>31</sup> says that there is no hint of spiritual or functional superiority between male and female in Gen 1. Both share in dominion over the earth and in procreation, and both participate equally in the image of God. Even so, Stitzinger<sup>32</sup> argues that, "spiritual equality between man and woman does not prohibit a distinctiveness in role relationships." However he is forced to admit that, "feminists, by an argument from silence, may be correct in supporting complete positional equality." Still, he argues, Gen 2 makes clear that while male and female share equally in the "image of God," equality of roles is not of God.

<sup>29</sup>Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978): 18-19. Cf. the critique of Tribble by Ann Gardner, "Genesis 2:4b-3: A Mythological Paradigm of Sexual Equality or of the Religious History of Pre-Exilic Israel?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990): 1-18.

<sup>30</sup>See Bernhard W. Anderson, "'Subdue the Earth': What Does It Mean?" *Bible Review* 8 (1992): 4, 10.

<sup>31</sup>Davidson, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1988): 7

<sup>32</sup>Stitzinger, *Grace Theological Journal* (1981): 26-27.

Marrs holds that Gen 2-3 focuses on humankind's role in God's creation. Specifically, these chapters treat man's, i.e., male and female, privileged status and role in creation and the disintegration of that life through disobedience (13-14). Noting hierarchical interpretations of Gen 2:21-25 (18-19), Marrs observes that the so-called "order of creation," i.e., man first and woman last, is often taken to mean that "first" connotes superiority while "last" denotes subordination. However, he counters that the actual "order of creation (man first, woman last) intends not a move from superiority to inferiority, but through *inclusio* (man/woman) a move from incompleteness to completeness" (19). Davidson<sup>33</sup> notes that Hebrew literature often makes use of an *inclusio* device in which the points of central concern occur at the beginning and end of the unit of text. This is the case in Gen 2. The creation of man at the beginning and woman at the end correspond to each other in importance. Only with the creation of woman does creation reach its climax. Thus, the "order of creation" in Gen 2 does not teach male superiority or female subordination.

Further, regarding the hierarchical view that woman is man's "helper" and therefore subordinate, Marrs observes that the Hebrew term for "helper" used here also occurs in the OT to refer to God as the helper of humankind. Even so, one should not take this to mean that God is subordinate to humans. Rather, the relationship is in focus. The Hebrew term "helper" does not specify rank or position. One should understand the specific meaning from the context. Whereas Stitzinger<sup>34</sup> holds, without stating precisely his reasons, that the context does not support equality of position, Davidson<sup>35</sup> holds correctly that Gen 2:18 and 20 clearly indicate equality of position. So, Marrs concludes, "Woman is created as a companion (neither subordinate nor superior) who alleviates man's isolation through identity" (20).<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>Davidson, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1988): 14

<sup>34</sup>Stitzinger, *Grace Theological Journal* (1988): 31.

<sup>35</sup>Davidson, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1988): 15.

<sup>36</sup>See Michael L. Rosenzweig, "A Helper Equal to Him," *Judaism* 35 (1986): 277-280, who argues against the radical feminist

Also, Marrs concludes that the hierarchical view that man's naming of woman, like his naming of the animals, implies superiority, is without foundation.<sup>37</sup> He notes that this naming is spontaneous on man's part, that the designation "woman" is not really a name but a generic term, and that in naming "woman" he simultaneously names himself. Man's naming of woman connotes no power or authority over her, but is merely an exultant acknowledgement of God's having created a suitable partner for him (21). This "suitable partner" culminates in their union as "one flesh" (2:23-24), a designation not of differentiation, but mutuality.<sup>38</sup>

Marrs holds that the temptation story in Gen 3:1-7 highlights the inclination to become like God, but that the woman is intelligent, informed, and perceptive (24).<sup>39</sup> This precludes the notion that the woman is weak, feeble-minded, and gullible. Contrary to popular opinion, the text does not state that the man is absent when the serpent speaks with the woman. Actually, the serpent uses the plural form of address and the woman answers in the first person plural. V. 3:6b makes it clear that the man was "with her" at the time. At no place does the text state or imply that the woman was a "temptress" or that she "enticed" her husband to eat the forbidden fruit. The sin was not so much in eating the fruit as in deciding to eat the fruit.<sup>40</sup> In their choice, man and woman desire independence that enables them to decide for themselves, and in so doing become like God (26-27).

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theory that the Hebrew term "equal to him" should rather be translated "greater than him," as well as against the common reading, "opposite to him."

<sup>37</sup>Stitzinger, *Grace Theological Journal* (1981): 32.

<sup>38</sup>See Lee McGlone, "Genesis 2:18-24; Ephesians 5:21-6:9," *Review and Expositor* 86 (1989): 243-247.

<sup>39</sup>See also George Coats, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983): 54; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984): 249.

<sup>40</sup>See Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis* (trans J Marks; rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972): 88.

