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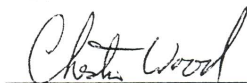
*BIBLICAL SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY IN MARRIAGE  
WITH SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ITESO EVANGELICAL  
CHRISTIANS OF UGANDA*

BY  
PETER OKAALET EBULU

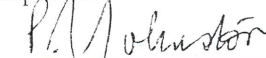
PETER OKAALET EBULU  
BIBLICAL SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY  
IN MARRIAGE WITH SPECIAL INTEREST  
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Theology

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## **ABSTRACT**

Correct practice can only flow out of correct theory. It is upon this premise that I set out to investigate the meaning of submission and authority in marriage in the relevant New Testament texts. Chapter one is introductory.

Chapter 2 includes an exegetical study of Genesis 1-3 and the social backgrounds of Peter and Paul - how women and marriage were perceived in the Roman, Greek, and Jewish settings. The views and teachings of Jesus concerning women and marriage are also included in this chapter.

In chapter 3, I have exegetically discussed what one would call the "primary marriage texts", namely, Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-20; and 1 Peter 3:1-7. Here, the Apostles Paul and Peter clearly spell out imperatives for husbands and wives in marriage. I have also included other related Pauline texts in this chapter, because they, too, have to do with man/woman and/or husband and wife relationship. These are: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33b-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; and Galatians 3:28.

To seek to apply theological principles to the African context is in keeping with the declared purpose of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (N.E.G.S.T.) namely, "To develop an authentic African understanding and expression of the universal gospel of Jesus Christ, and an effective cross-cultural communication of the same." This is the content of chapter 4, where I discuss marital practices of the teso, a Nilo-hamitic people of North-eastern Uganda. In a closing chapter, I discuss a restatement of the issue, a summary, and recommendations for further research.

Please note that all biblical quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible, 1988 edition, by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

## **DEDICATION TO**

Sarah, my dear wife for her  
love, patience and understanding;  
and our dear children, Emmanuel, Peter,  
Jenny-Mercy and Faith-Linda.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Issue

Marriage is God's creation and gift to humanity. The Bible clearly states that man and woman are created in God's image,

"...in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

Man, therefore, needs woman, and woman needs man. But the very thought that men need women and women need men is repulsive to many in a secularised society that values independence and self determination<sup>1</sup>

The problem is that men and women today are turning away from God-ordained principles of harmonious living in a home, as husband and wife. The roles of husbands and wives are already blurred. The moods of today are 'Independence,' 'Liberation' ('Women's Liberation'), and 'Freedom.' The roles of men and women, husbands and wives are getting more and more confused, to the extent that the children growing up today may not know how to function in their homes. No wonder Dr. E. E. LeMaster has said in his book, Parents in Modern America:

In the modern American family male and female roles have been shifted and reorganized extensively since about 1920, and some families appear to be disorganized in that nobody seems to know who is supposed to do what.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Boehi, "Men and Women: Seeing the Value in Our Differences," Moody Monthly, 92, no.11 (July August 1992): 17.

<sup>2</sup>As quoted by Paul Steele and Charles Ryrie, Meant to Last: A Christian View of Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, S.P. Publications, 1983),29.

What obtains in Africa today, at least in the urban centres, and among the 'educated class' may not be far from what has been quoted above. This is compounded by the so-called 'modern' lifestyle.

Without clearly defined roles for husbands and wives in a home, there will be problems in the upbringing of children. These problems will also be experienced in a community and in a church. Since communities make up a nation, then these problems will be experienced nationwide. This will then lead to confusion, all because of the unsatisfactory role definition between husbands and wives. On every social stratum, there can be productivity only as there is a harmonizing of roles. This harmony is especially important in the family.

The problem at hand is that African society is getting more and more confused on the matter of marital roles. Fortunately, God is not. His unchangeable Word is clear. He still speaks through what He has spoken before. There is nothing more necessary for life, growth and health of families, and especially of Christians, than that they should hear and heed what the Spirit is saying to them through the ancient - yet modern - Word.

God created Adam and Eve to complement each other, not to compete with each other. Until the Church re-examines and implements the biblical teaching on submission and authority in marriage, the Christian families are going to continue to wallow in confusion and tension, in fear and uncertainty, just like their non-Christian counterparts.

What is more is that, today, in most of our churches, the number of women far outweighs that of men. A summary of the Nairobi Church Survey reveals that there are seventy-two women for every one hundred men in Nairobi city. This is because so many men leave their families behind in order to come to Nairobi city in search of employment. But in contrast, the church has a slightly greater attendance of women than of men. The research indicated that on a given Sunday one out of ten men in the

city attend church (10%), while one out of seven women attend church (14%). From the aforementioned it follows that the church is not reaching men as well as it could. In the Anglican and the African Independent churches, more women attend than men.<sup>3</sup> The survey showed that there are more single adults in Nairobi churches than might be expected. Slightly less than 50% of those attending are married. This indicates that many young people in the churches have not chosen a marriage partner or have been unable to afford the high cost of marriage.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, most of the women in our congregations are either married to, or cohabiting with husbands who are neither church members, nor care about the Gospel. This state of affairs breeds tension in many homes. These tensions have a bearing on submission to authority ("headship") in homes. How can there be harmony in such homes? Instead, there is competition, strife, and tension as far as husband and wife are concerned.

My thesis is that God has created man and woman to complement each other. The husband is the God-appointed "head" (has authority-over) of the wife. The wife has a God-given role "to submit" to her husband in a marital relationship. I believe this to be what Paul and Peter teach in the New Testament.

What then is biblical submission? And what is biblical authority in matters pertaining to Christian marriage? Why are these significant questions for Christian couples today? What are the implications of a correct understanding, interpretation and application of biblical submission and authority, with respect to the Evangelical Christians in Africa? What do these have to do with the Evangelical witness of the church in this continent?

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<sup>3</sup>Larry Niemeyer, "A Summary of the Nairobi Church Survey" (Nairobi: Daystar University, 1989), 37-38.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 38.

This study seeks to answer these, and other related questions, hopefully, not only for the benefit of the Evangelical Christians, but also for the benefit of the non-Christian community, especially the Iteso of North Eastern Uganda.

### Significance of Study

What is the "current" way to exercise submission and authority in a home? The correct answer(s) to this question will go a long way in helping to solve the many problems that arise due to the misunderstanding of the same question.

The words "submission" and "authority" are fraught with emotional overtones and are likely to elicit a broad spectrum of reactions from individuals. Very few Christian husbands and wives remain neutral about these words. Yet, based on Genesis 2:18, where the Lord God has said, "it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (NKJV), Dwight H. Small has been quoted as having said:

The glory of man is the acknowledgement that woman was created for him. The glory of the woman is the acknowledgement that man is incomplete without her. But the humility of the woman is the acknowledgement that she was made out of man ... and the humility of the man is the acknowledgement that he is incomplete without her.<sup>5</sup>

This knowledge will set a woman free from the false notion that submission simply means being a 'doormat', or a 'yes-person' to her husband. For fear of losing their identity many women would rather mask submission with either 'appeasement,' or 'manipulation.' This will cause her to hide her true self and self-worth. "A

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<sup>5</sup>Robert Wes, and H. Norman Wriaht, Before You Say, "I Do": A Marriage Preparation Manual For Couples (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1978), 38-47.

woman's unique personhood is a terrible thing to waste," says Groom.<sup>6</sup> When women have been set free from manipulating their husbands, harmony will then begin to flow in the homes of Christians, which will then enable such partners to become' more effective in Christian ministry, both in the home and in the church.

What of the significance of this study with regard to men? The role of man is based on such texts as Colossians 3:20 and Ephesians 5:25. "Love", (*agape*) is what he is expected to exercise towards his wife. The model for the husband is none other than Christ. Christ, who is the head of the Church, demonstrated his "headship" for the Church through his sacrificial death on the cross for her. His love for the Church was for the purpose of nurturing her, building her up, and presenting her back to himself pure, holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27). All this is for the sake of the Church, not of Christ. What a gigantic calling and standard for Christian husbands!

To love one's wife, therefore, implies (1) sacrificially to toil, care and materially provide for her physical and other needs, (2) to care for her spiritual welfare, (3) to go the way of the cross for her (John 12:24), and (4) to exercise God-given authority in humility after the manner of Christ toward his Bride, the church.<sup>7</sup>

This is very crucial in that, failure to love one's wife as prescribed by Scripture results in:

- (i) prayers of husband (and wife) not being answered by God (1Peter 3:7);
- (ii) a lack of submission from the wife;

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<sup>6</sup>Nancy Groom, Married Without Masks: A Closer Look at What Authority and Submission Really Have to Do with Marriage (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 1989), 37.

<sup>7</sup>Larry Christenson, The Christian Family (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany Fellowship, 1970), 126-139.

(iii) a lack of intimacy and harmony in the home.

That being the case, there will be a poor witness and modelling of Christ to the children, the church and the community at large.

Children can ideally be truly nurtured, sheltered, and introduced to God in a home where both mother and father exercise their God-given roles of 'submission' and 'headship', respectively, to the honour and glory of God, through Christ.

This study, it is also hoped, will benefit the teachers and trainers of young people in schools and colleges. Already, it is reported that the rate of immorality among the Secondary School youths is reaching alarming proportions, according to an AMREF Survey in the Kenyan Schools on Adolescent Health and Sexuality.<sup>8</sup> The present writer was among the ninety-seven participants who received and discussed the report at the Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, on the 19th. of November, 1993.

The teaching to young people of the roles of husbands and wives in marriage will in some way assist them to make responsible choices when they grow up. Moreover, it is a form of 'preventive' counselling, because "to be forewarned is to be forearmed."

There are also reported cases of homosexuality and lesbianism already in our urban centres and in some Secondary schools. For example, 1.5% of approximately the 10,000 girls surveyed in the 17 districts of Kenya in the above study reported that their first coitus took place with another girl.<sup>9</sup> The knowledge derived from this thoroughly biblical study, it is hoped will go a long way in averting these and other unnatural relations among persons of the same sex.

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<sup>8</sup> Pat Youri, ed., "Female and Adolescent Health and Sexuality in Kenyan Secondary schools: A Survey Report" (Nairobi: African Medical and Research Foundation, February, 1994).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 28.

All in all, it is hoped that this study will have far-reaching effects and benefits to the married, the young people, the church leaders, and the teachers in our schools and colleges. If this study will encourage the building-up of Christian homes according to biblical foundations, then the researcher's efforts will not have been wasted. After all, stable homes make up stable churches, which in turn, make up stable communities.

In summary, then, freedom and harmony in marriage is costly. It means letting go of our non-biblical traditional and cultural values, as well as our pride and a tendency towards independence. The "independent - I", according to John Stott, has to give way to the "dependent - We", in order for there to be harmonious living in our homes.<sup>10</sup> Home, then is where we model for the world the picture of Christ and the church. As He shows us His unconditional love, we should try to respond in happy submission to Him, so that the world will see and know that we are truly His disciples.

### Objectives

The objectives of this study derive from the issue already discussed above. These are:

1. to exegetically elucidate the meaning of submission and headship, as they are related to marriage;
2. arising from one above, to try and correct the misconception that "submission" implies "inferiority" and that "headship" has to do with male domination and "lordship";
3. to promote the dignity of the role of wives;

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<sup>10</sup>John R.W. Stott, God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians (London: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 236.

4. to demonstrate that the moods of today, such as "Freedom", "Independence", and "Liberation" (of women) are human creations which are not consistent with the divine creation of both man and woman in God's image;
5. to suggest some implications of obeying the divine order of "submission" and "loving headship" for married couples, especially among the Iteso, a Nilo-hamitic tribe in the North-Eastern region of Uganda, which in turn have a bearing on their children, the church and the Evangelical movement in Africa;
6. to demonstrate from biblical exegesis of the relevant portions of Scripture that "submission" is for men, too;
7. to demonstrate from Scripture that the prerequisite for peace and harmony in church and society, is obedience to the divine order for wives and husbands.

### **Assumptions**

Whereas it is believed in most societies that two people (male and female) are married when their relationship is legally recognized (i.e. registered by the registrar of marriages), from the biblical perspective, there is much more to marriage than legal registration.

In this study, it is assumed that Christian marriage includes mutual consent between two persons (male and female adults), a covenant, both verbal and written before a pastor and before a congregation of God's people, and a consummation of the physical union, based on 1 Corinthians 7:1-6 (i.e. "let the husband fulfil his duty to his wife, and the wife, likewise to her husband").

Another assumption is that God is the creator not only of male and female (Genesis 1:26,27), but also of heterosexual marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). It is, therefore, normal to assume that, based on creation accounts, there cannot be marriage between two men (homosexual relationships), nor between two women (lesbian

relationships). Also, it is assumed that by marriage, we mean a monogamous and not a polygamous relationship (Rom. 7:1-3).

This study takes for granted the fact that God's order for partners is the best that can ever be (see Colossians 3:18,19). All other demands, especially of culture and tradition, upon the couple must be subjected to biblical scrutiny. Where these contradict the stated commands of God, they have to be rejected. Where they do not contradict scriptural teaching they can be upheld, despite the fact that there could still be 'grey' areas. Hence, apart from the Bible there should not be any other authority on marital matters.

It is also assumed that scripture is inerrant, infallible and Spirit-inspired (cf. 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17). As such, coherence can be expected from such inspired texts on marriage like the ones quoted above, notwithstanding the 'difficult texts' such as 1 Corinthians 14:33-35, Galatians 3:28, and 1 Timothy 2:8-15, among others.

Also, the writer assumes Pauline authorship of the books of Ephesians and Colossians. I am not going to deliberate much on the subject of the authorship of these books, except to say that the chief arguments against the Pauline authorship of Ephesians are linguistic, stylistic, literary, historical, and doctrinal.<sup>11</sup> go along with those who argue for the Pauline authorship of Ephesians and conclude that the internal and external evidence are sufficient ground to uphold this view. Some defenders of the Pauline authorship of Ephesians include Donald Guthrie,<sup>12</sup> F.F.

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<sup>11</sup>Edger J. Goodspeed, Meaning of Ephesians (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933). His books, together with other works by DeWette and F.C. Baur, have been influential in rejecting the Pauline authorship of the letter. Goodspeed proposes a reconstruction of a post-Pauline situation which, for him, produced the book of Ephesians. He contends that Ephesians was written by a disciple of Paul as a preface to the Pauline corpus. But see end of footnote 14, below for further comments on this matter.

<sup>12</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 496-528.

Bruce,<sup>13</sup> and Everett F. Harrison.<sup>14</sup> In any case, internal evidence suggests that the letter is was written by Paul (1:1; 3:1).

As for Colossians, it is claimed that it was written by a disciple of Paul or by a member of his close entourage who was well versed in the Apostle's theology. But arguments for the authenticity of Colossians seem more convincing. Language and style are not sufficient grounds to doubt the Pauline authorship of the epistle. Therefore, in this study, we shall assume that Ephesians and Colossians are authored by Paul.

#### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study is limited to the relationship between husbands and wives only, not males and females in general and even then, only to the aspect of submission and headship. It is not the intention of the writer to cover all other aspects that have to do with marriage, such as courtship, wedding, honeymoon, in-laws, and dowry ('bride-price'). The focus of this study is on the meaning of "submission" and "headship," in marriage.

This study is also limited to discussing what obtains in monogamous marriages and not in polygamous ones. Similarly, it is a study on marriage, not divorce and re-marriage.

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<sup>13</sup>F.F. Bruce, The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians, New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 22-46.

<sup>14</sup>Everett F. Harrison. Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 332-37. For the latest and most powerful advocates of this view, the reader may also want to refer to D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, An Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 305-309.

On implications, these are limited to the African context, and more specifically, the Iteso, a Nilo-hamitic ethnic group in North-Eastern Uganda.

Even then, it is the implications within the Evangelical witness of the church, and not on other concerns of the African church, such as church-state relationships, church and politics, for example.

In the Old Testament, the study is limited to sections on marriage from Genesis 1 and 2, and also 3.

In the Gospels, Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:3-12 and related passages is briefly discussed. However, Jesus did not specifically give a prescription on the manner in which husbands were to relate to their wives in marriage.

In the Epistles, the study is limited to Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-20; and 1 Peter 3:1-7, commonly known as the *Haustafeln* (Housetables - see later). Other related Pauline texts are also included, namely: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33b-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15, and Galatians 3:28, because they, too, speak of the relation of wives to husbands in marriage in one form or other.

#### **Definition of Key Words**

The following words are defined as the writer sees them in relation to this study namely: marriage, submission, authority, Evangelical.

**MARRIAGE:** A relationship between two persons, male and female –adults, which is legally recognized and registered (in contemporary society), but which, from the Christian point of view, has mutual consent and a covenantal aspect to it, and has been consummated through physical union.

**SUBMISSION:** Submission in this case (of wife to husband) is the recognition by a wife of her husband as the legitimate head of their home and her esteeming of

his role as the head of the family, directly under Christ's lordship. There are no inferiority or superiority overtones implied.

**AUTHORITY:** (1) "Power or right to enforce obedience; moral or legal supremacy; the right to command, or give an ultimate decision."<sup>15</sup>  
 (2) Derived or delegated power: authorization."<sup>16</sup> Definition number two, above, is what the writer sees as most applicable to this study. A husband's headship (Ephesians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 11:3) over his wife is a form of derived 'authority' bestowed upon him by God, the writer contends. Authority in this case has nothing to do with rule, lordship, and/or tyranny. The concept of authority in this case spells out love and responsibility on the part of the husband.

**EVANGELICAL:** The term Evangelical means what pertains to the 'euangelion', the Gospel. Evangelicals are, therefore, those Christians who are committed to the authority of the Word of God as their "rule of faith and practice." They are those who affirm the following as essential doctrines of the Gospel: the incarnation, virgin birth, and the sinless life of Christ; His substitutory atonement and bodily resurrection; justification by faith alone of all who trust in the

<sup>15</sup>William Little, H.W. Fowler, and Jessie Coulson, "Authority" in The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, vol. 1.(1973).

<sup>16</sup>ibid.

*ephapax* ("once for all time") sacrifice of Christ. <sup>17</sup>Evangelicals believe in Jesus' divine miracles, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His personal return in glory. In short, an Evangelical is one devoted to all the Good News of Jesus Christ, to the whole special Revelation of God. Also from the Prospectus of The Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (1994-95 Academic Year) doctrinal basis of faith, an evangelical is one who believes in [sic]:

- The Holy Spirit indwelling of a believer, enabling him/her to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The spiritual limit of all believers in Jesus Christ, who compose the church, the body of Christ of which He is head.
- The personal existence of Satan, whose intent is to supplant God and frustrate His purpose, and whose ultimate end is consignment to eternal punishment.
- The Bodily Resurrection, of all the dead, of the believers unto everlasting blessedness and of the unbelievers unto judgement and everlasting punishment. <sup>18</sup>

### Plan and Methodology

In this study, careful exegesis has been applied to relevant biblical texts. These texts are representative of the major blocks of Scripture within the limitations given above. The exegetical procedure followed includes:

<sup>17</sup>Tite Tienou, The Theological Task of the Church in Africa (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1982), 7. See also, Carl F.H. Henry, "Evangelical" in The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, (1974).

<sup>18</sup>Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology Prospectus, 1994/95, 25.



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## CHAPTER TWO

### MARRIAGE AND THE WORLD BEHIND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In this chapter, the writer tackles only two contexts which have a direct relevance to Pauline and Petrine writings in the New Testament. These are: (A) The Old Testament perspective, with particular emphasis on the creation of man and woman in the image of God. Paul refers to Genesis 1, 2 and 3 in his New Testament writings on marriage, hence our concern for this context. (B) The social contexts of Paul and Peter, which are the first century cultures of Judaism, Hellenistic and Roman settings. How women were perceived with respect to marriage is vital to us because the messages of Paul and Peter which we handle in the next chapter, came to people living in a particular life situation then.

#### A. THE OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

This perspective will be discussed under three sub-sections, namely: (1) the creation of man and woman in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28); (2) creation of the marriage ordinance (Genesis 2:18-25); and (3) the Fall and its effects upon marital relations (Genesis 3). The discussions will be preceded by an exegesis of the relevant texts as indicated above.

#### EXEGESIS

##### 1. The Creation of Man and Woman in God's Image: Genesis 1:26-28

Day six was creation's climax for it included humankind. Though man and woman were the last creatures to be created, they are the only creatures created in the

image of God (v.27). This makes humankind distinct from all other kinds of creatures both in creation and in calling.

**Verse 26: "Then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness;..."**

The issues for discussion here are: (a) the use of the plurals "us/our", (b) the force of the prepositions, "in" (  $\text{בְּ}$  ) and "according to" (  $\text{כְּ}$  ) and (c) the meaning of "image" and "likeness".

##### a) The use of the plurals - "us/our"

Scholars have posited different understandings of verse 26 on the meaning of "us/our". Some of these views are presented here, from Wenham's summary.<sup>1</sup>

- (i) **Philo and Jewish Commentators** - God is addressing his heavenly court, (i.e. the angels, cf. Isa. 6:8).
- (ii) **From the Epistle of Barnabas and Justin Martyr** - the plural is reference to Christ. Most scholars, though, admit that this verse adumbrates the Trinity, and so is not acceptable.
- (iii) **Gunkel** - suggests that the plural might reflect the polytheistic account taken over by "P" (Priestly Source). This view is now rejected by most commentators.

<sup>1</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 1 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publishers, 1987), 27-28.

- (iv) **Keil, Dillmann, Driver** - This is an example of a plural of majesty: (cf. the English royal "We"). It refers to "the fullness of attributes and powers conceived as united within the Godhead." But Jouon's observation that "we" as a plural of majesty is not used with verbs has led to the rejection of this interpretation.
- (v) **Jouon (114e)** - This is a plural of self-deliberation (i.e. self-exhortation, encouragement, cf. 11:7; Ps. 2:3).
- (vi) **Clines** - suggests that the plural is because of plurality within the Godhead. God is addressing his Spirit who was present and active at the beginning of creation (1:2). "This, though possible", says Wenham, "looses much of its plausibility if (Spirit) is translated as 'Wind'."<sup>2</sup> That leaves options (i) "us" = God and the angels, and (v) "us" = plural of self-exhortation, to be the more likely choices. Both are compatible with Hebrew monotheism. But view (i) has been negated by some scholars who argue that the Old Testament nowhere else compares man to the angels, nor suggests angelic co-operation in the work of creation. In fact, the use of the singular verb "create" (1:27) does suggest that God worked alone in the creation of humankind. Still others see interpretation (v), where

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28.

"us" = plural of self-exhortation, as uncertain on the grounds that parallels to this usage are very rare.<sup>3</sup>

But Cassuto argues that the "us" in 1:26a should be taken as a plural of exhortation (cf. the usage "let us go", "let us rise up", when one is addressing oneself).<sup>4</sup> Moreover in Genesis 11:7, we have a similar exhortation: "Come, let us go down and let us confuse their language." In view of this other usage of the "us" (11:7), it would, therefore, imply that view (v), above is the most plausible in this context.

#### (b) The use of the prepositions $\text{בְּ}$ bē ("in") and $\text{כְּ}$ kē ("like")

A study of the Hebrew-English Lexicon<sup>5</sup> reveals that the prepositions  $\text{בְּ}$  ("in, by") and  $\text{כְּ}$  ("as, like") are not exact synonyms. But in this verse,  $\text{בְּ}$  "in" is virtually equivalent to "like". "According to our likeness", therefore, appears to be an explanatory gloss indicating the precise sense of "in our image." "There is widespread agreement about this today," asserts Claus Westermann.<sup>6</sup>

#### (c) The Meaning of "Image" and "likeness"

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Umberto Cassuto, From Adam to Noah: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, vol. 1 Translated by Israel Abraham (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1978), 55-56.

<sup>5</sup>Francis Brown, The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew English Lexicon (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 88-91, 453-455.

