

Paul is talking about order in the church here; and is using the order of creation as a ground for his teaching that women should respect their husbands by wearing their head coverings while they pray.

Regarding his opinion of most credentialed scholars' stance on the issue, scare quotes do not a sound argument make, and unsupported mudslinging does not deserve to be dignified with an answer.

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## The Bible's high view of women—letter 2

I would like to pass my best words of appreciation to the author—this is an issue very much underestimated by the church, and the less we teach about what the Bible says about the issue, the more the world confuses people about it. The author has a really clear vision of the subject and, as I can see, was trained in the Wesleyan tradition (which is a pioneer in that area of practical theology), so, I would highly recommend the author to continue the study's development. That is the only reason I am writing—to encourage the author to improve the paper for the sake of God's greater glory.

I fear the paper does not go far enough with the Genesis account's proper exegesis. This results in confusion, such that despite "Eve's ontological equality with Adam ... she is subordinate him in some sense" (p.53). I would make the following comments:

1) The point that the name giving is an act of ultimate authority is a very good insight. But the Genesis account shows very clearly that the man "called his wife's name Eve" only in Genesis 3:20, i.e. after the Fall—the man did not have such authority over his wife until the God's verdict.

- 2) The word "adam" (Heb. "man") in Genesis 1–3 cannot be understood exclusively as the male person or even his personal name. It is also a general term for both male and female together (1:27) and even a collective given name for them: "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Genesis 5:2).
- 3) It could well be that the subordination of the wife to her husband was declared for the first time in Genesis 3:16: "thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee". There is no "shall be" in the original text, the word "desire" is in the present tense, so that is not a prediction but a statement of fact. And it is definitely not about sexual desire, as some understand, since sexual desire was given to the *adam* (male and female) as a commandment prior to the Fall (Genesis 1:28).

Precisely the same phrase "desire—rule over" as in 3:16 is used in 4:7 where sin is about to control Cain, but God says to Cain to rule over it. These are only two places we meet that phrase in the Scripture. So one can interpret the phrase in the way that the wife will have a desire to rule over the husband (and, probably, the opposite is right as well) as an outcome of the Fall, and God resolves the conflict of the desires declaring the order for the new conditions. From that interpretation one can conclude that before the Fall *adam* (man and woman) did not have the selfish longing to control one another, but were subordinate to one another in love.

That leads to interesting New Testament implications: the Church is called to restore the proper order of God's household (Gr. *oikonomia*—translated as "dispensation" in Ephesians 1:10, 3:2), where all are submitted (Gr. *hupotassomenoy*—subordinated) to one another. However while "there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28), their roles are different. That is why in Ephesians right after

the instruction of submitting to one another Paul shows the difference in the way wives should be submitted to their husbands and husbands to their wives (and also role differences in the mutual submission of masters/slaves and parent/children later on).

- 4) The idea of the ontological subordination of woman "in some sense" comes also from a misunderstanding of the word *ezer* (helper) as an apprentice or assistant, while it could mean "enabler" or "empowerer" and more commonly refers to God (cf. Deut 33:7,26,29; Ps 20:2, 33:20, 70:5, 89:19, 115:9–11, 121:1–2, 124:8, 146:5; etc.). Sure, that role of woman was corrupted by the Fall, but even today the world recognizes that, like someone put it, "behind every great man one always can find a great woman".

While not pretending to be great in any way, I can testify that I would never have been able to start or run our ministry if not a for the support, enabling and empowering I receive from my wife Olga, for whom I praise God.

The last point: speaking of women in ministry in the NT it would be worthwhile to mention that Philip had four daughters "which did prophesy" (Acts 21:9), whatever that meant. Paul mentions prophecy among the special ministries of the word given to the Church by God (Ephesians 4:11). He describes it as speaking "unto men [i.e. people] [for] edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1Cor. 14:3), he even provides the instructions on how women should practice it in a culturally appropriate way (1Cor. 11:5).

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Lita Cosner replies:

I agree that this is a topic that the Church has not addressed as it

should, especially in the light of how competing worldviews view women.

It is true that Adam named his wife Eve after the Fall, but that was the second time he named her. The first time was 2:23, where he named her “woman”. This is clearly an act of authority, just as God’s naming of mankind showed His authority over them (I agree with your point 2), and Adam’s naming of the animals showed his authority over them. But there are different types of authority, and I would say that Adam’s authority over the woman is not the same as God’s authority over mankind or Adam’s authority over the animals.