This pattern occurs throughout the OT, beginning with Cain assuming a prerogative not really his and killing his brother (Gen 4).<sup>41</sup>

Admitting to God their choice, they, along with the serpent, face swift judgment (3:14-19).<sup>42</sup> There exists no little difficulty in understanding the judgment on the woman in 3:16. One problem has to do with whether her punishment is only pain in childbearing or pain in childbearing and desire for her husband. Marrs notes three interpretations. One view is that,

"Her desire, whatever it may be, will not be her own. She cannot do what she wishes, for her husband rules over her like a despot and whatever she wishes is subject to his will."<sup>43</sup>

Marrs states that the view that woman usurped man's authority has no solid textual basis behind it. Further, man's failure to control his wife is not mentioned in his punishment in 3:17-19 where it might be expected (31).

A second interpretation of 3:16b involves woman's desire to dominate her husband and the relationship. Foh,<sup>44</sup> assumes that God intended male headship from the very beginning and that it was not the result of or punishment for sin. Interestingly, instead of locating the meaning of the Hebrew noun "desire" in the Hebrew verb *shaqa* (to desire, excite), she locates its etymology in the Arabic *saqa* (to urge,

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<sup>41</sup>See John J. Scullion, "Genesis 1-11: An Interpretation," *St. Mark's Review* 122 (1985): 11-17; and Marsha M. Wilfong, "Genesis 2: 18-24," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 58-63, esp. 61-62.

<sup>42</sup>See Jack P. Lewis, "The Woman's Seed (Gen 3:15)," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (1991): 299-319, who critiques the view that this passage is to be interpreted as a messianic promise rather than being part of the curse on the serpent.

<sup>43</sup>Edward J. Young, *Genesis 3* (London: Banner of Truth, 1966): 127.

<sup>44</sup>See Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God*, 69; and Richard Hess, "The roles of the woman and the man in Genesis 3," *Themelios* 18 (1993): 15-19, esp. 17, where he prefers, "he will rule over you."

drive on, impel). So, woman's "desire" for her husband was not sexual desire, but the desire to possess and control him. However, two problems militate against Foh's view: 1) her presupposition of male headship prejudices her reading of the text, and 2) her attempt to locate the meaning of the Hebrew noun in the Arabic word for "to drive on, impel" rather than in the Hebrew verb for "to desire" is not at all convincing. Simply put, the text of Gen 3:16 does not say that woman's sin was in attempting to dominate the man.

Both of these alternatives presuppose a hierarchical reading of Gen 2 and a reading of the temptation scene for which there is no solid evidence (usurping man's authority).

A third alternative, and the one Marrs prefers (31-32), is that the woman's desire involves primarily her sexual desire for her husband. Marrs notes 1) Eve's derivation from Adam does not presume subordination,<sup>45</sup> 2) the Hebrew term "helpmate" does not imply subordination, 3) Adam's naming of Eve reflects recognition rather than dominion and subordination, and 4) 2:24, God created woman for companionship. There is no indication in 3:1-7 that the woman's temptation involved separation from the man. Her sin was not that of "usurping man's authority," but of exalting herself above God. This, I think, is correct.

Busenitz<sup>46</sup> observes that 1) in the context of Gen 3:14-19 each recipient of God's judgment receives one punishment, 2) in each judgment the nature of the punishment has no essential relationship to the nature of the sin committed, 3) the judgments on man and woman both revolve around propagation and seed, 4) 3:16 addresses the woman, 3:17-19 the man, and 5) the pronouncement occurs first in each punishment, followed by an explanatory

<sup>45</sup>Davidson, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* (1988): 16, argues that derivation does not imply subordination. Adam, for instance, was derived from the ground (v. 7), but one cannot conclude that the ground was his superior.

<sup>46</sup>Irvin A. Busenitz, "Woman's Desire for Man. Genesis 3:16 Reconsidered," *Grace Theological Journal* 7 (1986): 206-207.

statement. In actuality, Marrs notes, the pronouncement on the woman is the only pronouncement in this series that contains no curse (29). This being true, the context does not speak of the desire of the woman to dominate the man, but of the continuation of life in the face of death. This is the central point of 3:16a. This is the focal point of 3:17-19. There is then good reason to believe that this is the point in 3:16b. Marrs concludes,

If v. 16b has any relation to v. 16a, we would expect the woman's desire to have some connection to the pain that now accompanies her giving birth. It seems plausible that given the extreme pain that will now attend childbirth, the woman's desire for intimacy would be diminished. V. 16b counters such an assumption. However, her desire will be met with rule (32).

So, "he shall rule over you"<sup>47</sup> came about, not because woman usurped the leadership role of the man, but because she exalted herself above God. Her sin had nothing to do with denying Adam a rightful role. The only role Eve usurped was God's—a usurpation characteristic of all acts of wrong by people of both sexes at all times. Woman, then, may desire to dominate man, but that is not a punishment pronounced by God upon woman. Self-exaltation naturally results in the desire to dominate. Any act of domination by a woman is an action that is the consequence of sin on her part, not the result of a judgmental "curse" in Gen 3:16.

Gen 1-2, then, teach that originally man and woman shared an equality in a pristine world designed by God. The Fall in Gen 3 shattered this equality and began a long history of gender conflict based upon male hierarchy. Patriarchy is an unfortunate result of the Fall, not something designed by God. A question arises, however, whether Jesus accepted hierarchalism or whether he attempted to restore the equality that existed before the Fall.

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