<sup>6</sup>Claus Westermann, Genesis 1-11: A Commentary. Translated by John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 146.

The Hebrew word for "image" is  $\text{צל}$  *selem*. In the Old Testament, it refers to various types of physical images, for example, tumours (1 Sam. 6:5); pictures of men (Ezek. 16:17); or idols (Numb. 33:52). In Psalms, man's existence is likened to an image or shadow (Ps. 39:7; 73:20).

The Hebrew word for "likeness" is  $\text{דמות}$  *demut* (literally, "portrait," "copy"). It has an ending typical of an abstract noun, and is related to the verb  $\text{דָּמָה}$  *dā mā* (to be like, resemble). The word occurs most frequently in Ezekiel's visions, for example in 1:5 where it could be aptly rendered "something like" (cf. Isa. 40:18).<sup>7</sup>

But in what does "image" and "likeness" consist? We turn once again, to Wenham's summary of some of the solutions that have been proposed by some scholars.<sup>8</sup>

- (i) "Image" and "likeness" are distinct aspects of man's nature. The image refers to the natural qualities in man (reason, personality) that make him "resemble" God, while the "likeness" refers to the supernatural graces (e.g. ethical) that make the redeemed godlike. But these distinctions still do not express the original meaning.
- (ii) The "image" refers to the mental and spiritual faculties that man shares with God, such as reason, personality, free will, self-consciousness, and intelligence. But we do not find many references to the divine image in the Old Testament. So, it may be justifiable to assume, as some modern commentators do, according to Wenham, that "image" was too well understood to require definition.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 146-147.

<sup>8</sup>Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 30.

- (iii) The "image" consists of a physical resemblance (i.e. man looks like God, cf. Genesis 5:3, where Adam is said to have fathered Seth "after his image". But the Old Testament's stress on the invisibility of God makes this view somewhat problematic (see Deut. 4:15-16). The case for identifying the image of God with man's bodily form or upright posture is, therefore, unproven.
- (iv) The "image" of God in man makes man God's representative on earth. The divine purpose for man is to rule over creation. This rulership is a royal task (cf. 1 Kings 5:4). Also, Psalm 8 speaks of man as having been created a little lower than the angels: man is "crowned" with glory and made to "rule" the works of God's hand. Whereas the Egyptian writers often spoke of kings as being in God's image, they never referred to other people in this way. The Old Testament, therefore, according to Wenham, seems to have democratised this old idea, thus affirming that not just a king; but every man and woman bears God's image and is his representative on earth. This view tells us why humankind has rulership over other creatures. It does not tell us what this image really is.
- (v) The "image" is a capacity to relate to God. The divine image in man means that God can enter into a personal relationship with man, speak to him, and make covenants with him. This view is also held by Westermann,<sup>9</sup> among others, who writes that the phrase "in our image" modifies the verb "let us make", not the noun "man". In

<sup>9</sup>Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 150-151.

this case, the "image of God is not part of the human constitution so much as it is a description of the process of creation which makes man different from animals.

The above survey indicates the difficulty of determining what the author of Genesis understood to be the image of God. None of the suggestions seem entirely satisfactory, though there may be elements of truth in many of them. Wenham, though, seems to suggest that view (iv) is plausible, that the divine image makes man God's vice-regent on earth. Because man is God's representative on earth, his life is sacred (see Genesis 9:5-6). But this merely describes the function or the consequences of the divine image, it does not pinpoint what the image is in itself.

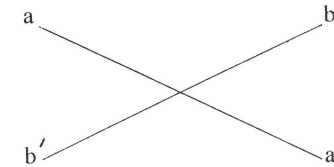
Perhaps Cassuto's<sup>10</sup> suggestion should be given serious consideration: that the image of God in man should be thought of in spiritual and not corporeal terms. No material idea should be imputed to the meaning; only spiritual. So, man, who resembles the other creatures in his physical structure, approaches God in his thought and in his conscience.

**Verse 27: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."**

In this verse, we have the voice of the narrator (cf. v. 26 where God is the one 'speaking'). The fulfilment of the divine intention (v. 26) is recorded in three brief phrases (see above), specifying the most significant aspects of human existence.

<sup>10</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 56. C.F. Keil and P. Delitzsch, A Commentary on the the Book of Genesis, vol. I, Trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1966), 63-64, however, see the image of God in man, both in the spiritual and the corporeal nature of man and woman in the creaturely copy of the holiness and blessedness of the divine life. This was, of-course, shattered by sin; it is only through Christ that our nature is transformed into God's image again.

Structurally, the first and second lines are chiasmically arranged thus:



"So God created..... man in his own image; in the image of God..... He created him;

According to Cassuto:

- the first line speaks in general terms, of man's creation; -the second line draws attention to the fact that he was created in the divine image;
- the third line ("male and female he created them") notes the creation of the two sexes.<sup>11</sup>

Also, each of the three clauses contains the verb  $\text{בָּרָא}$  ("create"), which is repeated for emphasis. Furthermore, whereas verse 26 used the anarthrous  $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית}$  (mankind, humanity), here, in verse 27, the definite article  $\text{בְּרֵאשִׁית}$  is used. This means that mankind in general, "male and female", not the individual, is meant. The expression "male and female" signifies the fact that God created a male  $\text{זָכָר}$  and a female  $\text{אִמְרָא}$ . Both share the image of God. But unlike God, humans are characterised by sexual differentiation.<sup>12</sup> And unlike animals, humans are not broken down into species (i.e. "according to their kinds", or "all kinds of"). Male and female he created them is significant for a number of reasons. First, it negates the rabbinic interpretation which claims that man was created with two faces (i.e. hermaphrodite)

<sup>11</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 57

<sup>12</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 138.

which is not the sense of the verse: He created them in the plural.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, it bridges the first part of verse 27 and the verses that follow. It identifies exactly who bears the image of the divine. Thirdly, it prepares the way for the blessing of fertility to be announced in the next verse (28).

Before proceeding to verse 28, we must state here that the consequence of verse 27 is that humanity exists in community-people have been created to live with each other. "Every theoretical and institutional separation of man and woman, every deliberate detachment of male and female, can endanger the very existence of humanity as determined by creation," says Westermann.<sup>14</sup> An overstatement? Maybe, but there is great truth in it.

**Verse 28: "Then God blessed them, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion... over every living thing that moves about on the earth.'**

The words, "Then God blessed them, and said to them," according to Wenham, are meant to draw attention to 'the personal relationship between God and man.<sup>15</sup> God gave two assignments to the male and female: (1) procreation, and (2) dominion ("to subdue and to rule") on the earth and the animals, thus fulfilling their role as God's image bearers on earth (v.26).

<sup>13</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 57. There is a chance from (He created) "him" (אֱלֹהִים בָּרַךְ אֶת הָאָדָם), to (He created) "them", אֱלֹהִים בָּרַךְ אֶת אֲדָמָה. The Word אֱלֹהִים בָּרַךְ אֶת אֲדָמָה ("them"), indicates that God created two human beings, man and woman.

<sup>14</sup>Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 160.

<sup>15</sup>Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 33.

The blessing mentioned in this verse is purely one of fertility and increase (cf. 1:22), as if to say, "Be fruitful and multiply like the fish."<sup>16</sup>

Verse 31 brings to a close, all that God did on the sixth day. On the previous days the words "that it was good" were applied to a specific detail; now God evaluates all of his creation, everything (including man and woman). The whole was not just good, but "very good". The sixth day as being the last, is distinguished above all the rest by the article on the ordinal number, יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי ("a day, the sixth").

Humankind is distinct from all other living creatures both in creation and in calling.

In creation, man and woman are unique. They are the crown of creation. They are created equal. Both are bearers of God's image.

In calling, man and woman, according to Genesis 1 are both to have dominion over all the realms of creation. Both are commissioned to multiply and to rule over all creation (1:28).

In Genesis 1, the author does not concern himself with the headship, subordination, or equality of the sexes. The point that must be emphasized, though, is that, in Genesis 1 equality between man and woman is underlined. There is equality in the bearing of the divine image. There is equality in the mandate of rulership over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26, 28). Both man and woman have equal dignity before God. They are of equal worth.

But in the second creation account, the focus changes from creation in relation to God, to creation in relation to each other (man and woman).

## 2. Creation of the Marriage Ordinance: Genesis 2:18-25

<sup>16</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 51, 58.



ⲛⲉⲣⲉⲥ̅ has caused a lot of difficulty to ancient translators (see below for their attempts to translate Gen. 2:7<sup>23</sup>).

**(b) God's Provision for the well-being of humans: Genesis 2:8-17**

Verses 8-14: Are about the abode which God prepared for the first man. It was called a "garden in Eden," also known as "the garden of Eden" (see 2:15; 3:23, 24; Joel 2:3).

Eden ( ⲉⲃⲉⲛ ) means "delight", something that is a "pleasure", "delight".<sup>24</sup> Eden is described as a garden (cf. 3:23, 24) (literally, "a place hedged around").<sup>25</sup> The garden had trees that were "good for food" and were also "pleasing to the eye" (2:9). It was a well watered garden. But this garden had to be taken care of. God assigned man the responsibility of tending the garden of Eden.

**Verse 15.** Here we see God placing man to work the ground, to keep it, and to dress it, since the reader has already been alerted to the fact that "there was no man to work the ground" (v.5). The Hebrew word for keep is ⲓⲁⲙⲁⲣ̅. Cultivation, therefore, would prevent the trees from running wild through natural degeneration. Thus we

<sup>23</sup>Early Versions render ⲛⲉⲣⲉⲥ̅ as indicated: (1) Targum (Babylonian), "endowed with speech;" (2) Targum (Palestinian), "man became a living being endowed with speech", (3) Peshitta Syriac, "and Adam became a living spirit/soul"; (4) Old Ethiopic, "progeny of the mother of the living". The LXX renders it as "a living soul". The following are some renderings of Gen. 2:7 by some Modern Versions: REB, "became a living creature", NAB, "became a living being". (note literally, "being = "soul"); NRSV, "became a living being". Note that the emphasis of the Targamic interpretation is on "reason" (shown in the ability to speak).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>25</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 80.

see that man is created to work, not to idle around. The man, created in the image of God, also has work to do (cf. God, working in creation).

**Verses 16-17.** In these verses we see that God provides food for the man. In doing so, God sets limits for the man: "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Obedience to the divine will would have enabled humans to attain a godlike knowledge of good and evil. Disobedience, on the other hand, meant death. And, indeed, Adam and Eve learnt the difference between good and evil from their guilty experience. They "fell victim to the threatened death".<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the tree which would have helped them attain true and eternal freedom, became the means by which the first human pair (and all humans thereafter) came to know sin, and with it, death. They failed in both responsibilities: first, toward God (became disobedient); secondly, toward the environment (failed to tend it as required by God). Hence, their banishment (3:23, 24) from the very garden which had been a delight (2:8,9).

**(c) Creation of the Woman: Genesis 2:18-25**

**Verse 18.** As the creation of man is introduced by divine decree ("Let us make man", see 1: 26), so here, too, that of the woman is preceded by the divine declaration: "It is not good for the man to be alone." Against the sixfold refrain of "and God saw that was good" in chapter one (vv. 4,10,12,18,21,25), and the "very good" (1:31), is now this divine observation that something "is not good." Wenham finds this observation

<sup>26</sup>Keil, and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 85-86.

"startling"<sup>27</sup>. I find it fitting, in that the Master 'designer' is yet to fashion ('build') another human 'specimen' comparable to the man.

The word  $\text{לֹא}$  ("not"), according to Cassuto, is a more emphatic negation than  $\text{אֵין}$  (not),<sup>28</sup> hence its usage here. The phrase "it is not good," however, alerts the reader to the importance of companionship for the man. That man, the first one, Adam, was in need. Hence God's provision of a helper to meet that need (vv. 18,20).

The new being which man needs is called  $\text{עֹזֵר}$  (a "helper"). To help someone does not imply that the helper is necessarily stronger than the helped (except, of course, if the helper is God). It simply means that the latter's strength is inadequate by itself. Moreover, the God of Israel, *Yahweh*, is often called (a "helper") and a "shield" in many Old Testament texts (for example, Ex. 18:41; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Pss. 33:20; 115:9, 10,11; 124:8; 146:5, etc.).

The verb  $\text{צָלַם}$  ("succour"), means "to save from danger", "to deliver from death". The woman, therefore, will deliver or save the man from his solitude.<sup>29</sup>  $\text{לְפָנָיו}$  ("is in front of him") "according to what is in front of him"). This is a compound prepositional phrase, consisting of  $\text{לְפָנָיו}$  +  $\text{כְּעֵצְמוֹ}$ , and which means "matching him" (literally, "like opposite him"; cf. "corresponding to him," "that which is over against", "counterpart" )<sup>30</sup>. According to Delitzsch, the phrase, a "helper of his like" = "a helping being in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognize himself."<sup>31</sup> This suggests that what God creates for Adam will neither

<sup>27</sup>Wenham, *Genesis* 1-11, 68.

<sup>28</sup>Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah*, 127.

<sup>29</sup>Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 176.

<sup>30</sup>Westermann, *Genesis* 1-11, 227.

<sup>31</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch* 86.

be superior, nor inferior, but equal to him; complementary rather than identical to him. If identity was intended, the more likely phrase would have been  $\text{כְּמִי}$  ("like him,")<sup>32</sup> "Human community, therefore, has to do primarily with man and woman, and determines human existence for all time," says Westermann.

But why the delay in providing for man's identified need? This hold-up creates suspense. Most scholars are agreed that it allows us to feel the first man's loneliness. The animals which God brings to him, and which he names, each in turn, provide no company for him. The naming of these creatures demonstrates man's superiority over them.; for, "To give a name to something is to assert authority over it (cf. 1:26, 28)."<sup>33</sup>

**Verse 20** "...But for Adam,, there was not found a helper corresponding to him."

The latter part of verse 20 reiterates the words of the LORD God at the end of verse 18b, thus emphasizing that the divine intention has not yet been fulfilled; the state of "not good" still remains unaltered. This sentence, also makes the reader anticipate what follows in verses 21-23.

**Verse 21.** Genesis 1:27 says nothing about the sequence of the creation of man and woman; simply that the image bearers were male and female. But if we agree that Genesis 2 is a particularly more detailed account of the general narration in Genesis 1 (see above, then 2:21ff should complement 1:27. The male *adam* was made first. Just as the male was "taken" from the earth (see 3:19, 23), so the woman is "taken"

<sup>32</sup>Wenham, *Genesis* 1-15, 68.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Cassuto, p. 130; Hamilton, p. 176 and Keil and Delitzsch, p. 88 are all in agreement that to confer a name  $\text{קָרָא}$  is to speak from a position of authority and sovereignty. Keil even goes on to say that it presupposes acquaintance. He says that language is merely thought cast into articulate sounds or words.

from the man. Both man and woman owe their existence to something that existed before them. Therefore, chronology and sequence make it clear that, in the history of the human race, the woman's creation follows that of Adam.<sup>34</sup>

The LORD God made a heavy<sup>3</sup> sleep to overcome man. "Heavy sleep",  $\text{נִשְׁכָּתוֹת}$   $\text{tardemâ}$  is often divinely induced sleep (cf. Is. 29:10; 1 Sam. 26: 12) . But why the sleep? Wenham could probably be right by observing that to imagine man conscious during the 'operation' (removal of the side) would destroy the charm of the story.

God took of the  $\text{צִדְּךָ}$   $\text{ṣēlā}^c$  ("side, not "rib")<sup>35</sup> and from it "built" a woman. It is only in Genesis 2:21 where the modern versions of the Bible render this word  $\text{צִדְּךָ}$   $\text{ṣēlā}^c$  as "rib."

**Verse 22.**  $\text{בָּנִיתָ}$   $\text{bānâ}$  ("build"). The Lord God "made" (literally, "built") the "rib" into a woman. The verb  $\text{בָּנִיתָ}$  ("build") is used only here and in Amos (9:6) to describe God's creative activity. By its very definition, this word "built" when used of God's activity, implies beauty, stability, and durability.<sup>36</sup> God then brought her (.the woman.) to Adam, who had been massive in this whole process.

<sup>34</sup>Keil, on why the order of the sequence is given, writes: "Because the creation of the woman formed a chronological incident in the history of the human race, which commences with the creation of Adam" (see. p. 87).

<sup>35</sup>Hamilton The Book of Genesis: chapter 1-17, 179. He suggests that should be translated "side" (cf. a side of the shell of the ark of the Covenant, Ex. 25:12, 14; 37:3,5; the side of a building - Ex. 26:20; 36:25; or even a whole room - "side chamber, arcade cell" as in Ezek. 41:5-8; or a ridge or terrace on a hill 2 Sam 16:13). He continues to say that the translation "rib" is traceable to an Arabic root meaning "to curve, deviate," hence,  $\text{ṣēlā}^c$  is a curved bone, citing G.R. Driver, "Notes and Studies," JTS 47 (1946) 161-62. Perhaps he is correct, for, Cassuto too, argues that the meaning of the text is that the Creator took together with the bone also the flesh attached to it, and from the flesh He formed the woman's flesh, and from the bone her bones. Proof of this is in verse 23, where the man exclaims, "this at last, is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (see Cassuto From Adam to Noah, 134).

<sup>36</sup>ibid.

**Verse 23.** Here, Adam's words are recorded in direct discourse: "This one, this time, is now bone of my bones and f flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man." Many standard techniques of Hebrew poetry are employed in verse. Perhaps a rewriting of verse 23, poetically, will make these techniques clearer: (L= line):

L1 - "This, this time

L2 - (is) bone of my bones

L3 - And flesh of my flesh

L4 - This shall be called woman

L5 - For from man was taken this."

Wenham, among others, mentions -the following techniques:<sup>37</sup>

- (i) parallelism (in Hebrew poetry, means correspondence, in a sense or construction, of successive clauses or passages)' - see lines 2-3; 4-5.
- (ii) assonance (=correspondence of sound between words or syllables) -for example , man ( $\text{אָדָם}$  'āḏām), and woman ( $\text{אִשָּׁה}$  'iššāhā ).
- (iii) chiasmus (=a figure by which the order of words in one clause is inverted in a second clause eg. ABC/CBA ). For example, in lines 4-5: "T h i s ..... called woman/from man .... taken this."
- (iv) word repetition="The word  $\text{זֶה}$   $\text{zē}$  (rendered once as "this," and twice as "she" by the NIV, KJV, NASB, among others) occurs three times. It occurs at the beginning and at the end of this verse, thus driving home the fact that the man, on beholding this and the only other human creature, concentrated all his attention upon her.

<sup>37</sup>Wenham. Genesis 1-15, 70.

"**Bone of my bones ...flesh of my flesh**" - This poetic expression sets man and woman on an equal footing as regards their humanity. Yet it also sets them apart from the animals (vv. 19-20; cf. 1:26-28). How did the man know that the woman was "bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh"? This remains a mystery. The text does not tell us. But the formula "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" is used in Hebrew of family relations, for example:

- "Surely you are my bone and my flesh" (Gen. 24:14);
- "I am your bone and your flesh" (Judges 9:2);
- "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh" (2 Sam. 5:1; cf. Chr. 11:1).

In each case, the meaning is: "formed from the same parents or from the same family; the source of the bones and the flesh is the same."<sup>38</sup>

We note that in designating her "Woman", the man interprets her identity in relation to himself. Can we not deduce from this action that, because God allowed Adam to define the woman, this, in some way is in keeping with Adam's "headship"?

Wenham, commenting on this verse (23), asserts that "though they are equal in nature, that the man names the woman (cf. 3:20) indicates that she is expected to be subordinate (sic) to him, an important presupposition of the ensuing narrative (3:17)".<sup>39</sup>

#### Verse 24. "Therefore a man forsakes his father and mother..."

<sup>38</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 135,136.

<sup>39</sup>Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 70. But Westermann, Genesis 1-11, p.232, argues that the naming of the woman is part of a name etiology (cf. vv. 19:20). Though certainly belonging to the narrative and firmly fixed in is a secondary trait, not a goal. He further contends that Genesis 2:4b-24 is not about the creation of a woman as such, nor is it about the origin of the natural attraction of the sexes, but it is about the creation of humankind, the "society" of man and woman.

Most commentators are agreed that this verse is not a continuation of Adam's words, but a comment by the author of Genesis. Two reasons are espoused for this stance. First, because the particles  $\text{לָכֵן} \text{-} \text{עַל} \text{-} \text{כִּי} \text{-} \text{עָלָם}$  ("therefore," "upon ground of such conditions") usually introduce the remarks of a writer,; and secondly, Adam had no father and/or mother to speak about.

$\text{וַיִּזְכַּר} \text{-} \text{וַיִּשְׁאַר} \text{-} \text{וַיִּזְכַּר}$  (an imperfect Qal of the stem  $\text{זָכַר}$ ), which means "to leave, forsake, loose."<sup>40</sup> Whereas a number of modern translations of the Bible take  $\text{וַיִּזְכַּר}$  as a future action (cf. NIV, KJV, *NKJV*, NASB), this does not denote future action, but, "constant and continuing action". So, "leaves", "forsakes" is a better translation than "shall leave," "shall forsakes".<sup>41</sup> "Forsake" is a better translation of  $\text{וַיִּזְכַּר}$  than "leave," because the latter suggests that the man moves from his parents and sets up a home elsewhere. But in Israelite culture, marriage was patrilocal (i.e. the man continued to live in or near his parent's home). It was the wife who left her home to join her husband (cf. the Iteso culture, as could be true for many other African cultures).

To "forsake", in this context, implies, "to abandon," "relinquish", "to move away from, "to distance oneself. " It implies a separation from, but not a severance of relations with one's parents. Before marriage, a man's obligations are to his parents, but after marriage they should be to his wife. This remark, though, about separation from one's parents is very striking in cultures (cf. most African cultures) where the honouring of one's parents is considered one of the highest human obligations.

"**And he cleaves to his wife...**" The Hebrew word for "cleave" is  $\text{דָּבַק}$  dābaq (see BDB).<sup>42</sup> It means "to cling to", and is here used

<sup>40</sup>Francis Brown, The New Brown - Driver-Briggs - Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon, (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 736-737.

<sup>41</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 136.

<sup>42</sup>Brown - Driver-Briggs - Gesenius, 179:2a.

figuratively of loyalty, affection, passion and permanence, each of which should characterise a marriage. The idea of physical proximity is retained. We may recall that Israel is repeatedly urged to stick to the Lord (i.e. "to cling to" - see Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). The use of these terms, "forsake" and "cling" in this context (cf. Israel's covenantal relationship with the LORD) suggests that the Old Testament writers viewed marriage as a kind of covenant. That could be why Hamilton can assert that "Marriage is a covenant rather than an ad-hoc makeshift arrangement."<sup>43</sup> How we need to emphasise this aspect of marital permanence in Africa today!

**"And they become one flesh"**  $\text{אֶחָד}$  (= "one", "united", undivided").<sup>44</sup>

This denotes more than sexual union that follows marriage. It means that marriage creates a kinship between man and woman that is similar to the blood relations that one has. This verse speaks of a solidarity that even divorce cannot (or should not) destroy. Note, yet again; that it is the man who takes the initiative to found a new household with his wife.

**Verse 25 "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."**

**"And they were both naked"** - This detail prepares the reader for what will follow later (3:7), where we read, "and they knew that they were naked." "Naked", here, primarily refers to physical nudity; though it also implies "openness" to each other in all aspects of their lives. Although here "shame" does not accompany

<sup>43</sup>Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 181.

<sup>44</sup>Brown-Driver-Briggs, 25.

"nakedness", it (shame") is present in other Old Testament passages where the word "naked" is employed. For example, we read of the "humiliation of Egypt and Ethiopia" (Is. 47:4); and the "humiliation of Babylon" (Is. 47:4); and the "humiliation of Israel" (Mic. 1:11). It is only in this verse (2:25) that the word "naked" is used without any connotation to shame and/or humiliation.

