

beauty and logic of true deity. And if our Creator exists in this manner, should we be surprised and offended if the people he makes in his image have equal status but different roles as well?

The New Testament Superstructure

The New Testament clearly teaches both male-female equality and male headship-female subordination. In Christ, Christian men and women are 'joint heirs of the grace of life' (1 Pet 3:7; cf. Gal 3:28). At the same time wives are to submit to their husbands in the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church (Eph 5:22-24). The husband, meanwhile, in his headship role is never to dominate and oppress his wife. There is no New Testament basis for the equation 'headship = domination'. On the contrary, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (5:25-33). When a wife receives such self-sacrificing love, it becomes easy for her to accept her husband's headship.

This two-dimensional reality appears again in 1 Cor 11. Paul teaches *both* that 'in the Lord' men and women are equal (11:11-12) *and* that the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ is the head of the man and God the Father is the head of Christ (11:3). On the basis of the male headship put in place in creation, Jesus called only men to be his apostles, and Paul insisted (as a 'command of the Lord' in keeping with 'the Law' established in Genesis) that the women were not to teach at public worship (1 Cor 14:33-38; 1 Tim 2:11-15). The New Testament has no difficulty placing these two themes alongside each other (see 1 Pet 3:6-7). In no way does a distinction in our roles detract from our equality before God.

Contemporary Challenges to the Order of Creation

Today various aspects of the order of creation are challenged:

- God's design for marriage as a life-long union, with husband and wife 'cleaving' together (Gen 2:24) until death parts them;

- God's design for sexual love to take place only within marriage (only after the public 'leaving' of the parents - Gen 2:24);
- God's design for the husband/father to be the head of the marriage partnership and the family;
- God's design for sexual love to take place only between a male and a female. In criticising homosexuality, Paul alludes to the male-female distinction of Gen 1:27 ('male and female he created them'; cf. Rom 1:26-27). Because they've undermined these foundations, history shows that once advocates of women's ordination gain the day, some start advocating homosexual clergy;
- God's design that only men are to hold the public Office of the Ministry. Writing to Timothy, Paul appeals to Gen 2-3: 'I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to be in silence. *For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor*' (1 Tim 2:12-13).

Christians influenced by feminism cast suspicion on these biblical foundations in favour of the shifting sands of our culture. Doing so denies the realities of God's created order.

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Honouring God's Good Creation



Honouring God's Good Creation

To those looking for a clear word of Christian teaching about God's created order and the implications for the Office of the Ministry.

The speaker stared at his interrogators. He'd been advocating women's ordination, but during question-time some pastors raised the issue of 'the order of creation'. They argued that this was the reason the Lord does not permit the ordination of women. 'Order of creation?' he replied. 'What order of creation? I don't know what you mean.'

The Order of Creation

God outlines his original plan for how human beings should relate to him, to each other, and to the rest of creation in Genesis chapters 1 to 2. Humankind made in God's image is the pinnacle of his handiwork, with a special role of caring for the animals and the rest of creation. Woman was created as a helper for man who has been given a headship role. 'Order of creation' is thus shorthand for describing these key relationships, reaffirmed in the New Testament.

The above speaker feigned ignorance, because this theme of God's original plan is an uncomfortable one for the proponents of women's ordination and feminist theology in general. *This is not least because Paul bases his arguments for a male-only pastorate on the created order.*

Some advocates of women's ordination rule out any consideration of God's original creative design on the basis of Gal 3:28 which teaches that there is no longer 'male nor female' through our baptismal oneness in Christ. They say things like this: 'Through baptism, when we clothe ourselves with Christ, *even the laws of creation are suspended*. God created humans male and female, but now in Christ there is no male and female. There is no order of creation that demands the lordship of men and the subservience of women. Before God there can be no gender-restrictions.'

But is it true that gender differences no longer exist 'before God'? And if so - as one writer responded - what did you marry? Does Paul's advice to husbands and wives in Eph 5:21-33 no longer apply? *Not at all!* The truth is, our salvation in Christ is the answer *to the Fall*; it does not do away with the original created order, or supersede it.

Genesis 1-3 Foundational to Christianity

Genesis 1-3 is foundational to Christianity. The Christmas gospel in John 1:1-14, with its grand opening, 'In the beginning was the Word', replays the opening words of Genesis, 'In the beginning God created...'. All the New Testament's central themes rest on Genesis 1-3: God's light in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6; Gen 1:3), his powerful speech (John 4:46-54; Matt 8:5-13; Gen 1:3), the goodness of all he does (Mark 7:37; Gen 1:31), humanity's fall into sin (Gen 3; Rom 5), the promise of a Saviour (the seed). Much is at stake if we try to get around aspects of these foundational texts.



But our chief concern is *the creation of man and woman*: 'And God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness".... and God created man in his image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them' (Gen 1:26-27). Eve was created from Adam's rib to be his helper, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh (Gen 2). The chapter concludes with the marriage text: 'Therefore a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (2:24).

Everything the New Testament teaches about the relationship between the sexes rests on these texts. For example, when Jesus challenged the Pharisees on their attitude to divorce, he appealed to Genesis: 'In the beginning it was not so' (Matt 19:8). *From the beginning* God intended marriage to be the *lifelong* union of a man and a woman. *From the beginning* God designed sexual love to take place *within* the 'God-created shape called *marriage*'. *From the beginning* God created us male and female, so that sexual love is to take place only between a man and a woman. *From the beginning* God created the

man and the woman as equal partners, both of them creatures in the image of God, *and* at the same time with the man as the head of their partnership, the woman as his helper.

Headship and Equality

But where in Genesis 1-3 does God say the man must be the head? Doesn't Genesis simply teach equality? Yes, Genesis certainly teaches that we all have equal worth as God's image-bearers. But it also indicates male headship: both the male and the female are given the collective name 'man' ('Adam' - Gen 1:27). Adam is created first, and Eve is taken from him and given to him to be his helper (Gen 2:18-25). In the Fall, however, the woman is deceived when the man fails to exercise spiritual leadership, and the woman hears that though she may wish to rule her husband, he will rule her (Gen 3:16).

Since the Fall, then, what was meant to be a loving headship has often degenerated into an oppressive one. But in Christ, God's original intention of a servant headship is restored. Inspired by Christ, Christian husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

Thus Genesis 1-3 sounds a two-fold theme: male-female equality coupled with male headship. The feminist view, however, is that either you have male-female equality without qualification, or you have males lording it over females. For feminists, male headship = male domination. So they reject male headship. But the Bible's theme of the man's headship is so clear that one feminist (Rosemary Radford Ruether) concludes: 'Feminist theology cannot be done from the existing base of the Christian Bible.'

The head-helper relationship is not arbitrary, but rather has a profound source, as one writer affirmed to this effect: God exists as one Godhead in three persons, equal in glory but different in role. Within the Holy Trinity the Father leads, the Son submits to him, and the Spirit submits to both. But it is also true that the three persons are fully equal in divinity, power, and glory. The Son submits, but not because he is God, Jr, an inferior deity. The ranking within the Godhead is a part of the sublime

It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. Genesis 2:18