I believe the woman’s designation as *ezer* is very important; the NICOT section on that passage says that “it suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him. Thus the new creation will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal.” I believe that the full ontological equality of men and women is very important, and frankly the only Christian position possible. This means that women are as fully human as men, they share all human rights that men possess, etc.

Now the question is: can subordination happen between ontological equals? And the answer is a resounding yes. We see it in work relationships. I may work for my boss, which involves some subordination (or I wouldn’t be employed for long!), but does that mean I am not ontologically equal to him? Of course not; no one argues that. It’s a somewhat similar situation in the Godhead; Jesus, God the Son, is eternally subordinated to the Father’s will, but we affirm His ontological equality to the Father (of course, some egalitarians would argue that Jesus’ submission to the Father was limited to His incarnation. I do not believe this to be a plausible position based on the biblical evidence). Subordination in and of itself need not be degrading, and true complementarians speak out against degradation in subordination as much as egalitarians.

I believe Genesis 3:16 refers to a distortion of the subordination already shown in Adam’s naming his wife

“woman.” Golovin’s interpretation of “desire” is plausible.

Nowhere in the Bible is the husband told to submit to his wife, but wives are clearly told to submit to their husbands. Ephesians 5:21 cannot be read apart from the following verses: husbands are rather to sacrificially love their wives, not submit to them. This means that husbands are to exercise their authority over their wives for their good, not to lord it over them and demean them. There is also a parallel in Colossians 3:18–19, without any hint of mutual submission. In Christian marriages, especially, when the marriage relationship comes close to what God intended all along, both partners are better off than either would be alone.

Regarding women’s roles in the church, it is clear from the New Testament that women prophesied: Paul does not restrict them from prophesying, but instead tells the married women to wear their head coverings while they do so, and that they are to do so in an orderly fashion—he regulates the practice, he doesn’t forbid it. It is hard to reconstruct exactly what women’s roles were in the early church. This is because a lot of the words that became technical terms—*diakonos* or deacon, for example, hadn’t fully developed in NT times. Sometimes *diakonos* has the technical meaning of “deacon” and sometimes it clearly only means “servant” or “helper” in a general sense. So if someone is going to argue there were, for example, female deacons, it would require proving that *diakonos* in that context has the technical meaning of deacon. Also, church structures were much different in the early church than they are today. So we can say that women prophesied, but what is the analogous role today? And if there is a role which women were prohibited from having in the early church, what is that role today? Much of the egalitarian/complementarian debate is precisely over these questions.

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## The Bible’s high view of women—letter 3

I respectfully accept the author’s argumentation, while I still have some reservations on two points:

“It is true that Adam named his wife Eve after the Fall, but that was the second time he named her. The first time was 2:23, where he named her ‘woman’.”

- 1) We do encounter in the Bible situations when someone gets a new name, but Genesis 3:20 says nothing about the change or replacement of the name.
- 2) The wife is called “wife”/“female person” (Heb.—*ishshah*) in Genesis 2:22 already, so man is not the first one who came up with that concept.
- 3) Genesis 2:23 says about calling (*niphal*) vs calling (*qal*) name in 3:20. The (sort of) sacred concept of name (Heb. *shem*—same as for reputation, fame or glory).

Therefore I would suggest that man in 2:23 actually just recognizes who woman is—the same type of person, but of the opposite sex. He applies to her the same word he calls (not names) himself (*ish*), but in feminine gender (*ishshah*).

“Nowhere in the Bible is the husband told to submit to his wife.”

To use the word “nowhere” one should exclude Ephesians 5:21 from the Bible. However that, I am afraid, is the hardest issue to discuss in the area of semantic nuances of the concepts of submission, subordination, authority recognition etc. in Greek, Hebrew (which impacts Greek semantics in Paul’s writing), English and Russian (the language in which my understanding of the concepts is rooted) with no actual direct equivalents (semantic approximations only).

Even in ancient Greek the words had multiple semantic fields allowing the writer to play with them. As the Online Bible Greek lexicon states on “*hupotasso*”. (“In non-military use, it was a voluntary attitude of giving in,