**"and were not ashamed"**. The Hebrew root  $\text{בָּשָׁם}$  ("to be ashamed") does not carry the overtones of personal guilt that the English word "shame" includes. There was nothing for them to be "ashamed" of. There was an openness between Adam and Eve. They were "naked" before each other, such that, they were content not only with themselves, but also with God's fellowship and his provisions for them.

I conclude that a woman was formed by God out of man, for man, to share in the task of rulership. That the man names the woman reflects his role with respect to her. He was to provide godly male headship in marriage.

### 3. The Fall and Its Effects Upon Marital Relation: Genesis 3

In this section, the present writer deals with, (i) the temptation and the Fall of man (humankind), (ii) the curses pronounced by God upon the serpent, the man, and the woman, and finally (iii) discussion on the relevance of Genesis 1,2 and 3 to this study.

#### (i) The Temptation and the Fall of Man: Genesis 3:1-7

**Verse 1a - "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made ... "**

$\text{נָחָשׁ}$   $\text{נָחָשׁ}$  (=serpent, cf. Numbers 21:7-9; Deut. 8:15; Prov. 23:32). In Numbers 21:9 we read that Moses raised up a  $\text{נֶחֱשֶׁת}$   $\text{נֶחֱשֶׁת}$  (a "bronze serpent"). Scripture does not give us a clear-cut picture of the nature of the serpent (though in the literature he has

been equated with Satan in disguise; a mythological being belonging to chaos opposed to God - a demon; or even just an animal that is particularly clever). What we know is that two characteristics of the serpent are given to us in 3:1a: he is cunning, and that he was made by the LORD God.

אֲרִיִּץ אֶרְמָן (= "shrewd", "cunning", "acute", "clever" ). The serpent was the most "cunning" creature of the field. There is a similarity between אֲרִיִּץ אֶרְמָן and הָיָה אָדָם אֶרְמָן (naked") at the end of chapter two (2:25). The similarity helps to link the Creation narrative to the Fall narrative. Whereas the man and his wife will seek to be 'shrewd' (3:6), they will discover that they are 'nude', 'naked' (3:7, 10).<sup>45</sup>

The word אֲרִיִּץ is used in Scripture for both a virtue of the wise (= "prudent", "shrewd", "clever", as in Prov. 12:16), and pejoratively if translated "crafty", "guile", "cunning" (as in Job 5:12, 15:5; cf. Exod. 21:14; Joshua 9:4).<sup>46</sup> This makes the word an ambivalent term, whose meaning can only be derived from the context. It may describe a desirable or an undesirable trait. The context here shows that the latter is implied.

**Verse 1b. "And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"**

If the serpent is only a beast, why did it speak? And how did he know God's commands to man? Why was it the serpent and not any other animal, anyway? Why does he address the woman and not either the man or both of them together? Cassuto makes interesting reading on a number of these

<sup>45</sup>Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 72.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

questions.<sup>47</sup> His conclusion though, is that a dialogue took place in the woman's mind. The woman did this reflection in her 'heart'. So we need not be surprised about the serpent's knowledge. "The woman imagined all this and decided to act as she did",<sup>48</sup> says Cassuto.

The serpent's claim that God did not allow access to all the trees of the garden provides Eve with an opportunity to defend God and to clarify his position. "The devil (sic) is suggesting that God is not a beneficent provider but a cruel oppressor."<sup>49</sup>

**Verses 2-3. "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden,; but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, let you die.'"**

Here we see the woman's attempt to try to correct the serpent's allusions. However, she is not quite accurate. The LORD God had said, "You may freely eat of every garden tree" (2:16); she omits "every" and simply says, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden". Moreover, she adopts the serpent's description of the LORD God, describing him simply as אֱלֹהִים ("God" ). Furthermore, she adds to the ban on eating the tree

<sup>47</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 139-143, (cf. Westermann, Genesis 1-11, who writes that "The temptation stands as something absolutely inexplicable - it will remain there as a riddle", p.239).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, 188,189.

of knowledge a prohibition on even touching it - "lest you die" (v.3). "Do not eat" is not the same as "Do not touch." <sup>50</sup>

The woman's omissions and exaggerations of God's commands to Adam pave the way for the serpent's further temptation. They also suggest that the woman has already moved slightly away from God toward the serpent's attitude. "The creator's generosity," says Wenham, "is not being given its full due".<sup>51</sup> He is being painted as a little harsh and repressive, not even allowing the touching of the tree in the middle of the garden.

**Verses 4-5 "You will not surely die ... For God knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil."**

"**You will not surely die.**" The meaning of these words is not quite clear. Does he mean, "certainly you will not die," or does he mean, "it is not certain that you will die"? Since the serpent's answer was intended to oppose the woman's words - "lest you die-" Cassuto may be right in insisting that the former meaning is applicable in the context.<sup>52</sup> The serpent was leading the woman to disobedience.

"**And you will be like God**" - What exactly did the serpent mean by this? Two interpretations are possible - (a) "Like Divine beings," and (b) "Like the LORD GOD." The first explanation seems to agree with the statement in

verse 22 - "Behold the man has become like one of us." But how can the word God be used in two different senses in the same verse? Hence, Cassuto's conclusion that the latter view "is perhaps to be preferred" to the former (i.e. like  $\text{אֱלֹהִים} = \text{like "the LORD GOD"}).<sup>53</sup>$

The serpent suggested to the woman that (a) disobedience to God's command would lead to blessing, and (b) that consumption of the fruit would make her and her husband godlike, knowing good and evil. The cunning character of the serpent is seen in that he did not use blatant lies, but t employed misquotations of God's command, denial, and slander to lead the woman to disobey obey God. Such an approach was too difficult to resist. And so, according to Hamilton, "Deification is a fantasy difficult to repress and a temptation hard to reject."<sup>54</sup> This ought to be a warning for us all.

**Verse 6. "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise ... "**

The word "saw", here, means "gave heed", "perceived." The woman perceived three commendable virtues from the forbidden tree, namely, it was physically appealing ("good for food"), aesthetically pleasing ("a delight to the eyes"), and sapientially transforming ("desirable in acquiring wisdom").<sup>55</sup> She took

<sup>50</sup>The word  $\text{לֹא תִגֹּעַ} = \text{do not touch}$  according to Cassuto often has a graver connotation than mere touching. He claims that "nor shall you touch it" is synonymous with the preceding clause, "you shall not eat thereof."

<sup>51</sup>Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 73.

<sup>52</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah. 145, 146.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Hamilton, The Book of Genesis, 190.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 191. Hamilton sees covetousness in the woman's character. He notes that the words  $\text{נִחְמָד} = \text{a "delight"}$  and  $\text{רָצוּהָ} = \text{"desirable"}$  are from roots meaning "to covet (cf. Deut. 5:21; Exod. 20:17).



In (ii), the writer focuses on the Judgement and the sentences that God placed upon the serpent, the woman, and the man. These judgements, especially of the human couple, are foundational to the understanding of the disorder in society as we know it today, even the disordered relations among married couples, Christian couples included.

Let us begin with the examination of verse 9. Here, God called to the man and said, "where are you?" Why did he do that? Why not to both of them? Could it be that the primary responsibility rested upon the man since he was the first to receive the divine command? Note that it is God who takes the initiative toward the couple in hiding.<sup>61</sup> God was in effect asking the man, "Why are you there?" "Is that where you should be?"<sup>62</sup> The man shifts the blame to the woman, who also shifts the blame to the serpent when interrogated by God. God replies to neither of their pleas.<sup>63</sup> His silence may be an indication that he rejected their pleas. But the serpent is not interrogated. Why not? Because the origin of evil cannot be explained.<sup>64</sup> Or could it be that he has no right to speak before God?

#### The Curse Upon the Serpent: 3:14-15

**Verse 14.** The words, "cursed are you above all cattle, and above all beasts of the field" recall the statement, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field." (3:1). Because he was "cunning above all", he is "cursed

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 254. The God who punishes his people is the same God who cares for them.

<sup>62</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 156.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>64</sup>Westermann. Genesis 1-11, 256.

above all.<sup>65</sup> Here, there is a play of similarly sounding words (assonance) between  $\text{אָרְרָם}$  'ā-rûm "cunning, shrewdness") and  $\text{אָרְרָם}$  ("cursed," cf. 4:11).<sup>66</sup>

**"Upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat, all the days of your life."**

This curse separated the serpent from the rest of the animal kingdom, to a different form and way of living thereafter. Whatever goes on its belly, we read much later on, is accounted an abomination (see Lev. 11:42).

**"And dust you shall eat"** - The punishment has to do with eating since the serpent tempted the woman with respect to eating.

**"All the days of your life"** = as long as there are serpents.<sup>67</sup>

#### Verse 15. "I will put enmity etc."

Enmity is between the serpent and the woman, between his seed and her seed.

Note the word-play, once again:  $\text{יִשָּׁקֵץ$  yēšûpekā ("he will bruise you") and  $\text{תִּשָּׁקֵץ$  tēšûpennû ("you shall bruise him").

#### Judgement Upon the Woman: 3:16

Note that a curse is not pronounced upon the woman as upon the snake (v.14), and the ground (v.17). But why should the descendants of Adam and Eve suffer for the sin of the first man and his wife? Is the punishment

<sup>65</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 159.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 161.

commensurate with the crime? Some say not at all. But I believe this was so because God takes disobedience to his commands very seriously.

The sentence upon the woman has to do with her motherhood ("in pain you shall bring forth children"). And womanhood ("your desire shall be for your husband. And he shall rule over you"). Because of the woman's influence upon her husband (3:6) her female descendants will forever be subordinate to their husbands. The husbands would be the heads of their families and would rule over them, according to Cassuto!<sup>68</sup>

**"Your desire shall be for your husband"** - According to Kaiser, the word

תִּפְּוֹשׁוּ אֶת־רִגְלֵי־כַּיִן which is rendered as "desire", could also be rendered "turning" (toward the husband). And so he suggests that "shall rule. . ." is best rendered "will rule": thus making it a prediction, rather than a God ordained induction for the proper ordering of domestic relations.<sup>69</sup> But the same phrase is found in 4:7 ("Sin is crouching at your door, it desires to have you"). Eve's intent would be to exercise mastery over Adam (cf. sin's intent to master Cain). Following the Fall, Eve, and every other woman in her fallen state would move toward control in her relationship with her husband (for more discussion on Gen. 3:16, see below).

<sup>68</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 164-166, (cf. Westermann who says, In her relation to her husband and in being a mother to her children she will experience "pain, burden, humiliation and subordination").

<sup>69</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Toward Old Testament Ethics (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 204-206. But which ever way 3:16 is interpreted, nothing can change the fact that God created male headship as one aspect of our pre-fall perfection. This is the contention of Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 109.

We have to wait until chapter three of this thesis to see how Paul and Peter deal with a husband's responsibilities toward his wife, and vice versa. But what we know is that the sin-destroying grace of the Gospel has changed this "rule" into a form more in harmony with the original relation, namely, "that of rule on the one hand, and subordination on the other, which have their roots in natural esteem and love."<sup>70</sup>

### **Judgement Upon the Man: 3:17-19**

Because the man listened to the voice of his wife Eve, rather than to God's command, and ate what he had been forbidden to eat, his punishment, too, is with respect to eating. From now on, the ground would be cursed (the opposite of blessing) and would yield its produce to him only with difficulty and in meager measure (v. 17). Thorns and thistles which were not found in the garden prior to now, would, thereafter, be found in abundance on account of man's sin (cf. the mention of thorns and thistles in connection with the sin of Israel in Hosea 10:8).

**Verse 18. "And you shall eat the grain of the field".** - This recalls 2:5, "And no grain of the field had yet sprung-up." The food now is no longer the desirable fruit of the garden of Eden, but "the grain of the field." This verse emphasizes the change in the sort of food to be eaten by humans.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Keil- Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, 103.

<sup>71</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 169 (cf. Westermann, 266-267).

**Verse 19a.** "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread". The work which formerly was without toil, now becomes toilsome and burdensome (cf. 3:17).

**Verse 19b.** "Till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken." This recalls 2:7, ("then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground"). It is subordinate to 19a above, and further qualifies it. Only with death will there be an end to toil.

**Verse 19c.** "For you are dust and to dust you shall return." A repetition of part 19b, above - for emphasis. In their origin, as in their destiny, human beings belong to dust. Note that the relationship to the ground on which he lives is changed, and then he is under sentence of death. Is death a punishment or a natural consequence of one's origin from the earth?<sup>72</sup>

**Verse 20.** "The man called his wife's name Eve", etc.

Since the LORD God had decreed that the husband shall rule over his wife (3:16), the man now assigns a name to her as a token of his rulership.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup>For a summary of views by various exegetes, see Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 266-267.

<sup>73</sup>Cassuto, From Adam to Noah, 170. Whereas some exegetes regard this verse as an insertion, Westermann, however, sees the naming of the wife חַוָּוָה ("Eve") as an expression of joy over motherhood whereby life is protracted in the future (p.268).

**Verse 21.** "Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them". Following their realization of nakedness after eating the forbidden fruit (3:7), Adam and his wife had sought relief in aprons of fig leaves. This was only a temporary measure. This kind of clothing was not adequate (see our discussion under 3:7, above). God showed mercy to them by sacrificing an animal so as to dress the couple with its skin. This is an action of care and concern. Westermann captures this concern, thus: "The creator 'protects' his creatures while putting them at a distance, and the protective action accompanies them on their way."<sup>74</sup>

Some scholars foresee atonement here. But Derek Kidner cautions that here, "God is meeting immediate rather than ultimate needs."<sup>75</sup>

### Summary

In Genesis 3:8-19, we have seen that the disobedience of the first human couple impacts three areas. First, the right relation that existed between Adam and Eve was broken. They realized that they were naked. Before, nakedness caused no shame (2:25). But now, nakedness is a source of shame and embarrassment.

Second, the fellowship which the couple had enjoyed with God in the garden was shattered - "I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid" (3:10) was Adam's confession to the Lord God.

Third, a "curse" came upon the fertility of the man and his wife. Pain would accompany pregnancy and parturition from then onward. For the man, toil and labour would accompany his eating from the cursed ground, whose fertility would be greatly

<sup>74</sup>Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 269.

<sup>75</sup>Derek Kidner, Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 72.

diminished on account of abundant thorns and thistles that would be in it. So, three major relationships-God to humans, humans to humans, and humans to the environment are all shattered. At the close of creation man was in a good relation to his wife, with God and the garden (environment). But now, all three are broken, disrupted, and disordered.

But when God appears on the scene, it is the man whom he confronts with the question, "Where are you?" (3:9). Why did God not confront both of them? Why Adam first? It is because Adam was the one who had received God's command firsthand ("And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it -you shall surely die", 2:16.17). No wonder God's judgement upon the man is preceded by the words: "Because you have heeded ("listened to") the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you..." (3:17). It means that Adam did wrong to listen to his wife in that particular case, and by so doing, abdicated his responsibility of leading his wife to obey God. His abdication of his role opened the way for sin to infect the human race (see Romans 5:12).

#### DISCUSSION ARISING FROM EXEGESIS

What do the creation narratives of Genesis 1-2 and the Fall narrative of Genesis 3 have to do with marital issues today? Do they have something to do with submission and authority in marriage? Do they teach prescribed roles for husbands and wives? Based on the study of the Creation and Fall narratives of Genesis 1-3 it is disturbing to find that Christian writers on the roles of men and women in general and husbands and wives in particular differ.

The primary points at which two opposing views differ most clearly lie in what William M. Swartley calls "hierarchical" (or "traditionalist," patriarchal") and

"liberationist" relationships.<sup>76</sup> The question which arises, therefore, is "Does Scripture teach clearly and normatively a hierarchical relation of men over women, or husbands over their wives? This study is concerned with the husband and wife relation in marriage. It sets out to try to demonstrate that, yes, in Scripture, we find clear teaching on an ordered kind of relationship between marital partners. Others, however, argue that Scripture supports the "liberation" of both males and females from what they call a "hierarchical" pattern of relationship.

Perhaps some points about men and women on which the "hierarchical" and "liberationist" interpreters diverge need to be spelt out here. Not that I support the use of these terms - in fact I believe that here in Africa, we do not have to copy blindly, theologies and arguments arising from the West, especially in matters pertaining to marriage. Swartley has tried to summarise some of the opposing views which the "hierarchical" and "liberationist" interpreters hold. Two of such summaries are given below.<sup>77</sup>

<b>Hierarchical</b>	<b>Liberationist</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Women are expected to be subordinate to men in the home, church and society.</li> <li>2. Especially in the home, husbands are to exercise headship over wives, with roles prescribed in accord with this pattern.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Men and women are called to mutuality in relationship. Subordination for women because they are women falls short of the highest biblical ethic.</li> <li>2. Patterns of leadership and prescribed social roles are not mandated by the biblical text. Abilities, needs and agreements should determine leadership and roles.</li> </ol>

<sup>76</sup>Willard M. Swartley, Salvery, Sabbath, War, and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania and Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1983), 151.

<sup>77</sup>Swartley, Salvery, Sabbath War and Women, 151.

My aim in quoting the above views, as summarised by Swartley, is not so that I can develop them further. On the contrary, I do so simply to illustrate what those who hold such views believe, in relation to the two terms, as shown above.

Anyhow, some interpreters who argue for the leadership role of a husband in marriage buttress their views with what Paul teaches later on, from creational accounts (see 1 Cor. 11:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:12-13).<sup>78</sup>

The "liberationist" interpreters, on the other hand, counter the "hierarchical" views as follows: (1) The Old Testament use of the word "helper" (Hebrew, עֵזֶר) does not support the notion of subordination. My reaction to this view is that it is not only upon this word that the main argument for the husband's headship over the wife is built. (2) In Genesis 2, the narrative moves to its climax in the creation of woman, reserving for her the place of final importance in the literary structure of the narrative.<sup>79</sup> (3) Also, the formula "bone of my bones" and "flesh of my flesh" binds man and woman together in both might (bone) and frailty (flesh), as does verse 24, thus emphasising the interdependence of male and female.<sup>80</sup> (4) Yoder, according to Swartley, further claims that sexual differentiation begins only after the companion for the man is created, that אָדָם אֶדָּמָה simply denotes that which is taken from the ground (אֶדָּמָה אֶדָּמָה). אִישׁ (man) and אִשָּׁה (woman) denote male and female. When the woman is created, אֶדָּמָה becomes

<sup>78</sup>Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*, 154-155, citing Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1980), 24-26.

<sup>79</sup>Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women* 155, citing Perry Yoder, "Woman's Place in the Creation Accounts," in *Study Guide on Women*, ed. Herta Funk (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1995), 12-13.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

bisexual and at this point experiences humanization and socialization.<sup>81</sup> Does this mean that the man was not male before the woman (female) was created? What then, do we make of 2:18, 20, which talk of a "helper" comparable "suitable," "corresponding") to him meaning one "adequate" to meet all man's needs for physical intellectual, and social communion? And again, in 1:27 we read these words: "Male and female he created them." How, then does Yoder arrive at the position stated above? (5) Swartley also cites Phyllis Tribble who calls attention to the difference between verses 19 and 23. In verse 19, she says the verb "call" is joined to a proper name to denote the naming of another person or thing, thus extending authority of one over the other (underlining mine). Verse 23, however, uses only the verb "call" without attaching it to a proper noun object. So, she claims that this is not to be understood to mean "name" (underlining mine). The implication, therefore, is that in calling woman, the man is not establishing power over her, but rejoicing in their mutuality. Moreover (woman) is not a name, but a common noun, not a proper noun - still the man is not determining who the woman is, but rather delights in what God has already done in creating sexuality.<sup>82</sup>

What shall we say about Genesis 3:20 where we read that Adam called his wife's name אִשָּׁה חַוְוָה ("Eve" literally, "living")? Is "Eve" not a proper noun, a name for the wife of Adam? Moreover, as already noted above, to give someone or something a name is tantamount to having "authority" over that person or thing. To change a name usually means assigning a new role or task. For example, God changed Abram's name (meaning "Exalted father") to Abraham (meaning "Father of a multitude; Gen. 17:5). Also, Jacob's name (meaning "supplanter,"

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women*, 156. citing Phyllis Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sex lit* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 16-17.

literally "one who takes by the heel," a "deceiver", Gen. 25:26) is changed to Israel (meaning "Prince with God," Gen. 32:28). Pharaoh, too, gives Joseph a new name (see Gen. 41:45. For more examples, see Daniel 1:6-7). Similarly, to cut off a name symbolizes destroying that person. So, before, and after the Fall, the fact that the man is the one who names ("calls") his wife is significant for the reasons given above.

I believe that naming is more than just labelling. Nor does it imply superior intelligence, otherwise we would be saying that man is more intelligent than woman - which cannot be the case, at all.

### Genesis 3:16

This text, too, presents problems to both "hierarchical" and "liberationist" interpreters. For the former, Gen. 3:16 indicates definitely that the Fall did not invalidate the regulations ordained in creation with regard to man - woman relationships, nor husband-wife relationships. The entrance of sin brought about a disruption of the man - woman, and husband - wife relationships. The divine order, though, remained - Adam was the one asked to account for their disobedience (3:9), but sin's effect was now to be experienced in that order. Even redemption by Christ does not completely abolish that order not until Christ's second coming. This is the truth that Conzelmann has captured as he reflects on the order presented by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:3: "The order of salvation does not abrogate the order of the world."<sup>83</sup>

The "liberationist" interpreters maintain that, (1) the phrase "Man shall rule over woman" describes - "it does not prescribe; it protests, it does not condone." They say that this is a tyranny of man over woman - a perversion of his humanity.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup>H. Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 181.

<sup>84</sup>Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women, 157, citing I K. Jewett, Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual from Theological Point of View (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974), 114.

(2) Phyllis Trible points out that within the context of the Fall, "the man names his wife's name Eve (v.20), thereby asserting his rule over her."<sup>85</sup> (3) Perry Yoder comments: "while chapter 3 serves as an explanation for the less than ideal state of affairs that may now exist, it does not condone or pardon it."<sup>86</sup>

Some of these arguments seem to play down the effect of humankind's sin and its effects upon God's created order (see Rom. 8:18-21), and upon God-human relations, as well as human-human relations. Genesis 3:1-7 describes their sin, while 3:1-7 describes the curses that follow. Adam and Eve had to live with the consequences of their sin; and so must we, too. From then till now, everything has become disordered, including marital relationships. True, Genesis 3 does not condone the state of affairs that may exist now. It is for that reason that Christ came to redeem humanity from the curse of sin and its effects. Yet, even among Christians, marital relationships still pose problems. Why? Because modern man and woman seem to think that they can bypass God's orders for married couples and seek solutions for the problems arising from such relationship from elsewhere. The writer maintains that the solution to husband-wife relational issues is obedience to God's word, not just the exegesis of it for its own sake. It takes humility to bow down to God's word. That is what we are called to do - to approach God's word reverently, but not to argue against it.

### Conclusions

Our study of Genesis 1-3 has demonstrated that both sexes are in the image of God and are together called to rule the earth. The creation accounts demonstrate that

<sup>85</sup>Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women, 157, citing Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 40, no. 1 (March 1977): 41.

<sup>86</sup>Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women, 157. citing Yoder, Women's Place in the Creation Accounts, 14.

man needed a "helper", a companion to come alongside him in order for them both, man and woman, husband and wife, to fulfil their role of serving God.

Genesis 1 stressed the joint task of the humans ruling the earth, while Genesis 2 described in detail, first, the formation of man, and then that of the woman from the man's "side". Upon her creation, man named her (as he did the animals), thus reflecting his priority over her. We noted that views differ on this matter of naming the woman, though in 3:20, even those who question the significance of naming in 2:23 seem to affirm that the man, in that context, exercised 'authority' over the woman.

In chapter 3 we noted that the headship of the man was reflected in his being called upon to answer for the disobedience of the couple. Moreover, the man's headship over the woman is made entirely clear in 3:16.

Although we have to wait until the New Testament era for explicit statements about the headship of the husband over his wife in the marital context, the writer contends that Genesis 1-3 is foundational in our understanding of those New Testament texts that speak of "submission" and "authority" in marriage. The writer, furthermore, maintains that there is a divine order for Adam and Eve, both before and after the Fall. But after the Fall, sin's effects will now be experienced in that order. The first couple's sin against God led to disordered relations among humans. And we, too, suffer the consequences of their sin, especially in marriage.

## **B. THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF PAUL AND PETER**

As already noted, the teachings of Paul and Peter concerning marital relations came to a people living in particular cultural settings. No study of marital issues in the New Testament can, therefore, be undertaken without first looking at the larger historical context in which the events of the New Testament history took place. In this section we can only mention selected portions of relevant data pertaining to the prevailing attitudes about women, their status and roles in the home and in religion

(spiritual life). Women in Judaism, in Hellenistic society, and in Roman society are the subjects of this section. Jesus' attitude and teaching on marriage is also included in this section.

## **Women in Judaism**

Space limitation does not allow for a detailed study of this subject. Our scope will include basic attitudes towards women, marriage, and women in public and religious life. A fuller coverage of this topic can be found in books by Hurley<sup>87</sup> and Witherington III,<sup>88</sup> among others.

### **a. Basic Attitudes toward Women**

The Palestinian Jewish culture was one of the most patriarchal in the Mediterranean crescent. This was due to the extensive power that a father had over both his wife and daughter. Also, the Old Testament Levitical laws prohibited women from taking significant roles in the cultic life because of their monthly "uncleanness." This, therefore, reduced the women's domain of influence to the home, (at least in early Judaism), except in a few instances (eg. Deborah, Huldah - see below).

One source of information on women comes from the Apocryphal book of the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach (also called Ecclesiasticus), dated about 190 B.C. Sirach believed that "woman makes man." A good wife, he said, "is the best of portions,

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<sup>87</sup>James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 58-78.

<sup>88</sup>Ben Witherington III, Women and the Genesis of Christianity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3-9. Also see his article in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. 6, (New York, 1974), 957-961.

reserved for those who fear the Lord" (26:3). His view of bad women was rather extreme. He believed that Eve was the source of mankind's fall. This has led modern feminists to regard him as a male chauvinist. Also, the writings of Philo and Josephus, contemporaries of Paul, provide two samples of Jewish attitudes toward women in general at the time of Christ.

Philo<sup>89</sup>, a Jewish philosopher who wrote from Alexandria and was deeply influenced by Greek thought, says that the female was the less rational sex, which from his perspective makes women defective.

Josephus,<sup>90</sup> who wrote an apologia of the Jews for the Romans says that "the woman is inferior to man in every way." As such, "she is to be obedient, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for authority has been given by God to man."

So, both Philo and Josephus wrongly teach that women are intrinsically inferior to men. The Old Testament, however, makes no such claims of inferiority for women.

The Talmud is yet more explicit in its teaching of women's inferiority. The most offensive statement to modern ears on this matter comes from Rabbi Judah ben Elai (c. 150 AD) who used to say: "A man is bound to say the following three blessings daily, "[Blessed art thou...] who hast not made me a heathen; ... who has not made me a woman, and who has not made me a brutish man".<sup>91</sup> The term 'brutish' essentially means 'illiterate'. Women were generally assumed by rabbis to be persons

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<sup>89</sup>See Craig S. Keener, Paul women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 165.

<sup>90</sup>Craig S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, 165; citing Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2:24 200-201 (LCL).

<sup>91</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 6

incapable of learning about religious things. This Generally low view of women resulted in rabbis frequently using them as examples of undesirable traits.

#### **b. Women and Marriage**

The Jewish people of the post-Old Testament era showed a deep concern for sexual temptation. As such, women tended to be secluded from the public; they were expected to remain indoors. This seclusion of women helped allay the fears of husbands and fathers.

The commitment to marriage was overwhelming. Of the man who would not marry and have children, it was said, "He who does not engage in the propagation of the race is as though he sheds blood",<sup>92</sup> meaning, "lives are lost." It was expected that all persons would marry, if possible.

But once married, the woman knew where authority lay. Up to the age of twelve and a half, a girl was under the authority of her father. Thereafter, she was given away in marriage. After marriage, the rights of her father over her were transferred to her husband. The husband was the final authority in the home.

A wife's role was primarily at home. Her duties included grinding flour, baking bread, washing clothes .... the making of the bed, the washing of his face, his hands, and his feet.<sup>93</sup> Women also worked the farms and ran shops, but all these were done under her husband's authority. Even the woman of "noble character (Proverbs 31:10-31), though portrayed as aggressive, hard working and competent, seems to function in a manner that honours her husband's leadership (vv. 11,23,28).

#### **c. Women in Public Life**

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>93</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 5.

Unless widowed, Jewish women were expected to stay at home and work under their husbands. In regard to the legal position of a woman in early Judaism, her testimony was considered valid by some early Jewish teachers, but suspect by others. In the family, the legal position was restricted in regard to the right of inheritance. She was basically entitled to maintenance, from her father's or husband's resources.<sup>94</sup> As for the right of divorce, only the male could divorce. The only way a woman could precipitate a divorce was by going back to her father's home.<sup>95</sup> Very few women held high public offices. It is said that both Deborah (Judges 4 and 5), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) presented problems for the rabbis.<sup>96</sup> Women directing men were considered out of place as far as the rabbis were concerned.

#### d. Women in Religious life

In Judaism, the place of women in religion should be considered under three headings: individual worship, public worship, and teaching and learning functions.

##### (i) Individual Worship

The spiritual influence of the mother in the home is perhaps indicated by the fact that rabbis considered a child a Jew only if his mother was a Jewess. To marry a pious woman would make one pious; but to marry a wicked one, it was believed, made a pious man wicked. It was in the home that the training began which equipped Jews for participation in the synagogue or temple services, and, in the case of men, for religious leadership whether as a scribe, rabbi or priest. Women did receive and pass along some basic religious education in the home.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 70.

##### (ii) Public Worship

According to Josephus (Antiquities, XV, 418), the women were restricted to the court of Gentiles and to the court of women, at least at the time of the temple of Herod. But during their menstrual and post-natal times of ceremonial uncleanness, they were not allowed to enter the temple area at all.

But at the synagogues, women had somewhat more freedom than in the temple. Synagogues were the local places of prayer and worship for Jewish communities. In order to pronounce benediction, and recite certain prayers, indeed, in order to have a formal synagogue, a quorum of ten free adult men was required. Women could not make up the '*munyam*' (-the quorum that constituted a synagogue).

The oral reading of the Scripture was not for women, although they were 'qualified'. Rabbinic writings attest other restrictions. For example, apart from the prohibition not to read lessons at worship, women could not act as legal witnesses, could not pronounce blessings at meals, and were discouraged from studying the Law (see below). A woman's obligation was to enable her husband and sons to study the Law. The Talmud permitted men leave of absence for even up to three years away from their wives as they studied the Torah.

##### (iii) Teaching and Learning

Women and children were required to attend synagogue worship because Deuteronomy 31:10-13 specifically required so. Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah's perspective of this text is that: "the men came to learn, the

women came to hear" (Hag. 3a) as quoted by Hurley.<sup>97</sup> The rabbis opposed women as teachers in schools and even in homes, except as teachers of their own children. This was a result of the fact that women were exempt from studying the <sup>98</sup>Torah. This caused women to be generally shut off from almost all other aspects of religious life.

## Conclusion

Despite the apparently grim picture painted above, the Jewish culture placed extensive responsibilities upon a Jewish husband to honour and respect his wife and daughters. Yet, considering the fact that they were an occupied people who struggled to preserve their culture and religious way of life, we should not overlook some positive aspects made by early Jews about honouring and respecting women.<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, we see in early Judaism, a very patriarchal society that limited women's roles and functions to the home, and severely restricted, (1) their rights of inheritance, (2) their choice of relationships, (3) their ability to pursue a religious education or fully participate in the synagogue, and (4) their freedom of movement.<sup>100</sup>

## Women in Hellenistic Society

### Introduction

The Hellenistic and Jewish backgrounds are important for a number of reasons. (1) They form the larger historical context in which the events of the New

<sup>97</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 72,

<sup>98</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 7.

<sup>99</sup>Witherington, "Women (New Testament)", in the Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. 6 (1974).

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

Testament history, and in particular, Paul's and Peter's letters were written. (2) As we shall see later, some arguments have been put forward against the use of Ephesians 5:21-23 for instruction on the relationship between husband and wife<sup>101</sup> on the grounds of (a) its origin - (Is it Hellenistic Judaism, primarily Hellenistic, or is it fundamentally Christian<sup>102</sup>); (b) Its content is said to be not specifically originally Christian.<sup>103</sup> It is argued that the content of the Haustafeln is Stoic ethics. For example, J.T. Sanders says "The ethics of the Haustafeln are completely worthless for Christian ethics." <sup>104</sup>

For a detailed study on the Household codes, see chapter 3, the section on I Peter 3:1-7. But the above comments serve to show that both the Jewish and Hellenistic backgrounds are important, if we are to understand the contexts of both Paul and Peter, who write' to readers who were living in those contexts. How did these readers hear the Apostles?

The Greeks, as distinct from the Romans thought very little of women and treated them largely as chattel<sup>105</sup> Greek women had no place in public life. The purpose of a wife was the production of legitimate offspring. Other women or men served for pleasure. Sexual expression in Greece was for instance, not as restricted as

<sup>101</sup>Francis Wessels, "Exegesis and Proclamation: Ephesians 5: 21-33: 'Wives be subject to your Husbands ... Husbands, love your "Wives"', in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, 67 (June 1989): 67-75.

<sup>102</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 147.

<sup>103</sup>Wessels, Ephesians 5:21-33, 70.

<sup>104</sup>Wessels, Ephesians 5:21-33, 69, citing J.T. Sanders, Ethics in the New Testament (London: SCM, 1975), 75.

<sup>105</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 75.

it was among the Jews. Yet even in Greece, there was a great deal of difference between being a woman in Athens, Sparta, or Corinth.<sup>106</sup>

### Athens

Apart from common prostitutes and slaves, there were three categories of women at Athens: Athenian citizens, concubines, and companions. Demosthenes is said to have maintained that the *heteira* ("companions" were kept for pleasure, *pallakai* ("concubines") for personal service, and wives for the production of legitimate children.

Athenian citizens were respected as wives and mothers in the classical period (before Alexander the Great [356-323 B.C. I who initiated the age of Hellenism). Their position as a whole was a little better than that of Jewish women in the same period. Once an Athenian citizen woman married, usually at about 15, she lived in a separate and guarded chamber. Citizen-women provided legitimate male heirs for the homes. They were the mothers who had the rights of citizens and the right to legal marriages.

The concubines were probably the smallest and least important group. They occupied the middle ground between legal wives and companions. If a concubine was an Athenian citizen, her children would be free, though not legitimate members of the family of her male partner. Concubines had no dowry, and their main function was to care for the personal, especially sexual needs of their male partners.

The companions, on the other hand, were foreign women. They had no civic rights. They were not allowed to manage public affairs, or to marry citizens. It is said that many famous Greek men, including Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Isocrates and

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<sup>106</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 11.

Menander had female companions.<sup>107</sup> It would be wrong to assume that these women were simply harlots. It is known that many of them studied arts, philosophy, and politics by virtue of being companions to intelligent and important men. They were said to be "the only educated women in Athens".<sup>108</sup> Concerning the Athenian woman's religious and legal status, it is said that at seven years of age, a girl was allowed to carry the mystical box, at ten, she could carry the sacred basket. In regard to her legal status, it appears that an Athenian citizen-woman was not allowed to be a valid witness in Athenian courts, except possibly in homicide cases.<sup>109</sup>

### Sparta

Spartan women occupied a position of more freedom and influence compared with their Athenian counterparts.<sup>110</sup> The Spartans trained and educated their women to be strong, brave, and ideal for military service. They mingled freely and competed openly with men in gymnastics, wrestling, festivals and rudimentary education schemes. This had two sides to it, though. On the one hand, it afforded the men the opportunity to choose a proper mate, and it prepared the women to be good mothers. Yet, on the other hand, this selection process deprived the 'weaker' women of the opportunity to marry for fear of producing 'weak' children.

The women of Sparta are often praised in the inscriptions for their prudence, discretion, and true love of their husbands. Sparta had virtually a monogamous society. Spartan women did not usually eat with their husbands, most of whom were soldiers who ate with their regiments.

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<sup>107</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 11.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., 12.

The divorce laws gave men more freedom than women. Childlessness was a ground for a man to divorce his wife and take another. Yet, Spartan women were famous for their fidelity, as these words of Plutarch ("Sayings of Spartan Women," 242:2.1) signify:

When I was a girl, I was taught to obey my father and I obeyed him. When I became a wife, I obeyed my husband; if then you have anything to urge, make it known to him first.<sup>111</sup>

These words signify total loyalty to one's husband. The Spartan woman, like her Jewish counterpart, was subordinate to her father or husband, yet she had greater civil and property rights than a Jewish woman. In educational training, she compared favourably with a Jewess and also with an Athenian citizen-woman.

### Corinth

Corinth was "infamous all over the Mediterranean as the city<sup>112</sup> "If the companions of courtesans and companions". companions were enshrined at Athens, they were incorporated in the very fabric of Corinthian public life," says Witherington.<sup>113</sup> According to the historian Tineus (c.300 BC), many companions were dedicated to prayer in the temple of Aphrodite and for the salvation of Corinth from, Persia. They participated whenever the city offered sacrifices to their goddess. Being a port city, Corinth may have been more lax morally than other parts of Greece. In Corinth, it was not uncommon for both companions and free citizen-women to be devotees and administrators in some of the Corinthian cults.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>ibid., 13.

<sup>112</sup>ibid., 14.

<sup>113</sup>ibid.

<sup>114</sup>ibid.

The Corinthian citizen-women had greater freedom and earned greater respect than their Athenian counterparts. They were known to be very bold. For example, they are known to have defended a certain sanctuary against the attack of Spartan men.<sup>115</sup>

A casual reading of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians reveals that Corinth was one of the most important cities in Greece during Paul's day. Paul founded a church there (Acts 18:1-17) despite the problems that obtained in that city, which was a centre of commerce and idolatry. This epistle reveals the problems, pressures, and struggles of a church called out of a pagan society. Some of the problems included: factions, lawsuits, immorality, abuse of the Lord's Supper and of spiritual gifts. Paul, in addition to dealing with these problems, offered words of discipline and counsel in answer to some of the questions raised by the Corinthian Christians. For example, in chapter 7, he handles principles of marriage.

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians shows that the believers there had been swayed by false teachers who stirred the people against him. Despite their attempt to malign him, and to call into question his apostleship and leadership, Paul defends his character and calling as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, throughout the letter.

### Women in Roman Settings

A Roman woman's position in a first century family had changed considerably since ancient times. In ancient Rome, the authority of the father was as great as that of the Jewish father in the context of early Judaism. Women were firmly subject to the authority of their father (*patris protestas*). But, also in Rome, the oldest living male (*pater familias*) controlled all other members of the family, regardless of age and/or political importance. He was the only one recopied in the eyes of the Roman

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<sup>115</sup>ibid.

law and society as having ultimate authority over the family. He held the power of life and death over other family members.<sup>116</sup>

### Social Life

It is said that a Roman father "sold" his daughter into the hand of her husband by a form of marriage known as *coemptio*<sup>117</sup> (a form of marriage where a woman, though married, remained primarily in the control of her father, brother, as far as property rights were concerned). But beginning about 27 B.C. when Augustus was proclaimed Emperor, the *coemptio* form of marriage was non-existent having been replaced by less-restrictive forms.<sup>118</sup> Because the husbands were rarely at home, especially if they were in the army, it was understood that the matron was often the family's *de facto* head and business manager.

Freed women were mostly shopkeepers, artisans, or domestics. Others were known to be physicians, brick makers, and workers in the ship-building industry. This made freed women financially secure, to the extent that some could even afford respectable burial places. Witherington thinks that the freed women and female slaves in Rome were in a better position than their counterparts in Greece.<sup>119</sup> This is because Rome had the more liberal property laws and female slaves of a Roman matron could even acquire rudimentary education, and even money of their own if they were conscientious workers.

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<sup>116</sup> C. Kroeger, "Head" (*Kephale*), in Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, (1993).

<sup>117</sup> Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 20.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

### Spiritual Life

Rome had a class of women called Vestal Virgins. These women, from a tender age of six years or so, dedicated themselves for thirty years to virginity and tending the sacred flame (which represented the health and salvation of Rome). They were rich women. At the beginning of their services, they were given a dowry twice that of a rich matron because they had 'married' the state for thirty years. They were *so* much trusted that some statesmen would leave important documents and wills with them to look after. There were only six Vestals at any time, thus making them not really representative of the relationship of the average matron or free woman to Roman society or religion.

Rome basically had two types of religions - native cults supported by the state (e.g. Vesta), and important cults such as that of Isis. Rome used these cults to promote socially desirable behaviour. Various Goddesses were patronesses of various age groups or classes of women. For example, the goddess *Fortune virginis* was patroness of young girls; *Fortune primigenia* was patroness of mothers and childbirth, as well as giver of virility and material success to men.<sup>120</sup>

Emperor Augustus did much to try and promote these native cults. He went to the extent of building up to eighty-two temples in an attempt to rectify the neglect of traditional religion in Rome. These rectification attempts were too little, and came rather too late because of the influx of the new 'imported' oriental cults of Isis, Serapis, Cybele and Attis.<sup>121</sup> It was Isis, above all the others which Roman men feared, and rightly so. There were several reasons for this. First, the only state cults allowing women even a limited role as priestesses were those of Vesta (six women)

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

and of Ceraes, a goddess of procreation. Secondly, the cult of Isis, unlike any previous cult, was not for the benefit of the state, but for the benefit of the religious and emotional needs of individuals. Isis promised healing, blessing, sympathy, and understanding for her devotees' sorrow and pain, for she herself had lost a son.<sup>122</sup> She was said to have certain powers that usually only male deities possessed. Finally, unlike other cults, the rituals of Isis were flexible and her temples were at once a haven for prostitutes and a sanctuary for women to spend the night dedicated to chastity. Thus, the cult of Isis had a tremendous appeal because it was open to all. It put aside class barriers, so that both men and women could hold high office.

### Conclusion

Our survey of the Roman culture has revealed that Roman women had more political power than women in Greece or Palestine, because they could be the power behind some of the elected offices. Until the coming of foreign cults in Rome, women there had fewer opportunities to be priestesses than women in Greece. Moreover, educated women were more plentiful in Rome than elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. Roman women had more rights to property and freedom in marriage than the Grecian and Palestinian women. They had the opportunity to perform more than the functions of mother and wife. It seems the Romans had done more to raise the status of their women (including that of freed women) in society than either the Grecian or the Jewish cultures.

All in all, though it would be fair to say that the Roman society operated within a definite patriarchal framework, yet, even then, according to Witherington,

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 24.

Roman women seemed to have led "full, informed and satisfying lives"<sup>123</sup> within that framework.

### CONCLUSIONS

Our survey of some of the cultures relevant to New Testament times has given us a glimpse into the ways in which the cultures of both the Old Testament and New Testament eras understood their women.

Our examination of marital relations showed that, without exception, the cultures studied assumed male leadership and legal responsibility. The exercise of that role, however, differed greatly from place to place, and from era to era.

The Roman husbands held virtually unrestricted rights with respect to their wives. The Israelite husbands were limited by Old Testament law or by custom in the exercise of their authority.

We have also seen that, as far as some Jewish rabbis were concerned, women were considered to be inferior, not only with regard to legal rights, but also as human beings. Women held differing roles in the social lives of the cultures that we have examined. These were confined mainly to the home in all these cultures, though in Judaism and in Grecian cultures, women were involved in commercial life, too. But they were considered unfit to hold office in public life, because of (1) a separation of woman and men in the Temple and synagogues, and (2) women were not allowed to read the Torah in the assembly in the New Testament times.<sup>124</sup>

In Roman culture they seldom engaged in public life.

The role of women in religious life, too, varied from culture to culture. Israelite women enjoyed a personal relation with the Lord and were required to

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 8-9.

attend certain public ceremonies, but did not lead in the temple and synagogue worship functions as priestesses. Though they could learn some aspects of the law, women in Judaism were considered unfit to teach the Torah. But in both Greek and Roman cultures, women participated in worship and functioned as priestesses in various cults.

From here, our study naturally moves into the teaching of Jesus on women, to be found in the Gospels, before proceeding to marital relations as found in the Epistles of the New Testament. However, the Gospels do not explicitly discuss implications of Jesus' teaching and ministry for the relations of men and women within marriage. Male "headship" or "authority" simply receives no mention either for or against.<sup>125</sup> We must, therefore, look in the relevant Epistles for such teaching and information.

But for now, let us turn our attention to Jesus' teaching and attitude toward women and marriage.

### **Jesus' Attitude and Teaching on Marriage**

The teaching of Jesus on marriage and divorce does not help to answer some of the questions about role relationships of husband and wife in a marital context. But Jesus' words are foundational to the apostles' teaching. "It is a vision that Paul seems to have imbibed and implemented further some twenty years after the ministry of Jesus".<sup>126</sup> Before looking at Jesus' teaching on marriage, let us first look at Jesus' involvement with women.

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<sup>125</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 112.

<sup>126</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 51.

### **Jesus and Women**

A casual reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus was perfectly at ease in the company of women. He had women who were his disciples. By teaching them Torah, and allowing them to be his disciples, Jesus imparted to women a new dignity and role which they had been denied by the rabbis of the day. We know that in Judaism for example, the testimony of women carried little weight (Josephus, Antiquities IV. 219; (IV 8.15), "From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the laxity and temerity of their sex"). Some of these women supported Jesus' ministry financially (Lk. 8:2-3).

Jesus frequently ministered to women (e.g. Peter's mother-in-law - (Mk. 1:29-31); he exercised a demon from the daughter of a Syrophenician woman (Mt. 15:21-30, Mk; 7:24-30, ); he raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mk. 9:18-19, 23-26); he healed the woman with a long-standing haemorrhage (Mk. 9:20-22, Lk. 8:40-56); he raised a widow's only son from the dead at Nain (Lk. 7:11-17); he taught and frequently visited with Mary and her sister Martha in their home at Bethany (Lk. 10:38-42); and he healed a crippled woman in a synagogue (Lk. 13:10-17).

At the time of Jesus' death and burial, and thereafter, when almost all the male disciples fled and abandoned Jesus, it was the women who stood with him. This involvement of Jesus with women and his acceptance of their ministry to him, shows that he was concerned for them as women in a manner that seemed to fly in the face of rabbinic ideas and ideals.

### **Jesus' Teaching on Marriage**

In this section we shall very briefly examine Matthew 5:27-30; 31-32; and 19:3-12, texts which talk about Jesus' teaching on fidelity in marriage, the sacredness and binding nature of marriage, and divorce, respectively. In Matthew 19, for

example, the disciples are shocked at Jesus' view on divorce which must have been radically different from the prevailing view of the rabbis.

### 1. Adultery: A Matter of Attitude in the Heart: Matthew 5:27-30

Matthew 5:27-30 (cf. 5:31-32) fits into a context that deals with Jesus' teaching on the rejection of Pharisaic traditions (5:21-48). Six times Jesus said, "you have heard that it was said ... But I say to you". (5:21-33; 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 41-44). 5:27-30 is a practical illustration which reveals the empty teaching of the rabbis of Jesus' day. The rabbis taught that adultery could only be committed through an act of sexual union. But Jesus taught that adultery originates within a person's heart (with a "lustful look") and follows in the act. The place to arrest the sin of adultery, therefore, is the heart.

This was a new teaching, especially in a context where men were warned by the rabbis against the seductiveness of "loose women". Jesus squarely places both the responsibility and the onus for such sin upon the male.<sup>127</sup> By so doing, Jesus asks his listeners, particularly the males, to take stock of their own sinful actions (cf. John 8:2-11). "What is intriguing about this teaching," says Ben Witherington, is that "it is not only a reaffirmation of men's leadership and responsibility for the community welfare, but also an attempt to liberate women from a social stereotype."<sup>128</sup> This teaching seriously takes into account both a man's lust and a woman's seductiveness.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

### 2. Marriage is Sacred and Binding: Matthew 5:31-32

The parallels to 5:31-32 are Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18. In Mt. 19:3-9 on marriage and divorce, we read that some of the Pharisees confronted Jesus over this issue, to "test" him. Their aim was to draw him into a longstanding debate which had been raging within Jewish circles.<sup>129</sup> Among the Jews, there were two schools of thought regarding the matter of divorce, arising from an interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, which reads:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favour in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness ("indecent", literally, "nakedness of a thing") in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house... (NKJV).

- (i) The school of Rabbi Hillel taught that a man was permitted to divorce his wife for "any reason" - for a shameful thing, or for anything which caused displeasure to her husband.
- (ii) The school of Shammai understood Moses to permit divorce only for a major offence, a "shameful thing" or "indecent" (Hebrew *rwh db.r*).<sup>130</sup>

Jesus' response was that God views marriage as an indissoluble union which should not be terminated by divorce. The 'exception clause' has been interpreted differently by various scholars. The word  $\pi\omicron\rho\upsilon\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu$  ("marital unfaithfulness") could also be interpreted as 'prostitution', 'unchastity', 'fornication', or other kinds of 'unlawful intercourse'.<sup>131</sup> It is no wonder, therefore, that the 'exception clause' has been understood in several ways: (a) a single act of adultery, (b) unfaithfulness at

<sup>129</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 97. For an extensive study on this matter of divorce by Hurley, see pp. 95-106.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., 102.

betrothal (Mt. 1:19), (c) marriage between near relatives (Lev. 18:6-18), or (d) continued promiscuity.<sup>132</sup>

Moreover the words of Jesus, "But I say to you.." (Mt. 5:32, 19:9) indicate that he refused to be drawn into the Jewish debate regarding the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24: 1. According to him, only sexual infidelity provided a reason to terminate a marriage.

### 3. Marriage and Divorce: Matthew 19:3-12 (cf. Mark 10:2-12)

Our interest in this text is not so much what it says about divorce (which is not the central theme in this study) but what Jesus has to say about the indissolubility of marriage, and the basis for such a permanence.

In response to the first question put to him by the Pharisees, namely, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?", Jesus appeals to two creational accounts. First, he appeals to the fact that God created humankind "male and female" (Gen. 1:27) by saying "from the beginning" (19:4). Secondly, he cites Genesis 2:24 in Mt. 19:5. Verse 6 is a deduction from verses 4 and 5, that only two persons, a man and a woman can become "one flesh". This is a divine order which none should try to put asunder. For anyone to try to do so is to "attack not only the marriage and the two people united in marriage, but also the unifier, God."<sup>133</sup> Jesus' response to their second question (19:7) is that God's original plan was not for two married persons to divorce, but to remain married "until death does them part." Moses' law was given because of their hardness of heart (19:8), and it was meant to be

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<sup>132</sup>Louis A. Barbeiri, Jr. , "Matthew," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty, New Testament edition, (1983).

<sup>133</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 43.

used "as a tool to limit not license, an existing evil."<sup>134</sup> For Jesus' words in 19:9, see the discussion above (Matt. 5:31-32).

This teaching of Jesus elicited shock on the part of the disciples (19:10). They found out that he was far stricter than the rabbis. Both schools agreed that Deuteronomy 24:1 authorized divorce. Their only difference was the grounds upon which it should be carried out. The answers given by Jesus to the Pharisees' two questions removes the discussion from the level of the termination of marriage to that of its creational design.

Jesus then does on to deal with the issue of celibacy (19:11-12). From his teaching we deduce that there are two equally valid callings open to any man or woman: "either to life-long-marriage or to celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of God".<sup>135</sup> Neither of these states is any holier than the other.

### Conclusions

Our survey of the Matthean texts on marriage has revealed that Jesus held marital life in honour. His teachings on marriage and single life are strikingly different from those of the rabbis of his day. While his views remain within the patriarchal framework, he strengthens woman's dignity and security within the family by advocating that male headship entails extra responsibility, and not extra liberty (Mt. 5:27-30).<sup>136</sup> He also taught that marriage is both sacred and binding (Mt. 5:31-32). Furthermore, Jesus' teaching on marriage intensifies the demands for a husband's fidelity and the rejection of divorce. Therefore, he refuses to be bound by the Jewish views of the day regarding the interpretation of such Old Testament texts as

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid., 49.

Deuteronomy 24:1. Rather, he appeals to creational order to buttress his teaching on the importance and permanence of the institution of marriage.

We begin the next chapter by discussing the issues of "submission" and "headship" in marriage as found in the "Household Codes" (Ephesians 5:21-23; Colossians 3:18-4:1; and 1 Peter 3:1-7).

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE A. MARITAL SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY IN THE HOUSEHOLD CODES

This chapter begins by laying out the texts where the Apostles Paul and Peter clearly spell out imperatives for both husbands and wives in marriage. These could be referred to as the primary marriage texts, and they include Ephesians 5:21-33, Colossians 3:18-4:1, and 1 Peter 3:1-7.

These texts are what have also been referred to as New Testament "Household Codes". Martin Luther, the Reformer, in his Catechism seems to have been the first person to refer to these lists as *Haustafeln*, meaning literally, "household tables," but often translated "tables of household duties."<sup>1</sup> The exhortations to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves in these codes, are reciprocal:

- Wives be subject to husbands... husbands love your wives.
- Children obey your parents... fathers do not anger your children.
- Slaves obey your masters... Masters treat your slaves justly.

Wives, children and slaves, are mentioned first in the pairs. But husbands, parents and masters, too, are instructed to fulfil their legitimate roles (e.g. Ephesians 5:25-6:9). Similar material is found in 1 Timothy 2: 8-15; 5: 1-2; 6: 1-12; Titus 2: 1-10; 3: 1, but is not as organised, reciprocally, as in the primary marriage texts referred to above.

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<sup>1</sup>John R. W. Stott, God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 214.

More will be said about Household Codes, their possible origins, purpose, and influence upon the New Testament writers when discussing submission to non-Christian husbands in 1 Peter 3:1-7.

We begin this study with Ephesians 5:21-33 because it is the most detailed and full passage on the subject of husband and wife relationships in the New Testament.

### SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY IN EPHESIANS 5:21-33

#### Introduction

The Letter of the Ephesians lends itself to two main divisions. Firstly, doctrine: 1:3-3:21, the implications of the Christian faith, and secondly, practice: 4:1-1-6:20, the application of faith to Christian life. This outline assumes an introduction, 1:1, 2 and a conclusion, 6:21-24.

Ephesians 5 and 6 discuss relationships between various categories of believers: husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters. The discussion on husbands and wives in 5:21-33 is the focus of this study, particularly the meaning of submission and authority.

#### Ephesians 5:21-33: Form and Structure

Ephesians 5:21-33 can be seen as a unit. Verse 21 acts as a link (see below), completing the thought of 5:18-20 about being filled with the Spirit, yet also introducing a new topic, "submission," to be developed in 5:22-6:9. The structure of 5:21-33 seems to fall into four main parts. These are:

- (i) 5:21.....Exhortation to all believers to submit to one another in the fear of the Lord.

- (ii) 5:22-24.....Exhortation to wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord.
- (iii) 5:25-32.....Exhortation to husbands to love their wives,  
25-27.....The motivation of Christ's love for the church,  
28-32.....The motivation of Christ's love for the church and the husband's love for his own flesh.
- (iv) 5:33.....Concluding exhortations to both husbands and wives.

Before proceeding with the discussion of Ephesians 5:21-33, it is in order to say a word about the context preceding it.

#### The Preceding Context (5:18-21)

Ephesians 5:18-21 is the context immediately preceding 5:21-33. Here, Paul discusses what it means to walk (KJV) or live (NIV) in wisdom. It is to "be filled", πληροῦσθε with the Holy Spirit (v.18). The result of being "filled" with the Holy Spirit is given in a series of participles that follow, all of them dependent on the verb πληροῦσθε. These are: speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (v. 19), "giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus" (v.20), and "submitting to one another in the fear of Christ" (v.21).

Verse 21, therefore, is related to verses 18-20, because of the verb πληροῦσθε (v.18). But it is also related to the following (5:21-6:9) whose subject is "submission". Here, wives are to submit to their own husbands, children and slaves are to obey their parents and masters, respectively. This makes verse 21 very appropriate to all the three relationships.

Since the participial clause ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ

Χριστοῦ ("submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ") is so crucial to the understanding of what follows (vv 22-33), it is fitting that we spend some time on this link clause. The questions we shall be trying to answer are: How does the injunction to "mutual submission" relate to what follows? Is it both a call upon husbands and wives to be mutually submissive, and an introduction to the discussion of husband/wife, parent/child, master/slave relationship?

### The Transitional Role of 5:21

So, what is the connection between verse 21 (see above for the Greek rendering, which means, "submitting to one another in the fear of Christ") and the previous and following contexts? The following positions seem to stand out from a reading of some of the scholars:

- (i) It concludes the previous paragraph, verses 18-21.
- (ii) It is a link between verses 18-20 and verses 22-33.<sup>2</sup>
- (iii) It commences a new section, verses 22-33.
- (iv) The participle in this verse has an imperitival force (so Calvin, Koppe, Flat, Mathies, among others), as noted by Eadie.<sup>3</sup>
- (v) It is a "hanging participle".<sup>4</sup>

As already noted above, positions (i)-(iv) above are plausible and related to one another, as we shall see below. We should dismiss, outright, position (v), on the

<sup>2</sup>James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 140.

<sup>3</sup>John Eadie, Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1883), 406.

<sup>4</sup>E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 146.

grounds that ὑποτασσομενοι is not a "hanging participle". Grammatically, it is related to the verb πληροσθε (v.18). Furthermore, the words ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ ("in the fear of Christ") describe the element of this submission: it is a reverential and respectful submission to the solemn awe which the authority of Christ inspires.

Therefore, the participle should be taken with the preceding πληροσθε, together with the other participles, εὐχαριστοσντες ("giving thanks," v.20); (singing, v.19); ἀδοσντες ("singing and making melody"); and λαλοσντες (speaking", v.19).

That leaves us with possibilities (i)-(iv) above which are all true about the significance of verse 21. To that end, I find Hurley's discussion on this issue very helpful. What now follows is a summary of his views.<sup>5</sup> Firstly, verse 18 calls upon the Ephesians to be filled with the Holy Spirit rather than with wine. Verses 19 and 20 amplify on the implications of being spirit-filled (see above). Verse 21 is the concluding implication of being Spirit-filled: "mutual submission." This makes verse 21 grammatically related to verses 18-20.

Secondly, verse 22 has no verb (see below). It presumes the verb expressed in the participle of verse 21 (ὑποτασσομενοι, "submitting"). We must therefore argue that verse 21 is grammatically related to both the preceding and the following contexts. It is, in fact, a link and transitional verse. This fact has been laid out diagrammatically by Hurley, thus:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 139-141.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 140.

Figure 2

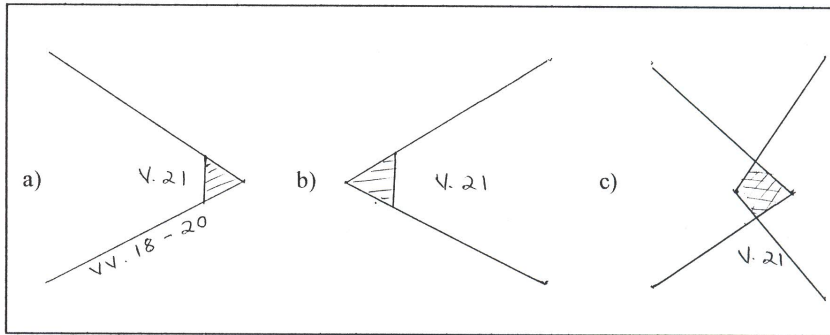


Figure 2 (a) Shows how verse 21 is a culmination of vv. 18-20.

Figure 2 (b) Shows that verse 21 is the starting-point for 5:22-6:9.

Figure 2 (c) Shows how the two roles expressed above are married together.

Thirdly, in 5:22-6:9, Paul discusses relations that demand the submission of believers to one another. Wives are to submit to their own husbands, children and slaves are to obey their parents and master, respectively. This makes verse 21 appropriate to all three relationships.

We conclude that verse 21 should be seen as both the conclusion of 5:18-21 and an introduction or heading to the following context, 5:22-6:9.

Markus Barth, too, sees 5:21 as summing up three statements that are vital to our understanding of Paul. These are (1) A rightly understood submission when practised by Christians is pleasing to God. Why? Because of Christ, who by taking on "a form of a servant," obeyed God totally and unselfishly, thus offering himself to God for us (5:2). In God's judgement, "submission, obedience, and service rendered to God for the benefit of sinners in no way discredits him who thus humiliates himself".<sup>7</sup> (2) Submission is more than an external attitude. References to Christ

"imply references to reverent, voluntary, joyful and undivided service".<sup>8</sup> 'Submission,' says Markus Barth, "has no value when it is eye-service, rendered out of hidden arrogance or slavish calculation."<sup>9</sup> (3). Christ is honoured by such submission. "Be subject to one another" (5:21) is not a call to submission to some law, rule, or idea of perfect marriage, family, economics, or society. Paul's readers need not submit to any such "It".<sup>10</sup>

So, submission rendered from the heart to one's fellow man (not to principalities) is the service which pleases God and for which we are prepared. Such service is actually rendered to God himself (cf. 6:5-7).<sup>11</sup>

Markus Barth, however, claims that the counsel given to husbands and wives in 5:22-23 does not include the sentence "Husbands must be heads or bosses over their wives."<sup>12</sup> The reasons he gives are that (1) because the husband cannot be saviour to his wife, and (2) the husband shall be the head over the wife in such a manner that love and only love is the essence and sign of his rule.<sup>13</sup> For him, to be 'head' means to "go ahead in loving his wife".<sup>14</sup> But does not the "going ahead" by a husband imply 'leadership', and, therefore, some form of 'authority over' (i.e. "headship") the wife?

<sup>7</sup>Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Valley Forge, Pa.: The Judson Press, 1959), 222.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 226.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 226.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 227.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 231.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

This leads us to 5:22-33, which will be exegetically handled, paying particularly emphasis to the duties expected of wives and husbands, as these relate to the theme of "submission and authority."

### Exegesis of 5:22-33

**Verse 22:** *αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ* ("Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."). The problem that faces an exegete, here, is that this verse does not have a verb. Some manuscripts actually supply it, either in the second person, *ὑποτασσεσθε*, or in the third person, *ὑποτασσεσθωσαν*, (see UBS 3rd edition, <sup>15</sup> Lincoln, <sup>16</sup> Simpson, <sup>17</sup> and Bruce <sup>18</sup>). The idea conveyed in the participle of verse 21, *ὑποτασσόμεναι*, supplies the sense here. Wives, in the spirit of this submission, are to be directed in their duty to their husbands.

The participle, *ὑποτασσόμεναι* has an imperitival force, according to John Eadie,<sup>19</sup> and John R. W. Stott.<sup>20</sup> A Greek participle was sometimes used as an

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<sup>15</sup>The Greek New Testament, eds. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1983), 676.

<sup>16</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, vol. 42 Word Biblical Commentary, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books Publishers, 1990), 351.

<sup>17</sup>Smpson, *The Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians*, 126.

<sup>18</sup>F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians*, 286.

<sup>19</sup>Eadie, *Ephesians*, 406.

<sup>20</sup>Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 215.

imperative. But what does it mean to "submit" in this context? To understand fully the meaning and implications of verse 22 forces us to examine the meaning of *ὑποτασσω*.

### The Meaning of *ὑποτασσω* ("submit")

In BAGD, the term *ὑποτασσω* in the active voice means "subject", "subordinate" (e.g. in Rom. 8:20b). In the middle and passive, though, it means, "to subject oneself", "be subjected or subordinated"<sup>21</sup>

In an etymological sense, the term *ὑποτασσω* is a compound word made up of the preposition *ὑπο* ("under"), and the verb *τασσω* ("to arrange") thus: "to place or arrange under". This is not to say that the meaning of *ὑποτασσω* in this context is based on etymology<sup>22</sup>

In classical literature, though, the term is used as a reference to persons, ideas or objects being subjected or subordinated to something or someone else. The process of subjection "being portrayed as self-imposed or inflicted by another", says David M. Park.<sup>23</sup> So, one in subjection was to be deferent, both in attitude and action. To be subject in classical times, then, involved compliance with the wishes and desires of the forces of those in office. To act otherwise was to make oneself vulnerable to

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<sup>21</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 2nd. ed. rev. and augmented by Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 848. See especially section 1b(b).

<sup>22</sup>D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 31-32. Here Carson states that we cannot responsibly assume that the meaning of a word can be arrived at by considering etymology alone apart from the context.

<sup>23</sup>David M. Park, "The Structure of Authority in Marriage: An Examination of *Hypotassō* and *Kephalē* in Ephesians 5:21-33", *Evangelical Quarterly*, 21 (April 1987), 118.

punishment and recrimination.<sup>24</sup> But is this the sort of 'submission' that Paul had in mind? I think not. Verse 22 has another motivation, as the words *ὡς τῷ κυριῷ* ("as to the Lord") demonstrate.

The adverb *ὡς* ("as") denotes the character of the obedience enjoined. Not "as to your masters", nor "as to your husbands as if it were rendered to Christ who enjoins it", but "in like manner as to the Lord". The duties of the Church to Christ are the same in spirit as those of a wife to her husband. "The obedience inculcated by the Apostle sits gracefully upon her, and is in harmony with all that is fair and feminine in her position and temperament."<sup>25</sup> His view is shared by T. K. Abbot<sup>26</sup>, and H.C.G. Moule.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the character of the obedience enjoined is not imposed obedience. It is "willing submission", "voluntary submission". In this respect one could even talk of "voluntary subordination" and "voluntary obedience".<sup>28</sup>

Also, the possessive *ἑδῆος* ("one's own") further qualifies to whom a wife should direct her submissiveness: it is to her own husband, and not to any v other man. This is so because of the "tenderness, speciality and the exclusiveness of the relationship which *ἑδῆος* entails", says Eadie.<sup>29</sup> It is more than a mere possessive,

<sup>24</sup> Ibid .

<sup>25</sup>Eadie, *Ephesians*, 409.

<sup>26</sup>T. K. Abbott, *The Epistle to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, vol.49, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark Ltd., 1979), 165.

<sup>27</sup>H.C.G. Moule, *Studies in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1977), 138.

<sup>28</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 368.

<sup>29</sup>Eadie, *Ephesians*, 409.

concur Abbott,<sup>30</sup> who also correctly observes that the possessive *ἑδῆος* is not found in the parallel passage of Colossians 3:18.

In response to a husband's love, Paul said the wife was to "submit" herself to her husband as a duty rendered "unto Christ". This subjection was to be voluntary, patterned after that of the Church's submission to Christ. In doing so, a wife should show an attitude not of resentment but of respect (see 5:33, below).

So, a wife should see her relationship to her husband with an attitude that reflects her special relationship to her Lord, Christ. "Her attitude thus, has a special sanction from Him."<sup>31</sup>

What the Apostle does in this verse (22) is to give a parallel between the earthly and the heavenly relationships. In Ephesians 3:14, for example, he speaks of "the Father from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named." This enables him to link the simplest precepts of social morality with the most transcendent doctrines of Christian faith. The natural relationships in the common life of the home are "hallowed by their heavenly patterns".<sup>32</sup>

**Verse 23.** ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἐστὶν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναίκος  
ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας...  
ὅτι ("For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the Church...")

<sup>30</sup>Abbot, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 409.

<sup>31</sup>Moule, *Studies in Ephesians*, 138.

<sup>32</sup>J. Armitage Robinson, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 2nd. ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), reprint (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1979). 124.

ὅτι ("for"), introduces the reason for the wife's submission. As Christ is Head of the Church, so the husband is the head of the wife. It is the function of the head to plan the safety of the body, securing it from danger and providing for its welfare (see below, verse 29). This is what Christ is to the church in the highest sense. Yet, in a lower sense, it is what the husband should be to his wife. In each case, the responsibility to protect is inseparably linked with the right to 'rule': the head is 'obeyed' by the body.<sup>33</sup> Eadie goes further to state that there is only one 'head', because dual headship would be perpetual antagonism in a home: "...authority and government are loaded in him ... from him the wife receives her cherished help... and to him she looks for instruction and defense."<sup>34</sup>

This seems an overstatement. Paul already described Christ's headship in 4:15-16. It is from Christ as head that the body derives its health and grows into maturity. "His headship expresses care, rather than control; responsibility, rather than rule."<sup>35</sup> The head of the body is the saviour of the body, thus making saviourhood and not lordship the characteristic of his headship. The article, τῆς before ἡ ὑποτακῆς ("wife") points to the special relationship - "his wife".

The reason for the wife's submission to her husband is drawn from creation, though not developed here as in 1 Corinthians 11:312 (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-13, to see later). It is the narrative in Genesis 2 that gives the Apostle ground for his assertion in the two passage quoted above. There, we noted (see chapter two, above) that woman was created after man, out of man, and for man (Gen. 2:18-25). Despite the dependence of husband and wife on each other (1 Cor. 11:11-12), yet the emphasis of

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Eadie, Ephesians, 410.

<sup>35</sup>Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 225.

Paul is on order, mode, and purpose of the creation of Eve.<sup>36</sup> The man's headship is foundational in creation. It is mainly in these facts of creation that Paul bases his case for the husband's headship. This, according to Stott and others (Eadie, Abbott, Moule, Hurley, among others) makes Paul's argument have a universal and permanent validity, not to be dismissed as culturally limited, as some others do. The arguments of some of these other scholars are presented in the relevant section (see below) on the meaning of κεφαλή ("head").

To argue that redemption frees the wives from the subordinate role to their husbands (cf. Gal. 3:28, see later) is not in order. The new creation in Christ frees us from the distortions of relationships between the sexes caused by the fall (Gen. 3:16), but it establishes the original intentions of creation. It was to the 'beginning' that Jesus went back in Matthew 19:4-6 (cf. Mk. 10:6). By so doing, Christ confirmed Genesis 1 and 2. "What creation has established, no culture is able to destroy"<sup>37</sup> (cf. Witherington III<sup>38</sup>).

Robert Wall, in his essay "Wifely Submission in the Context of Ephesians",<sup>39</sup> argues that the demand for wives to submit to husbands carries a radically altered meaning in Ephesians by virtue of its literary context: the meaning of the ethical demand that wives submit to husbands is qualified by its parallel theological indicatives. He says,

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 221.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ben Witherington III, Women and the Genesis of Christianity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 24.

<sup>39</sup>Robert W. Wall "Wifely Submission in the Context of Ephesians," Christian Scholars' Review 17 (1988): 272-85.

The root issue of this code is the spiritual formation of a relationship, not hierarchy ... first, by submitting to her husband, the wife insures her own salvation; and second, like the church, the wife submits not from her weakness but from her strength, her charism.<sup>40</sup>

Despite his call for an egalitarian relationship between husband and wife, Wall still has to wrestle with the question: "Why does the Ephesians *Haustafel* retain the hierarchical and patriarchal rhetoric of the Jewish and Greco-Roman moral codes?<sup>41</sup> Wall admits that there is nothing inherently dehumanizing about one person submitting to the other (5:21). Moreover, he calls upon his readers "to acknowledge that a real tension between sexual equality and patriarchy exists within the Christian marriage this side of Christ's return ... God's salvation of the Church and of Christian marriage is both already real and not yet fully realized."<sup>42</sup>

**Verse 24:** ἄλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτασσεται τῷ Χριστῷ  
οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

("Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything."). Concerning ἄλλὰ : what role does it play here?

- (i) Does it introduce a proof drawn from what precedes ("therefore")?
- (ii) Does it conclude the demonstration? or
- (iii) Is it an antithesis (but")?

When translated as "therefore", then option (i) above is the likely meaning: verse 24 restates, and reinforces the exhortation already given in v.22, beginning with the

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 284.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

analogy, "as the church submits to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands". But the word ἄλλὰ is also seen by some scholars as an adversative, providing a contrast with the immediately preceding words of verse 23.<sup>43</sup> The sense according to Eadie is<sup>44</sup> thus: "The man is the head of the woman, as Christ is Head of the church - Himself saviour of the body - do not disallow the marital headship for it is a Divine institution - ἄλλὰ - ('but') as the Church is subject to Christ." - οὕτως καὶ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί ("so let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything"). Ἄλλὰ here, is used in such a way as to imply a suppressed negative answer. So, option (iii), above, is plausible, too.

ἐν παντί ("in everything"), here means in everything within the proper circuit of conjugal obligation, and within the scriptural norms.<sup>45</sup> Verse 24 is the conclusion of the duties expected of the wife, with regard to her husband (i.e. 'submission'). But this has raised counter-arguments among some scholars, such as Craig S. Keener.<sup>46</sup> He correctly observes that submission of wives was standard in ancient culture. This is what we have also noted in chapter two, above, where we dealt with marriage in the Roman, Greek and Hebrew cultures. But he, too, admits that Paul urges wifely submission, except that he places it in the context of "mutual submission". He even clearly states that Paul "does not call on wives to take charge

<sup>43</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 370

<sup>44</sup>Eadie, *Ephesians*, 413.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 164-166.

of their husbands, but calls on husbands to love their wives in such a radical way that husbands become their wives' servants, too".<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, Keener then goes on to suggest that since slavery has been abolished, so too, must wifely submission be. He says, "We must insist that what we grant today concerning slaves, we must grant concerning wives (that a call to submit is not a transcultural approval of the husband's authority).<sup>48</sup> And so, in chapter 6 of his book, Paul, Women and Wives, Keener deals at length with slaves in Ephesians 6:5-9 as a "model for interpreting the wives' submission".<sup>49</sup> He argues that we must use the same principles of interpretation for both passages (i.e. to use abolition of slavery as a model for interpreting wifely submission). His line of argument is faulty on the following grounds:

Firstly, slavery is not a divinely-ordained institution as marriage and family are (see chapter two, especially the discussion on Gen. 2:24). Secondly, slavery was regulated though not abolished at the time of the writing of Ephesians. Thirdly, slavery is a dehumanizing institution, without justification in any biblical doctrine,<sup>50</sup> because slavery is nowhere presented as a divine plan for human relationships. The New Testament portrays the husband/wife (cf. parent./child) relations as ordained by God. But it does not do so for slavery. Paul does not endorse slavery.; if anything he indicates its undesirable nature (1 Cor. 7:21). But a husband's headship, on the other hand, is divinely ordained and rooted in Scripture (v.23 above; cf. 1 Cor. 11:3).

<sup>47</sup>Ibid .

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 184.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid .

<sup>50</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 157-161.

Yet we still have to precisely define what is meant by 'headship.' We shall discuss 'headship' below, after rounding off the exegesis of the verses that follow, 5:25-33, paying particular attention to the duties expected of husbands in relation to their wives.

**Verse 25.** *Οἱ ἀνδραποῖν, ἀγαπατε τὰς γυναίκας...*  
("Husbands, love your wives...")

"Submission" must be met by love. Christ loved the Church enough to "give himself for her" (cf. 5:2). Here, as there, love is defined as the love of self-surrender, with the result that He, Christ, might hallow and cleanse His Bride, the Church. The word used for this self-sacrificial love is *ἀγαπατε* ("love"), a present active imperative of *ἀγαπαω* which means:

- (1) of persons: - "to treat with attention, to care.. love, be fond of",
- (2) in New Testament: "to regard with brotherly love", as we read from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon.<sup>51</sup>

This "love" involves more than natural affection or attraction. It calls for the husband's unceasing and sacrificing concern for her well-being. The model for the Christian husband is Christ. By setting this highest standard of treatment of his wife, Paul does to the limit in safeguarding the wife's dignity and welfare.<sup>52</sup> It was Christian teaching which introduced strong, sacrificial *ἀγαπη* ("love") in marriage.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, rev. and augmented by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, 9th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940, 1968), 6.

<sup>52</sup>Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 115.

<sup>53</sup>Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 226.

Paul uses five verbs (see vv. 25-27) to indicate the unfolding stages of Christ's commitment to his Bride, the Church. These are ἠγάπησεν ("he loved"), παρέδωκεν ("to deliver over", he gave"), ἀγίαση ("to sanctify, make holy, set apart"), καθαρίσας ("to cleanse"), and παρέστησεν ("to present"). But why did Christ do this? It was that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her. The church was decisively 'sanctified,' separated from the claim and dominion of sin unto God, when she was decisively 'cleansed,' accepted as guiltless.<sup>54</sup> This is accomplished by the "washing of water by the word" (v.26.). This could refer to Holy Baptism (Moule, Stott, Robinson). Ἐν ῥήματι complicates the picture: ("in or by the word"), the spoken word, - this, could either be locative or instrumental case. Perhaps the reference is to the Gospel which is proclaimed: the evangelical system in its fullest extent. But Eadie<sup>55</sup> says that while the cleansing has a sacramental symbol in the washing of water, it has a special instrument in the Word. The heavenly Bridegroom cleanses and sanctifies the Church, His Bride, and then Himself presents her to Himself in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish (verse 27). Such is the love of the Divine Husband for His Bride, of Christ the Head of his own Body, the Church. His love and self-sacrifice for her, his cleansing and sanctifying of her, are all designed for her 'liberation' and her perfection. He does not crush the church, rather, he sacrifices himself to serve her. Just so a husband should never use his headship to crush or stifle his wife, or frustrate her from being herself. He should give himself for her, in order that she may develop her full potential under God, thereby becoming more completely herself.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup>Moule, Studies in Ephesians, 140.

<sup>55</sup>Eadie, Ephesians, 417-420.

<sup>56</sup>Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 229.

**Verse 28.** οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.  
("Even so ought husbands [also]<sup>57</sup> to love their own wives as their own bodies".)

Why this repetition (cf. verse 25)? This is probably due to the Apostle's knowledge of the pagan world of New Testament times. He seems to Justify the analogy of the husband's love for his wife as "his own body" from the Old Testament teaching that husband and wife are "one flesh" (see below, verse 31; cf. Gen. 2:24). "To treat one's wife as a slave or a chattel does as much damage to a man's own personality as hers."<sup>58</sup>Hence the words: "he who loves his wife loves himself" (v. 28b).

Paul, in his instruction to husbands to love their wives seems to descend from the lofty standard of Christ's love to the rather low standard of self-love. Why this change? This is because Paul is always a realist. 'He did not want to create the impression that the ideal was out of reach for the husbands. Humanly speaking, it is impossible to fully grasp the immeasurable greatness of Christ's love, it "surpasses knowledge" (3:19). But at least we know how we love ourselves from everyday experience.

**Verse 29.** οὐδὲς γὰρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμισήσεν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θαλπεί αὐτήν..  
("For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it...")

<sup>57</sup>The Majority Text and Codex Sinaiticus ( Ⲛ ) omit καὶ ( and"). According to Dr. P. Johnston, p46 and Codex Vaticanus (B) attest it.

<sup>58</sup>Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 118.

Paul enunciates a general law of nature here - nobody ever hates his own flesh under normal circumstances. He uses *σαρξ* ("flesh") instead of *σώμα* ("body"). Why? Because of its occurrence in the words of the first institution of marriage (see verse '31). The husband's wife is "his other flesh", so to speak.<sup>59</sup>

The term, *ἐκτρέφει* ("to nourish", "feed") has a preposition, *ἐκ* thus making it a compound perfective. The term "to cherish, to show affection") connotes the supply of warmth and care. So these two terms imply more than just the provision of food and clothing, when seen in the context of the husband's love of his wife.<sup>60</sup>

**Verse 30.** ὅτι μέλη ἐσμεν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ  
("For we are members of his body".)

The majority of manuscripts add the phrase *ἐκ τῆς σαρκος... ὀστέων αὐτοῦ* ("of his flesh and of his bones") at the end of the verse.<sup>61</sup> This phrase does not appear in the original text, though it appears to be based on Genesis 2:23.<sup>62</sup> Though not original, the addition is in keeping with the line of thought of Paul, considering that he goes on to immediately quote Genesis 2:24 in Eph. 5:31.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Eadie, Ephesians, 425.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid. See also Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 230; and Lincoln, Ephesians, 379-380.

<sup>61</sup>Lincoln, Ephesians, 351, 380.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. See also Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 230; Moule, Studies in Ephesians, 142; and the Greek New Testament, United Bible Societies, 3rd. ed., 677.

<sup>63</sup>Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 119.

The use of the first person plural *ἐσμεν* ("we"), is to underline the participation of the readers in the reality of Christ's loving care for his body, of which body they are, in fact, members.<sup>64</sup>

According to Stott,<sup>65</sup> Paul at this point fuses together the two analogies he has used for a husband's love for his wife, namely, Christ's loving sacrifice for his bride, the church, and the husband's loving care of his own body. Christ's bride and Christ's body are one and the same (see verse 23). Eadie, on the other hand, believes that Paul has the idea of marriage in view.<sup>66</sup> As Eve was "taken out" of Adam (in creation), and then reunited to him in marriage, even so, the church originated out of Christ and is united to him as her Head. And so the church is one with him. I see that both writers are emphasising an oneness, between Christ and the church, which oneness, too, must exist between husband and wife. This leads Paul to quote Genesis 2:24 (see verse 31) at this point. For a fuller discussion on Genesis 2:24, see chapter two, above.

**Verse 32:** τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστὶν ἔγω δε λέγω  
εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν  
("This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church".)

If by *μυστήριον* ("mystery"), Paul means something of the sphere of spiritual truth not discoverable by observation or inference but by revelation, then what is it? In other words what does *τοῦτο* ("this") refer to in this context?

<sup>64</sup>Lincoln, Ephesians, 380.

<sup>65</sup>Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 230.

<sup>66</sup>Eadie, Ephesians, 428.

Various scholars posit different interpretations regarding the reference of ("this") in this context. Here are some of them:

- (i) Marriage between Christ and the church not marriage itself,<sup>67</sup> thus negating the Roman Catholic theology that "Marriage is a great sacrament".
- (ii) Allegorically, something spoken, having in it a deep or occult sense", probably referring to a marriage between Adam and Eve. But Eadie rejects this meaning as having a non-biblical foundation.<sup>68</sup>
- (iii) "This mystery is of great depth and meaning," a reference to Christ.<sup>69</sup>
- (iv) This great truth is a great mystery: the general sentiment of the preceding section summed-up in the phrase, "the two shall be one flesh".

Without really spending much time on the other options because of space limitation, I would choose the first option because of the following argument. In the other five occurrences of the term *μυστήριον* ("mystery") in Ephesians (see 1:9; 3:3,4,9; 6:19), it has to do with the once hidden purpose of God, which has now been revealed in Christ.<sup>70</sup> But in 5:32, the Apostle is talking about the comparison between Christ and his church to the husband and wife, which comparison helps him to illustrate and enforce conjugal duty.<sup>71</sup> What he seems to be saving is that the words of Genesis 2:24 enshrine a greater truth than that which lies

<sup>67</sup> This view is held, among others by: Moule, Studies in Ephesians, 143; Lincoln Ephesians, 380; Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 231; Robinson, Commentary on Ephesians, 209.

<sup>68</sup>Eadie, Ephesians 432.

<sup>69</sup>See Bornkamm, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, (1967), 823.

<sup>70</sup>Cf. Lincoln, Ephesians, 381.

<sup>71</sup>Eadie, Ephesians, 434.

on the surface. He uses the emphatic pronoun *ἐγώ* ("I"), and the particle *δέ* ("but") in verse 32b to make his point, that "I am applying it to Christ and to the church,, I am treating the man as symbolic of Christ and the woman as symbolic of the church."<sup>72</sup>

So, the mystery, here has more than just the reference to something spoken. Nor does it refer to the phrase "the two shall become one flesh" (i.e. options ii, iii, and iv, above, are thereby negated). Hence it must have something to do with marriage between Christ and the Church.

**Verse 33:** *πλὴν . . . ἀγαπάτω . . . ἡ δὲ ἑστὴ ἵνα φοβῆται τὸν ἀνδρα.*  
("Nevertheless ... let 'the husbands' love... let the wife see that she respects her husband").

The word *πλὴν* ("in any case", "nevertheless", "however", "yet apart from this"), is used to break the discussion and to emphasise what is important.<sup>73</sup> It suggests a return to the starting thought. It is used both as an adversative, and as a concluding particle. This makes the passage 5:22-33 a literary unit. In it we find an exhortation to wives (vv. 22-24), an exhortation to husbands (vv. 25-32), and a concluding exhortation to husbands (verse 33a), and another one to wives (verse 33b). This unity is reinforced through the literary device of *inclusio* (Latin = "the means by which a word or a phrase is used both at the beginning of a paragraph and at the end, to close off a discussion"). In this case the word which could be rendered "fear", "reverence", occurs both in verse 21, *φοβώ* and in verse 33, *φοβῆται*.

<sup>72</sup>Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians, 119.

<sup>73</sup>Eadie, Ephesians, 434.

The term *φοβῆταις* ("to reverence", "to show respect") means more than having respect. "It is the fear of the church for Christ which is the pattern of the fear of the wife for her husband it is not slavish fear but one of reverence."<sup>74</sup> The wife's welfare is indissolubly bound up with the husband's.<sup>75</sup>

It is worth noting that whereas Paul began with the couplet "love" and "submission", he now concludes with another couplet "love" and "respect."<sup>76</sup> The implication may be that the submission expected of the wife should not stir up feelings of resentment, but "respect". If this "respect" is to be shown to a sacrificing and serving husband, then the goal of Ephesians, 5:21 ("mutual submission"), has been accomplished. In other words. "Submission" and "love" both have to do with "giving oneself up for somebody", the husband for the wife, and vice versa. This makes verse 33 an appropriate summary of the teaching which Paul has been giving to husbands and wives: "Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

## DISCUSSION

### Arguments Against the Ephesian *Haustafeln*

What now follows is a discussion on arguments against the Ephesian *Haustafeln*, the meaning of *Kephalé* and authority and submission.

Some have argued that Ephesians 5:21-33 is unsuited as a guide for Christian ethics because it forms part of a *Haustafeln*, a code of household ethics, which was used by Hellenistic (Stoic) philosophers. Jack Sanders, for example says:

<sup>74</sup>Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 308.

<sup>75</sup>Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 119.

<sup>76</sup>Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 231.

The ethic of the *Haustafeln* is completely worthless for Christian ethics. The *Haustafeln* do not mark off Christians existence from non-Christian existence, since the regulations are by and large from non-Christian sources.<sup>77</sup>

In other words, because of (a) its origin, and (b) its content, Ephesians 5:21-33 is not specifically and originally Christian. Our response to such an argument is two-fold, with regard to the origin and the content of Ephesians 5:21-33.

#### (a) Origin of the Ephesians *Haustafeln*

Crouch, according to Wessels, has shown that the origin of the New Testament *Haustafeln* is to be found in Hellenistic Judaism, and not necessarily Stoic parallels.<sup>78</sup> In any case, why would quoting from a non-Christian source disqualify Ephesians 5:21-33 from serving as a Christian ethical admonition?

#### (b) Content of the Ephesians *Haustafeln*

For the Stoic, a basic philosophy is the concept of natural order. The world to them is governed by order (*phusis* = "nature"). 'Nature' is what Stoics generally mean when they say 'God'.<sup>79</sup> The Stoic ethical guideline for relationships is thus: find out what your place is in the divine order and maintain it. But the question is, "Did Paul in Ephesians 5:21-33 take over this

<sup>77</sup>Jack T. Sanders, *Ethic in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 75, as cited by François Wessels, "Exegesis and Proclamation: Ephesians 5:21-33," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 67 (June 1989): 67-75.

<sup>78</sup>Wessels, "Exegesis and Proclamation," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 67 (June 1989): 69, citing J.E. Crouch, *The origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972), 123; See also, Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 147-148.

<sup>79</sup>Wessels, "Exegesis and Proclamation," *Journal of Theology for Africa*, 70, citing W.A. Meeks *The Moral World of the First Christians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986.), 47.

world view?" Wessels, citing A. Verhey<sup>80</sup> argues that the early Christian tradition did not simply borrow from the conventional Hellenistic morality, but transformed it. There are at least three important differences between Stoic ethical codes and the New Testament codes.<sup>81</sup>

First, in the New Testament *Haustafeln*, the role obligations of husband, wife, children, slaves and masters are reciprocal. Whereas the Stoic codes addressed the individual, especially one in the 'subordinate' role who is instructed about his or her duties, the New Testament *Haustafeln* are formulated in the context of community rather than in the context of the individual's rational acceptance of his or her status. Husbands, parents and masters, too, are instructed to fulfil their legitimate roles (Eph. 5:25-6:9).

Second, the duty of submission itself is a mutual one ("Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ", verse 21). As we have demonstrated above, verse 21 forms an essential part of 5:22-33, even as it belongs to 5:18-20. In the Stoic codes, only the submission of the 'lesser' to the 'greater' is stressed.

Lastly, the New Testament exhortations are placed in a Christological context. It is no longer what is fitting in the natural order that should motivate those addressed in Ephesians 5:22-6:9. Wives are exhorted to submit to their husbands "as to the Lord" (5:22). Husbands are instructed to love their wives "as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (5:25). Both husband and wife should be subject to one another "out of reverence for

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<sup>80</sup> Wessels, "Exegesis and Proclamation", *Journal of Theology for Africa*, 70, citing A. Verhey, *The Great Reversal: Ethics and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1948), 68.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Christ" (5:21). It is this Christocentric emphasis that makes this periscope specifically Christian, despite its resemblance to the Stoic admonitions.

Hence, the ethics of Ephesians 5:21-33 are, indeed, Christian ethics. Both the context and the content of this periscope are thoroughly Christological.<sup>82</sup> We must remember, though, that the instructions to wives (and husbands) in 5:24-33 are addressed not to women in general, but to wives of husbands. What concerns Paul here, is the relations of husband and wife in marriage, not the relations between men and women in general.

We are now ready to examine the meaning of the term, κεφαλή ("head"). It is to that we now turn, before concluding with the issue of authority vis-à-vis submission.

#### The Meaning of κεφαλή ("Head") in Ephesians 5:23

Paul in Eph. 5:23 identifies a husband as "head" of his wife. What exactly does Paul mean? An understanding of κεφαλή ("head") is crucial to the whole understanding of the roles of men and women in marriage. So what does Paul mean when he says that "the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church" (Eph. 5:23.)? or that the "head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man" (I Cor. 11:3)?

The traditional understanding all through Church history, has usually been that "head" in these verses means "authority-over", but many scholars have denied that in the last few decades, insisting that head in this context means "source" or "origin". Christ, then, is the source of every man, the source of the church, and man is the source of woman.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 71.

The scholars who maintain that "head" means "authority over", are considered to teach subordination of women to men, and are thus dubbed 'hierarchical' or 'traditionalist' (see below). Some of those who maintain that the teaching of Ephesians 5:21-33 (and other parallel texts) introduce liberating, egalitarian elements into an existing cultural hierarchical pattern have been called "liberationist". Proponents of the first view (i.e. 'hierarchical'), according to Swartley, include Ryrie, Zerbst, Knight, and S. Clark. The 'liberationists', include Markus Earth, David and Elouise Fraser, Don Williams, Yoder, Paul Jewett, Virginia Mollenkott, and Frank and Evelyne Stagg.<sup>83</sup>

We shall now proceed by letting some of the 'liberationist' interpreters speak for themselves, at least those upon whose works I could lay my hands.

### Markus Barth

"Christ's headship over the church is the standard of a wife's subordination to her husband (vv. 22-24)".<sup>84</sup> Headship and subordination are defined within these contexts of reality. Barth considers the phrase "the husband is the head of the wife" to be determined "not only by the double meaning of [the] Hebrew rosh ("head" and "chief"), but above all, by the event and mode of Christ's headship".<sup>85</sup> Only the husband's love as it matches Christ's *agape* love can elicit the wife's respect for the husband. For Barth, the subordination of the wife to her husband is "characterised as

<sup>83</sup>Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath, War, and Women, 258-269.

<sup>84</sup>Markus Barth, Ephesians 4-5: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 2, Anchor Bible Dictionary (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1974), 652.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 618.

her response to the husband's love".<sup>86</sup> Barth claims that Paul nowhere speaks of a 'marriage' or 'marriage principles' as having a claim upon husband and wife. "It is exclusively to the order of God's kingdom that the wife subordinates herself in her subordination to the husband."<sup>87</sup>

But I thought the words of Paul leave no doubt as to whom the wife is to be submissive: "Therefore, just as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:24). Moreover, 5:22 is even more explicit: "Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord." Why? Because the husband is the "head of the wife" (5:23):

David and Elouise Fraser comment thus on the meaning of the husband's headship in Eph. 5:23:

Head is defined in a way that concentrates solely on love. The Husband is not encouraged to think of his task in terms of leadership. This is not the development of an organisational chart for the family, indicating who makes decisions and who follows them ... Paul does not make the husband lord in every way that Christ is Lord of the Church merely by comparing them. It is only at the point of sacrificial love that the two are compared.<sup>88</sup>

That may be so, but have the Frasers fully dealt with what Paul says about the wife's subjection to her husband? Robert K. Johnston accuses them of ignoring Paul's advice to the wife in their discussion of Ephesians 5<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 713.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 717.

<sup>88</sup>David Fraser and Elouise Fraser, "A Biblical View of Women: Demythologising Sexegesis," Theology, News and Notes, (Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1975): 18, as cited by Willard Swartley, Slavery, Sabbath War, and Women, 264.

<sup>89</sup>Robert K. Johnston, "The Role of Women in the Church and Home: An Evangelical Test Case in Hermeneutics," Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation, eds.

Virginia Mollenkott accuses Paul for treating women, at times as inferior to men. She says she respects Paul greatly for his central affirmation about humanity, but his words at times fall away from the central vision. She says when Paul does so, something has interfered: "I have called the interference a distortion caused by the human limitations of the human channel... this reflects Paul's rabbinical training and human limitations."<sup>90</sup>

Paul K. Jewett also argues that Paul's historical limitations', particularly his rabbinical background, affect his Christian insight. He would discard easily Paul's assertion that "the head of woman is man" (1 Cor. 11:3), as reflecting the human limitation in Paul, without re-evaluating the meaning of *Kephalē* in that context. Jewett is content to judge the text as reflecting Paul's rabbinic chauvinism and so disregard it.<sup>91</sup> "Paul was a split-person, unable to resolve his conflicts of sexism and Christian liberty in a consistent manner."<sup>92</sup>

Robert Johnston's assessment is that the danger in both Virginia Mollenkott and Paul K. Jewett's arguments is that they take "a dualistic approach to Scripture, isolating the time-bound from the universal, the human from the divine, the rabbinic from the Christian".<sup>93</sup> Both "Jewett and Mollenkott arrive at their dualist

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W. Ward Gasque and William Sanford La Sor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 247. See especially, footnote 31, p. 258.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 240, citing Virginia Mollenkott, "Reply to Sharon Gallagher," *Sojourners* 5 (March, 1976): 37-38; Mollenkott, "A Challenge to Male Interpretation," 22.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 241, citing Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975). 112-113.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 240.

hermeneutic partly out of their cultural attachment to women's liberation"<sup>94</sup>, says Johnston.

While still on Robert K. Johnston's article, "The Role of Women in the Church and Home", let us highlight his misgivings regarding the position of the 'traditionalist' interpreters, lest I create the impression that he is partisan. He is not. He accuses some of the traditionalists for "spiritualizing" Scripture by treating it historically - Scripture which should be viewed as being time-bound is understood by them as timeless truth.<sup>95</sup> For example, he cites Elisabeth Elliot Leitch and her brother, Tom Howard as committing this error.

Elisabeth Elliot Leitch believes that the biblical world view and culture, with its patriarchal system, was "peculiarly designed and chosen by God as a vehicle of heavenly truth" - for it was in the fullness of time "that the Gospel came ... It was the first century that is for the Christian Church normative".<sup>96</sup>

Tom Howard sees the biblical picture of male predominance as normative. Exceptions to this ordering in Scripture are so embarrassingly few, says Howard, that they only reinforce the basic fact. "It is not just a random happenstance ("chance") that Yahweh picked a patriarchal society to exhibit His name in."<sup>97</sup>

Howard and Elliot come to their 'spiritualized' hermeneutic out of a need to buttress their High Church liturgical commitment. But to conclude that "cultural and

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 240.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 242-3, citing Elisabeth Leitch, "Feminism or Femininity?" *Cabridge Fish* (Winter, 1975-6): 6.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 243, citing Tom Howard and Donald W. Dayton, A Dialogue on Women, Hierarchy and Equality", *Post American* 4 (May 1975): 8-9.

ecclesiological considerations are alone determinative of their approach to Scripture's cultural character would be untrue".<sup>98</sup>

### Wayne Grudem on *Kephalé* ["Head"]

Let us now turn our attention to Wayne Grudem's article "Does *Kephalé* ["Head"] Mean "Source" or "Authority - over"? [1985] in which he examines 2,336 examples in a Trinity Journal.<sup>99</sup>

Grudem proposed that the evidence to support the claim that *Kephalé* can mean "authority over" was substantial; whereas that which claims that *Kephalé* can mean "source" was rather weak, and in fact, unpersuasive. The evidence for the meaning "source" is:-

(i) Two examples of *Kephalé* in ancient literature -

*Herodotus 4:91* and *Orphic Fragment, 21a*, both of which come from more than 400 years before the time of the New Testament. *Herodotus 4:91* shows that *Kephalé* can refer to the "end points" of a river - so, "source". The other text, *Orphic Fragment 21a*, calls Zeus the "head" of all things, but in a context where it is impossible to tell whether it means "first one, beginning" (*Kephalé*), or "source".

(ii) After a search of 2,336 examples of *Kephalé* from a wide range of ancient Greek literature, there was no evidence to convince the researcher that "source" was a common meaning for *Kephalé* in Greek literature.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>99</sup>Wayne Grudem, "Does *Kephalé* ['Head'] Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," Trinity Journal, n.s.6, no. 1 (1985): 38-59.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid. 45-46.

The evidence for the meaning 'authority over' on the other hand, is overwhelming:

(i) All the major lexicons that specialize in the New Testament period give this meaning,<sup>101</sup> whereas none give the meaning "source". For example:

The Bauer - Arndt-Gingrich-Danker Lexicon (BAGD), *Kephalé* = "In the case of living beings, to denote superior rank." <sup>102</sup>

The Article by Heinrich Schlier, on *κεφαλή* in the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT), editors, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, gives the meaning "head" or "ruler of a society." <sup>103</sup>K.

Münzer, "Head", In the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT), volume 2 (1976), says that the relationship of the head to the body in Colossians 2:10, expresses the authority of Christ...

and the corresponding subordination of the church" (p.162).

Thayer and Cremer give similar statements. Thayer's lexicon says of *κεφαλή* "metaphorically anything supreme, chief, prominent; of persons, master, lord." <sup>104</sup> Cremer, under *κεφαλή* says, "The head is that part of the body which holds together and governs all the outgoing of life... and because of its vital connection stands in the relation of ruler to the other members" (see Col. 1:18; 2:19; I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; 4:15-16; and 5:23).

<sup>101</sup>Ibid. 47-48.

<sup>102</sup>Bauer, Arndt, Gringrich, and Danker (1979), 430..

<sup>103</sup>Heinrich Schlier, " *κεφαλή* " Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 3 (1964-76), 673 - 82.

<sup>104</sup>Grudem, "*Kephalé*", Trinity Journal, n.s.6, no. 11 (1985):48.

Louw and Nida give two meanings for κεφαλή ("Head"):

- (a) "head" (8:10). In Mark. 6:25, literally, "head of John the Baptist. In 1 Cor. 11:4, "any man who prays with his head covered" - here it means "top of the head"<sup>105</sup>
- (b) "Superior" (87.51): κεφαλή (a figurative extension of the meaning of "head", 8:10 above).

One who is of supreme or pre-eminent status, in view of authority to order or command.

One who is superior to, one who is supreme over (e.g. Christ in Eph. 4:15).

"Christ is supreme over every man, the husband is supreme over his wife, and God is supreme over Christ" (1 Cor. 11: 3).<sup>106</sup>

- (ii) The omission of the meaning "authority over" from the Liddell-Scott Lexicon could be an oversight that should be corrected. This is a lexicon for all the Greek literature from about 700 BC-600 AD with emphasis on classical Greek authors in the seven centuries prior to the New Testament. It does not specialize in the New Testament period, as BADG does.<sup>107</sup>
- (iii) The search of 2,336 examples turned-up 49 texts where *Kephalé* had the meaning "person of superior authority or rank, or "ruler", "ruling part". Therefore, this was an acceptable and understandable sense for *Kephalé* at the time of the New Testament.

<sup>105</sup>Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., Greek - English Lexicon of The New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, 2 vols. (Broadway, New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 95-96.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid. , 739.

<sup>107</sup>Grudem, "Kephale", 47.

So, Grudem and other 'traditional' interpreters suggest that in the New Testament Greek, *Kephalé* carried connotations of "authority over", as in Hebrew, where head can mean 'boss' or 'chief'.

Of the many scholars who have responded to Grudem's (1985) article are Catherine C. Kroeger (a University of Minnesota Classics Scholar) in an article entitled "The Classical Concept of "Head" as 'Source' , and Gilbert Bilezikian (of Wheaton College, Illinois), who supported Kroeger, during the 38th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), held in Southern Atlanta, Georgia, USA (1986).

In an article entitled "The Battle of the Lexicons: Scholars Debate Biblical Roles of Men and Women," which appeared in Christianity Today David Neff summarises the views of these scholars thus:<sup>108</sup>

#### **Kroeger**

Like Bilezikian and other 'liberationist' interpreters, Kroeger suggests that *Kephalé* means "source", as in English usage where source of a river may be called its "head". She also documented an ancient view of head of the human body as the source of body moisture (e.g. tears, mucus, and semen). Thus, head was considered as the source of life. She applied this notion of head as "source" to Paul's assertion that man is the head of woman, thus reinforcing the biblical phrase in the Genesis story of the creation of woman from the substance man. That man and woman were made of the same substance is seen by Kroeger as a "positive affirmation of heterosexual marriage".<sup>109</sup>

<sup>108</sup>David Neff, "The Battle of the Lexicons: Scholars Debate Biblical Roles of Men and Women" (News) Christianity Today 31, no. 16. (January 1987): 44-46.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

Grudem, however, noted the time lapse between the writings of Paul's Epistles and the comments of Greek-speaking writers that Kroeger quoted to support her understanding *Kephalé*. She quoted ancient authors: Plato, Aristotle, Alcmaeon of Croton whom she says taught that the head was the source of human moisture and substances (tears, saliva, earwax),<sup>110</sup> and other kinds of wetness as well (e.g. human semen).<sup>111</sup> Also she documents a view of the Pythagoreans that the head was the source of life. Others, she says, writing shortly after the New Testament period held the view that the head was the source of human generations: Plutarch, Philo, and Theodore of Mopsuestia.<sup>112</sup>

Granted, as Kroeger rightfully argues, the classical meaning of *Kephalé* is "source", but is that the meaning that Paul had in mind in Ephesians 5:23?

#### Bilezikian

Bilezikian attacked a previously published paper in which Grudem used a computer to search an exhaustive listing of ancient texts for occurrences of *Kephalé*. His (Grudem's) search of 2,336 sources showed 49 instances where *Kephalé* referred to a ruler or person of superior rank. Grudem's sources included non-biblical writings as well as ancient Greek translations of the Old Testament (Septuagint). Bilezikian examined each of the 49 instances, arguing in each case that *Kephalé* meant either 'source' or the "physical head of a human being or animal". Unfortunately I have not been able to get hold of this primary source.

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<sup>110</sup>Catherine Clark Kroeger, "The Classical Concept of 'Head' as 'Source'", in Gretchen Gabbelein Hull, Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987), 269-271.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

Concerning the selection of plenary speakers for that Atlanta meeting (see above), Neff observed that there was lack of balance in the choice of those who discussed the biblical view of man and woman: five were "non-traditionalists", and only one - Grudem - was a "traditionalist".<sup>113</sup>

It would be fitting, though, at this point, to summarise the views of other authors who have written on *Kephalé*. These include Berkely and Alvera Mickelsen, Ruth A. Tucker and Philip B. Payne, among others. All of these authors articles are found in the book, Women, Authority and the Bible, ed. Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, [1986]).<sup>114</sup>

#### 1. (1986) Berkely and Alvera Mickelsen, "What does *Kephalé* mean in the New Testament?" (pp. 97-110)

The Mickelsens set out to disprove the traditional view that *Kephalé* means "superior rank" or "authority-over". They present what Grudem calls the "Septuagint argument" and another argument from the Liddell-Scott lexicon, among others.

##### (a) "The Septuagint argument".

I The translators of the Septuagint (LXX) used *Kephalé* to translate the Hebrew word *rosh* ("head") in a sense of "leader" or "ruler" in only 8 out of the 180 cases in which the Hebrew *rōsh* means "leader" or "authority-over". The Hebrew word, however, was used to indicate one in a position of authority or command as well as origin or "priority". Hence, in Paul's day, the Greek word *Kephalé* could mean a physical head, a person with authority, or the source of something. It was used in first-century Greek as a synonym for

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<sup>113</sup>Neff, "Battle of the Lexicons," 46.

<sup>114</sup>The present writer has had direct access to all of these articles.

the more common words for "ruler" (*archon*) and for "source" (*arche* = "beginning", in this context, man is the one from whom woman's being is taken).

Gordon Fee says that the LXX translators "almost never" used the word *Kephalé* to translate the Hebrew *rōsh*, when "ruler" was intended - thus indicating that this metaphorical sense is an exceptional usage and not part of the ordinary range of meaning for the Greek word.<sup>115</sup> This may be so, but Grudem's comments are that:

(i) The use of *archon* that literally meant "ruler" in the LXX is not surprising. But this does not rule out the fact that *Kephalé* metaphorically, can mean "authority-over".

(ii) The meaning "source" has zero occurrences in the LXX.

(iii) The claim that there are only eight instances *Kephalé* meaning "authority over" or "leader" in the LXX is low. There are at least 16 instances altogether in the LXX.<sup>116</sup>

(b) Argument from the Liddell - Scott Lexicon

Liddell-Scott lexicon does not include the meaning "authority over". Grudem thinks this is an oversight that he hopes will be corrected in subsequent editions.<sup>117</sup> But he notes that this lexicon has the adjective *Kephalaios*,

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<sup>115</sup>Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 503.

<sup>116</sup>Wayne Grudem, "Appendix I: The Meaning of *Kephalé* ("Head"): A Response to Recent Studies," in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 451-52.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 454.

meaning "headlike". It is metaphorical of persons, the "head" or "chief".<sup>118</sup> Therefore, the meaning "authority-over" for *Kephalé* itself would probably have been understandable to Paul's readers.<sup>119</sup>

(c) Other Meanings of *Kephalé*- claimed by the Mickelsens:

Apart from the meaning "source of life" (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:15), the Mickelsens also see the following meanings for *Kephalé*: "top or crown" ("extremity") (Col 2:10; Eph. 1:20:33); "base", "derivation" (I Cor. 11:3); "exalted originator or completer" in Col. 1:18 (see p. 108). Also, "one who brings to completion" (Eph. 5:23). They call these "ordinary Greek meanings" (P.105). But these meanings are not found in any standard lexicons. What authorities do they quote to support these new meanings? This is the question Grudem<sup>120</sup> and those who hold a similar view to his, would like answered.

## 2. (1986) Ruth A. Tucker, "Response", in Women, Authority and the Bible, editor, Mickelsen (pp. 118-133)

Ruth Tucker finds examples of *Kephalé* meaning "authority over" in Clement of Alexandria (c. 155-200 AD), Tertullian (c.169-215 AD), and Cyprian (c.200-255 A.D). Her conclusion is that whatever the word *Kephalé* meant to the Apostle Paul as he wrote I Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5, it was generally interpreted by the Church fathers, and by Calvin (16th Century), to mean "superior rank", or pre-eminence". This calls into question the Mickelsens' assumptions, particularly that the "superior rank" meaning of *Kephalé* is not "one of the ordinary Greek meanings", but rather a

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<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 994-95.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 454.

<sup>120</sup>*Ibid.* , 453.

meaning associated with the English word 'head' (p.117). it seems that the early Church Fathers used this so-called English conception long before they could have been in any way influenced by the current English meaning.<sup>121</sup>

**3. (1986) Philip B. Payne, "Response", in Women, Authority and the Bible, editor, Mickelsen (pp.118-133)**

Payne repeats "the Septuagint argument" already discussed above. He points out that the Mickelsens separation of Paul's meanings into 6 categories (see above) is rather misleading - it is confusing and unnecessary. Furthermore, as Grudem has already pointed out, these meanings have no lexical support. Moreover, D.A. Carson also believes that to read other meanings into *Kephalé* in I Cor. 11:3 or Eph. 5:23 other than "authority over" is to commit the exegetical fallacy he calls "an appeal to unknown or unlikely meanings".<sup>121</sup>

But Payne also claims that to interpret "head" as "authority-over" in I Corinthians 11:3 ("head of Christ is God") is wrong because that would be propounding a doctrine of the subordination of Christ to God the Father (pp. 126-127). Mickelsens say the same thing: "This understanding has robbed us of the richer, more exalted picture of Christ that Paul was trying to convey to us" (P.111). But this subordination is in reference to role, not to essence or being. That is why the writer of Hebrews in 1:3 says that Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father. This means that God the Father is still on the throne. I do not see any connotation of inferiority of the Son (Jesus) implied by Paul in I Corinthians 11.

Where does the above discussion leave us? To what does it lead us? I believe we cannot escape the possibility that *Kephalé* could mean "authority over" in

<sup>121</sup>D.A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 36-37.

Ephesians 5:23. Assuming the result of the exegesis, above, I will now seek to demonstrate that "authority-over" is the correct understanding of *Kephalé* in Ephesians 5.

**Headship as "Authority-over"**

It is in Ephesians 1:20-23 where Paul first introduces the language of headship, subjection, and rule. He says it is God who has "put all things under Christ's feet, and given him (Christ), to be the head over all things to the church ... which is his body" (vv. 22-23; cf 4:15; Col. 1:15-18). There is a parallel between Ephesians 5:22-23 and 1:20-23. Both have, in common, the head-body relationship. The mention of Christ's headship is followed by a remark on the submission of the Church to Him. His self-sacrificing rule is for the sake of the body, the Church. Christ's self-giving love is to be imitated by the husband who should use all his resources for his wife's good. There are some differences, though, that should be noted, between chapters 1 and 5.

Chapter 1 stresses that by God's design, all creation had been subjected to Christ for the sake of the Church (vv. 22-23). In chapter 5, Paul sees God's design as calling upon women to "subject themselves" to their husbands as the church subjects herself to Christ. The wives are not asked to submit for the sake of the superior wisdom of their husbands, but for the sake of Christ. Neither are they called upon to submit because culture demands it of them, nor "because of Paul's smartness" in arguing apologetically, in the defence of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world of his day.<sup>122</sup> The model that we have seen in Ephesians 1:20-23 provides a pattern for a wife's relationship to her husband and vice-versa.

<sup>122</sup>Craig S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992). 139. Here, Keener asks "Why does Paul who calls for mutual submission, deal more explicitly with the submission of wives than with that of husbands?" His answer is, "Because he was smart". Paul, he says, needed to temper his radicalism with

Paul, as we know, must have been keenly aware of the men's tendency to abuse the 'dominant' position of headship given to them by God. Hence his regulatory stance to the husbands' behaviour in Ephesians 5:25-32. The husband's responsibility is a function of divine pattern and appointment rather than personal qualifications.<sup>123</sup> So, of "authority" of some sort is inherent in the headship of the husband, how may he exercise the same over his wife? This leads us back to the issue of "authority and submission", to which we now turn.

### Authority and Submission

As we have noted above, verse 21 of Ephesians 5 has a transitional role, forming a bridge between the sections 5:18-20 and 5:23-23. The three paragraphs that follow verse 21 are given as examples of Christian submission. The emphasis throughout is on submission: wives to husbands (verse 22), children to parents (obedience is enjoined, 6:1), and slaves to masters (6:5).

But in contemporary society, how do Evangelical Christians exercise this teaching on submission in the household? In the three paragraphs referred to above, the husband, the parent and the master have been invested with an authority to which others should submit. This does not in any way negate the equality of the sexes as far as man and woman are concerned, because, "equality of worth is not identity of roles."<sup>124</sup> The two questions that arise, naturally (cf. Stott) are:

- (i) Where does this authority come from?
- (ii) And how is it to be used?

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prudent sensitivity to his culture. Yes, but was not he also under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "a mighty Counsellor?" (Paul was aware of the role of women in leadership see Acts 18:2, 26; 16:40)

<sup>123</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 147-148, 237.

<sup>124</sup>Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 48.

The answer to the first question is that the husband's authority comes from God: the God of order, the God of creation and the God of the Bible. In the family, this authority is delegated to the husband, and the wife is expected to submit to it. Behind the husband we must see and discern the Lord himself, the author of the husband's authority. Similarly, the "mutual submission" expected of Christians, one to another, should be out of reverence to Christ.

It must be remembered that the husband's authority is not unlimited. If a husband misuses this God-given authority, for example, by commanding what God forbids, or forbidding what God commands, "then the duty of the wife is no longer conscientious submission, but conscientious refusal to do so".<sup>125</sup> The principle is clear: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

The second question has to do with the exercise of the divinely delegated authority. How is it to be used? Merely saying "as Christ does towards the church" (Eph. 5:25-29) will not do. Knowledge of what Christ does to and for the church is no guarantee that Christian husbands will put this into practice. That could have been why Hull<sup>126</sup> argued that *Kephalé* cannot mean 'authority-over'. She gives two reasons for that stand. First, it causes subordination of Jesus to God, yet we know that Jesus is very God of very God. Secondly, she says this will make men give only lip-service to submission and in the end, it remains only for the wife to submit to her husband. This will not do in view of the injunction to "mutual submission" in Ephesians 5:21.<sup>127</sup> How does one respond to Hull?

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>126</sup>Hull, Equal to Serve, 193-94.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid. Markus Barth, The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians (Valley Forge, Pa.: The Judson Press, 1959), 222-231, says of Eph. 5:21, (a) a rightly understood submission is pleasing to God, (b) this submission is more

With regard to Hull's first point, it should be noted that the subordination of Christ to God the Father is in reference to role, not to essence or being. Furthermore, God the son became man and acted on behalf of Adam's race. As "second Adam" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:45), Christ was obedient to God's authority, even to the point of death on the cross (Phil 2:8). Although he was God, Christ humbled himself for the purpose of redeeming humankind (Col. 1:14); but thereafter he was highly exalted to his status of co-equal with God, as Creator (Col. 1:15-17) and Lord (Phil 2:9-11).

Hull's other argument is that *Kephalé* should not be taken to mean "authority-over" to avoid men giving lip-service to submission. But should God's commands be modified to suit men's responses? How many men and women give lip-service to God's other commandments, such as to "love one another," to "forgive one another?" Either we receive God's word as "true and worthy of our full acceptance," or we reject it altogether, to our own peril.

But if indeed Paul intended husbands to exercise authority over their wives, why did he not use the word ἐξουσία ("authority") in this context? Paul is not telling the husbands (or parents and masters) to exercise any such "authority". On the contrary, he warns them against the improper use of that kind of "authority." Rather, in this passage (Eph. 5:22-33) he tells the husbands to love their wives and to care for them, parents to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (6:14) and masters to treat their slaves with justice (6:5-9). So 'authority' in this context is not "tyranny" or domineering power "in a word, the biblical concept of authority spells not tyranny "authority" is but responsibility"<sup>128</sup> The model of

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than an external attitude - references to Christ imply references to reverent, voluntary, joyful and undivided service, (c) Jesus Christ is honoured by such submission.

<sup>128</sup>Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 220. See also, David M. Park "The Structure of Authority in Marriage: an Examination of *Hypotasso* and *Kephale* in Ephesians 5:21-33," *Evangelical Quarterly* 59, (April 1987):117-124. He says Paul

responsible Christ. He demonstrated servant leadership. Redemption, through him and by him corrects the tarnish of sin's subordinating drives in husbands. (See Phil 2:2-; Eph. 4:12). The Christian symbol of hierarchy is not the sceptre, but the cross. So, the Evangelical challenge is to transform the definition of hierarchy so that it is not conformed to this world's standards, but transformed by the renewing of the mind. "Male leadership *in the home* (italics mine) that is not self-serving will convict the world. Jesus showed it on the cross of calvary."<sup>129</sup> What a challenge for Christian husbands!

### Summary

If, therefore, it is the wife's duty as wife to submit to her husband, it is also the husband's duty as a member of God's new society to submit to his wife. The essence of Paul's instruction is, "wives submit" and "husbands love. " To submit is to give oneself-up for somebody, as Christ gave himself up for the church. This makes submission and love two aspects of the very same thing, namely, "selfless self-giving".<sup>130</sup> But this is not easy. It can be painful. Yet to lose oneself that the other may find his or herself is the essence of the gospel of Christ. According to Stott, husbands and wives should not expect to discover harmony in marriage without pain and conflict: "they have to work at building a relationship of love, respect and truth."<sup>131</sup> What a gigantic task!

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defines *Kephale* Christologically, in terms of servanthood, sacrifice, and love. Husbands are to express their 'authority' and 'power' through acts of love (p.122).

<sup>129</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, "Shared Leadership or Male Headship? *Christianity Today* 4 (1986):121-131.

<sup>130</sup>Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 234. c.f. Lincoln, *Ephesian*, 393.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, 236.

## Conclusion

Our discussion on submission and authority in marriage as seen in Ephesians 5: 21-33 has revealed that the Apostle Paul shows great respect for both women and men. He addresses, exhorts and encourages each in their calling in marriage to exercise what God has allotted them, out of reverence for Christ ("in the Lord").

As a preface to the Ephesian Household Code, we read: "Be submissive to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5: 21, RSV). This, indeed, is a call to "mutual submission" demanded of all Christians. Even husbands, according to verse 21, are expected to submit to their wives without surrendering their overall direction of the family. This comes as no surprise because the command to live a life of submission is in keeping with Jesus' life of submission to his Father's will. Therefore, verse 21 becomes a transitional one, forming a bridge between verses 18-20, about the implications of being filled with the Holy Spirit, and verses 22-33, about submission in specific family relations. If we are to be honest to the text, we see that, even though husbands are not expected to "rule" wives, "the portrayal of the wife as submitting is related to the husband's 'headship'".<sup>132</sup>

Our discussion has revealed that two motivations are given by the Apostle for the wife's submission to her husband. First, the husband is the head of the wife (5:23a). The Scriptures we have looked at, above, clearly show that the husband, not the wife is called to headship. To argue that redemption frees the wife from the subordinate role to her husband is not quite right (see below for a fuller development of this point, under Gal. 3:28). The new creation in Christ frees us from the lack of

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<sup>132</sup>Ruth A. Tucker, and Walter L. Liefeld, Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 451.

harmony between the sexes caused by the fall (Gen. 3:16), but it established the original intention of creation. It was to the "beginning" that Jesus went back in Matthew 19:4-6, thus confirming Genesis 1 and 2. Should we not do likewise? "What creation has established, no culture is able to destroy."<sup>133</sup> The second motivation for wifely submission is the Church's submission to Christ (5:24). As the Church submits to Christ, so should the wife to her own husband.

Turning to the husbands, Paul exhorts them to "love their wives ... as Christ loved the Church (Eph. 5:25). As the "head" of the wife, which connotes "authority-over", as our extensive discussion has shown, his behaviour is to be limited to the Christian norms. This is due to the injunction, "love as Christ loved the Church". Although the command to the husband does not use the language of submission, yet there is a call to sacrifice on the behalf of the wife. We saw that to "love" and to "submit" are but two sides of the same coin: "to give oneself-up to somebody", yet without losing one's individuality. What is clear from our discussion is that "love" and "respect" in marriage can be expressed through "mutual submission" to one another out of reverence to Christ. Such an approach to marriage was not usual in the first century. Husbands then must have been challenged to more self-examination with a view to changing for the better.

Our discussion has also revealed that there are limits to Paul's teaching on submission. We saw that submission reaches its elastic limit when it calls upon the wife to break God's commandments. In such a case, the wife is justified to appeal to such texts as Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men" (see above).

Yet even then, there still remain grey areas where it is not possible to fully define the limits of submission. But suffice it to say that the limits of the call to submission are at the point at which it becomes destructive.

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<sup>133</sup>Stott, The Message of Ephesians, 221.

## SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY IN COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

### Introduction

The section, 3:18-4:1, is introduced without any connecting particle to the previous one. It is a "self-contained admonishing unit". Before discussing it, a word is fitting on the preceding context, which is Colossians 3:12-17.

Verse 12-14 summaries the character of the "new man." The Colossians Christians were such men and women, as we can see from the way Paul addresses them: "the elect of God", "holy and beloved". They are to behave in a manner that shows "heartfelt compassion", "kindness", "lowliness", "gentleness", and "long-suffering". Forgiveness and love for one another are enjoined. "Love" is the crowning virtue because it is the bond which produces perfection (v.14). Verses 15-17 are an exhortation to worship the Lord. The gospel message centering on Christ should dwell in them. Only then would they worship the Lord in spirit and in inspired psalms, hymns and songs, in gratitude to the Lord. Verse 17 concludes this section, and in it, Paul covers every aspect of the Christian life: every word is to be spoken and action done "in the name of the Lord Jesus". To act in that name is to act in recognition of the authority of Jesus over our lives, and also to act as his representatives, but ones who fully depend upon him, for, "...without him we can do nothing" (John 15:5c).

### THE COLOSSIAN HAUSTAFELN: COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

If Colossians 3:12-17 is about the character of a "new person" in Christ and in worship, then 3: 18-4: 1 is about the practical outworking of such character in the 'home' life of a believer. This section is about how to live out to one's self the life of faith "in the Lord", and how to set the other members of one's family to do the same.

But the question that scholars have battled with is - "How Christian are these instructions?" For one thing, other ancient pagan and Jewish communities also compiled household rules which are, in some ways, parallel to what we find here. Wayne Meeks for example, discusses what was obtaining in the households of the "first Christians" in his book, The Moral World of the First Christians.<sup>134</sup> Meek says that Aristotle took the household as a paradigm of the political order.<sup>135</sup> Like the polis ('city') itself, it is made up of people of different ranks. Some are fit to rule (free males, owners, fathers), others to serve (women, children, slaves). Such sentiments were repeated and expanded by other philosophers after him, and in Roman times, they were commonly to be found in handbooks of philosophy. Upsetting the order of the home, it was believed, meant upsetting the order of society in general.

When converts were initiated into Christianity they were faced with proclamations like, "put off the old-self .... and in its place put on the new man, after the manner of Christ" (Col. 3:9-11); and "in Christ, there is neither slave nor free, neither Jew nor Greek, no male and female" (Gal. 3:28). Besides, there were such prominent women leaders as Junia, who was "foremost among apostles" (Rom. 16:7). Must such women remain "submissive" to their husbands? What of persons like Onesimus, once a runaway slave, but now converted; how was Philemon to handle him (Philemon 26)? These were troubling questions that needed to be addressed. They form a background to such texts by Paul as Colossians 3:18-4:1; Ephesians 5:22-6:9; and also by Peter (I Peter 2:18-3:7).

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<sup>134</sup>Wayne A. Meeks, The Moral World of the First Christians , Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 111-113.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 20-23.

However, it is clear from Colossians (3:18-4:1) that Paul is not telling his readers to conform to prevailing contemporary standards. The Stoics for example, based their teaching on the law of nature: this is the way the world is, so this is how you must live in harmony with it.<sup>136</sup> Paul bases his teaching on the law of the "new nature". In Christ, one is released to be truly human, and the divine pattern of life is that it is in giving, not self-assertion, that we discover who we are. Of course, Paul expected Christians to recognise the ordinary standards of 'good' and 'bad' (see Romans 12:9; 13:1-7) to avoid giving unnecessary offence to non-Christians. Yet his call to living fulfilled Christian lives in the home has its basis elsewhere.

But first, let us discuss the structure and setting of Colossians 3:18-4:1, which will lead us onto the examination of what Paul says to wives and husbands, thereafter.

#### THE STRUCTURE OF COLOSSIANS 3:18-4:1

This is a self-contained and complete unit which consists of three pairs of reciprocal exhortations which have a certain order: first the 'addressee' then an 'exhortation', and finally, a 'I reason' or motivation for the exhortation, except the address to husbands (3:19) and to fathers (3:21) which do not have the motivation (see the structure in Greek, below, as taken from Harris<sup>137</sup>).

As can be seen below, wives ( αἱ γυναῖκες ) are exhorted to submission to their own husbands because this is ἀνήκεν ἐν κυριῷ ("fitting in the Lord". v.18). The children ( τὰ τέκνα ) are enjoined to ὑπακούετε "to

<sup>136</sup>David L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 51-62.

<sup>137</sup>Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon: Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 177.

obey") their parents because this is εὐαρεστον ἐν κυριῷ ("well pleasing", "commendable" to the Lord - v.20).

#### LAYOUT: COL. 3:18-4:1

3:18 Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτασθεσθε ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυριῷ

v. 19 Οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπάτε  
μη πικραίνεσθε

v. 20 τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῦτο γάρ... ἐν κυριῷ

v. 21 Οἱ πατέρες, μη ἐρεθίζετε

v. 22 Οἱ δούλοι, ὑπακούετε φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον

v. 23 ἔργαζεσθε ὡς τῷ κυριῷ

v. 24 εἰδότες ὅτι ἀπο κυρίου

4:1 Οἱ κύριοι δουλεύετε 25 οὐκ ἔστιν κτλ\*  
παρεχέσθε εἰδότες ὅτι... κυριῷ  
ἐν οὐρανῷ

\* κτλ = (καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ, "and the rest").

The slaves, too, are enjoined to "obey their masters ... in all things", because this is how they show their "fear for the Lord" (v.22). This exhortation to the slaves

(v.22-25) is expanded and does not quite fit the sequence in verses 18 and 20. Two contrasting exhortations are given:

- (i) positively: "obey with sincerity of heart" (v.22), and
- (ii) negatively: "not with eye service, seeking to please men" (v.22).

Also, in verse 23-25, are three other admonitions to slaves:

- v. 23a - "and whatever you do, do it heartily";
- v. 24a - "knowing that from the Lord... you will receive ...";
- v. 25a - "but he who does wrong, will be repaid for whatever he has done";

and three principle clauses:

- v. 24b - "as to the Lord and not to man";
- v. 24b - "for you serve the Lord Christ";
- v. 25b - "and there is no partiality".<sup>138</sup>

The husbands on the other hand are exhorted to love their wives, but then no motivation is given (v.19), except yet another exhortation - *μη πικραίνετε* ("do not be bitter") towards them. The fathers, too, are exhorted not to provoke their children lest they become discouraged (v.21).

In 4:1, Paul returns to the 'formula' already noted above in verses 18 and 20. The masters are exhorted to "provide" what is "right" and "just" (*τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὴν ἰσότητα*) to their slaves. The motivation for this action is that they, too, have a Master in heaven.

In summary, irrespective of the role in which a Christian finds himself or herself, at home or at work, life should and must be lived "for or in the Lord", and in harmony with one's fellow human beings. Christian conduct must be motivated and

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<sup>138</sup>Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians and Philemon*, vol. 44, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), 219-220.

determined by one's commitment to Christ. That seems to be the message of Colossians 3:18-4:1.

The main focus of this study, though, is on the relationship between husband and wife. It seeks to discover the meaning of "submission" and "authority" (if any) in marriage in Colossians 3: 18-19. It is to that we now briefly turn, beginning with exegesis of these verses (18-19).

### EXEGESIS: COLOSSIANS 3:18-19

Does Colossians 3:18-19 teach subordination of wives to husbands? And, by implication, does it teach "authority" of husbands over their own wives? These are the questions that our discussion seeks to answer.

Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is by first defining and exploring the meaning of what are clearly key terms in these verses (18-20). These terms are: *ὑποτασσέσθε* ("to be in subjection", "to subject one's self"), *ἀνήκεν* ("it is fitting", "it is proper"); both are used in verse 18. The other terms, both occurring in verse 19 are: *ἀγαπάτε* ("love"), and *πικραίνετε* ("to make bitter", "to embitter", "to become bitter").

In verse 18, the women are addressed first, and this word, must be referring to wives. Although it can refer to both 'women' and 'wives', the context dictates that we adopt the latter meaning here. It means, therefore, that Paul's interest here is not in the relationship between women and men in general. What he is concerned with is the manner in which wives should relate to their own husbands and vice versa.

What did Paul intend for wives to do by his use of *ὑποτασσέσθε* ("be subject"), in this context? To this issue we now turn our attention.

### A. A Word to Wives: "Submit" (verse 18)

The verb translated "to submit", "to be in subjection", in verse 18 is crucial to our study. The term ὑποτασθε, a present middle imperative from ὑποτασσω (cf. ὑποτασσομαι) we already saw in our study of the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:21-33.

However, a few more lexical examples of the usage of the term translated, "submit", are added here, to further clarify its meaning.

The New International Dictionary of New Testament (Colin Brown, Vol. 3) there are example of the usage of the term ὑποτασθε ("to be subject"):

-used in the "household duty codes", by Paul to keep social order, partly on the theological ground of the creation ordinances of the Torah, and partly to show that a Christian is not at liberty to overturn the social framework by denying the Jewish basis of faith, by getting involved in a slave uprising, or by promoting a feminist movement (cf. Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Tim 2:9-15; 1 Peter 3:1-7).<sup>139</sup>

Delling<sup>140</sup> discusses the use of the word "submit" in the Septuagint, the New Testament and the Early Church. Concerning the New Testament usage which is summarised here, Delling says the word is restricted to Luke, the Pauline corpus, Hebrews, and to James and I Peter. The use in the New Testament is influenced by the Septuagint, where, in the middle voice the term means: "to subject oneself", to acquiesce in", "to acknowledge someone's dominion and power", "to submit" (cf. 1 Chr. 22:18). So, in the middle voice usage in I Corinthians 15:28, for example, the

<sup>139</sup>R.P. Martin, "Virtue, Blameless," in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 3 (1978).

<sup>140</sup>G. Delling, "Submit," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 8 (1964).

notion is that the power of the son of God is not an end in itself; it is granted to him in order that he may render it back to God after completing his task (cf. "then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and authority and power" - verse 24).

The same word is used, says Delling, in Luke 2:51, where the boy Jesus subordinated himself to his parents (cf v.40). In Romans 13:1-7, the same word is used of a divinely willed order, with regard to submission to the authorities. In 1 Peter 2:18 and Titus 2:9, the submission of slaves to their masters is demanded, not because slavery is ordained by God. Not at all! Christianity then was not able to abolish it, but both Paul and Peter regulated it by calling for brotherhood in ἀγάπῃ ("love").

As discussed above (Ephesians 5:22-33), a number of other scholars are in agreement that the meaning of ὑποτασσω, in the middle voice has to do with the idea of "subordination", not "dominion".<sup>141</sup> Bruce is more emphatic on this issue of submission; for him, a Christian wife should accept her 'subordinate' place in this 'hierarchy' as "fitting in the Lord".<sup>142</sup> It is Hurley who categorically states that the term ὑποτασθε carries overtones of 'authority' and subjection or submission to it - a concept of exercising and yielding to authority".<sup>143</sup>

We conclude by saying that Paul teaches wifely submission in Colossians 3:18. "The admonition to wives," says O'Brien, "is an appeal to free and responsible

<sup>141</sup>The Scholars referred to include, Abbott, Ephesians, 293; Moule, Ephesians, 128; Lohse, Colossians and Philemon, 157; Louw and Nida, 476; Bruce, Ephesians, 289-290.

<sup>142</sup>F.F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1961), 290.

<sup>143</sup>James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 142.

agents voluntarily to subordinate themselves to their husbands since this is entirely proper within the new fellowship of those who own Christ as Lord 1 4 4. This submission is in recognition of God's order for husbands and wives. This is also the conclusion we arrived at after discussing Ephesians 5:21-33 above. It describes the appropriate form of humility or service for the Christian wife in relation to her husband. The fact that Paul does not spell out what submission amounts to in practical living, or how it works itself out in the day-to-day affairs of the household (which presumably Paul's readers knew), does not negate his exhortation that wives be<sup>144</sup> submissive to their own husbands. Harris<sup>145</sup> says that what Paul teaches is a case of voluntary submission in recognition of the God-appointed leadership of the husband and the divinely hierarchical order in creation (1 Cor. 11:3-9; Eph 5:22-24).

#### Motivation for Wifely Submission: "as is fitting in the Lord."

The motivation given by Paul for wifely submission is  $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon \epsilon\upsilon \kappa\upsilon\phi\iota\omega$  ("as is fitting in the Lord"). The term  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  is an imperfect indicative active, from  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\omega$  (BAGD,<sup>146</sup>; Schlier<sup>147</sup>). The entries in BAGD for this term include:

1. refer, relate, belong to something, for example, what concerns the church (1 Sam. 8:1).
2. Impersonal meaning of  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  "it is proper, fitting. So,  $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$

<sup>144</sup>Peter O'Brien, Colossians and Philemon, 233-234.

<sup>145</sup>Harr4s, Colossians, 178.

<sup>146</sup>BAGD, 66.

<sup>147</sup>Schlier, " $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$ ", Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 1:360.

$\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$ ="as is fitting" (cf.  $\text{o}\acute{\upsilon}\kappa \acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  =" what is not fitting or proper" of one's (  $\pi\omicron\iota\iota \eta \sigma\epsilon\varsigma$  )duty, with regard to avoidance of obscene, foolish or dirty words).

According to Louw and Nida,<sup>148</sup> the term  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  is synonymous with  $\pi\rho\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota$  and  $\kappa\alpha\theta\eta\kappa\epsilon\iota$  which words mean "to be fitting or right", with the implication of possible moral judgement. So,  $\acute{\omega}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  ("as is fitting") is an expression suggesting that the wife's behaviour of submissiveness should be in "such a manner" that it is proper before the Lord. The  $\acute{\omega}\varsigma$  is a comparative particle formed from the relative pronoun  $\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma$  and expressing manner<sup>149</sup>. Grammarians have wondered why the imperfect indicative active of  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\kappa\epsilon\upsilon$  was used here, rather than the present tense. Various views have been suggested for this rather unexpected use of the imperfect. Some of these, as outlined by Harris<sup>150</sup> are summarised now:

- (i) It points to the period, now past, between one's conversion and the present: "ever since your conversion".
- (ii) It stands for the potential optative of modest assertion (e.g. Acts 26:29): "as would be fitting".
- (iii) It expresses present time in an "unreal" condition without  $\acute{\alpha}\nu$  and with a protasis such as "if you do it" suppressed.
- (iv) It is an idiomatic use of the imperfect indicative with a verb expressing propriety in present time, a potential indicative.
- (v) A matter of a previously existing obligation that still applies, not of an unfulfilled duty: "this is your duty."

<sup>148</sup>Louw & Nida, 627.

<sup>149</sup>Bauer, Arudt, Gingrich, and Danker, 897.

<sup>150</sup>Harris, Colossians, 178-179.

The idea of outlining these possibilities is not that we might select one that best suits or expresses succinctly the mind of Paul, but rather it is to show that there are a number of ways of understanding the use of the imperfect tense here, as Harris has shown. So, "what is fitting," in this context, seems to imply an action, begun in the past, now ongoing, and has and should become customary practice.<sup>151</sup>

The reason for urging the submission of wives to their own husbands is that it is proper "in the Lord." The Phrase "in the Lord." ( ἐν κυρίῳ ) has the same meaning as at the end of verses 18 and 20. In each case, it forms part of the justification, ( ὡς ["as"], v. 18; γὰρ ["for"], v.20) for an earlier imperative. The Lord Jesus is the yardstick for determining what is fitting (v. 18) or pleasing (v.20), "as judged by a Christian standard".<sup>152</sup> The sphere in which this submission is to be lived out is "in the Lord" (locative dative). In Colossians 3:18 (cf. Eph. 5:22), the criterion for what is "fitting", is the Lord. This designates the proper attitude and behaviour "within the new fellowship of those who own Christ as their Lord".<sup>153</sup> For there is no corner of human life in which Christians could live without "doing ... all in the name of the Lord" (Col. 3:17). Lohse,<sup>154</sup> among others, does not see this directive as having timeless validity. He claims that custom and tradition determine what is "fitting", and that the words "in the Lord" are only appended here, but in reality, the issue of what is fitting, right, and just is determined by social order. I

<sup>151</sup>Harris, Colossians, 178-179.

<sup>152</sup>J.B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon (London: Macmillan and Co., 1879): repr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), 225.

<sup>153</sup>Bruce, 289. cf. Moule, Ephesians, 129; O'Brien, Colossians Philemon, 222.

<sup>154</sup>Lohse, Colossians and Philemon, 158.

believe Lohse has got it wrong. Paul is not talking about what is fitting in this or that culture, or in the light of human nature, or customs (which I believe change with the times).

Rather, he sees this as behaviour worthy for Christians in particular, not society in general. Here, Paul is not urging conformity to society's norms but conformity to Christ, whose behaviour was and still remains the ultimate norm and model for Christian behaviour.<sup>155</sup>S.C. Mott, in his book, Biblical Ethics and Social Change (Oxford, 1982), would rather that Christians be involved in meeting the needs of society in general than those of the Christian community in particular. He bases his argument on Jesus' teaching on "love of a neighbour/enemy" (Matt. 5:43-48), and Paul's call to love and to do good to "all" (Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 3:12; 5:15).<sup>156</sup>

#### **The First Word to Husbands: "Love" (Verse. 19a)**

Turning to the parallel exhortation to husbands, the word ἀγαπᾷ ("love".) becomes very prominent. This word was unknown in antiquity prior to its appearance in the New Testament, but it does not appear that it was used in the discussion of household duties<sup>156</sup> in Hellenistic Literature.<sup>157</sup>

As we saw in our discussion on Ephesians 5, the verb ἀγαπάτε ("love"), is a present active imperative, which has the idea, "maintain the habit of loving", "make it your practice to love". It calls for an attitude and positive expression, based

<sup>155</sup>Ben Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 152.

<sup>156</sup>Stephen Charles Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 35-33.

<sup>157</sup>Lohse, Colossians and Philemon, 158; cf. Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 152.

on a deep appreciation and high regard for the wife. To love their wives is a supreme duty for husbands. "Self-devotion, not self-satisfaction is its dominant trait", says Curtis Vaughan.<sup>158</sup> This sets ἀγαπαω ("love") apart, not to be thought of in terms of mere "feeling or showing affection towards" (φιλεω), nor the erotic "love", with sexual desire (ερω). The command to "love" (ἀγαπατε) their wives forbids husbands from behaving in an overbearing manner.

### The Second Word to Husbands: "Do not be harsh" (Verse. 19b)

The term πικραίνεσθε from the root πικραίνω, is a second person plural present passive imperative. In the active, it means "to make bitter." In the passive it means: "to become bitter, " "to be embittered ( πρὸς τινα, "against someone)"; "to foster bitter feelings, "to be harsh; "to show bitterness."<sup>159</sup>

The use of the present imperative with the negative ( μὴ + present imperative) forbids a habitual action. The negative definition of 'love' here, relates to action that must be avoided: "do not be embittered against them".<sup>160</sup> Louw and Nida, too have "have bitter hate", a similar translation, do not "have bitter hate", "bitterness".<sup>161</sup> But the use of this term ( πικραίνεσθε) here presents

<sup>158</sup>Curtis Vaughan, "Colossians. " in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 2 (1978).

<sup>159</sup>Harris, Colossians, 179.

<sup>160</sup>O'Brien, Colossians and Philemon, 224; Lohse, Colossians and Philemon, 154-158.

<sup>161</sup>Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 628.

problems: Does this mean that the husband is not to be "bitter" against his wife, or that he is not to become "bitter" in himself?

What seems to be in view here is that a husband is not to have an ongoing anger or deep-seated resentment against his wife.<sup>162</sup> The injunction, "do not be harsh with them" ("do not be bitter toward them" - NKJV) is a negative expression that is a corollary of the positive injunction to love. The avoidance of bitterness is an expression of obedience to the commitment and commandment to "love."<sup>163</sup>

In the section 3:12-17, forgiveness and forbearance were enjoined, which would thus, forbid a Christian man to be harsh to anyone. This being the case, how much more these exhortations are applicable in the case of one's wife. the husband's actions must be guided by love. Compassionate and loving care of the wife by the husband is likely to elicit willing submission on her part.

### SUMMARY

We have seen that whereas the wives and children are exhorted to "submit" and to "obey", respectively, and that, "in the Lord", the husbands are exhorted to "love" their wives. But this induction is not followed by the specifically Christian motivation, "in the Lord". Yet Paul does limit the exercise of the "authority" of the "head" of the household. He does so, first, positively by the exhortation "to love", and secondly, on a negative note, to desist from "bitterness" (v.19).

As we conclude this discussion on the Colossian household duty code, I think it is a good idea to briefly review Paul's exhortations to wives and husbands in Ephesians 5:21-33, in relation to Colossians 3:18-19.

<sup>162</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 152.

<sup>163</sup>O'Brien, Colossians and Philemon, 224.

### A Review of Paul's Teaching in Ephesians 5:21-33

In this paragraph, I seek to show that Paul is as consistent in his appeal to husbands and wives in Colossians 3:18-19, as he is in Ephesians 5:21-33.

Firstly, both appeal to wives before husbands, though the address to wives in Ephesians is much shorter than the one to husbands.

Secondly, the address to husbands in Colossians is so brief that it is given only one verse (Col. 3:19), yet the one in Ephesians has over eight verses (5:25-33).

Thirdly, Ephesians uses ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ ("one's own") to qualify the wife's submission, but in Colossians, the motive for the paraenesis is ("in the Lord") ἐν κυρίῳ.

Fourthly, Colossians does not make absolute its exhortation to wives as Ephesians does (κατα πάντα-"in everything" - 5:24). Instead, "in everything" is reserved for the obedience of children to their parents (3:20) in the Colossian parallel.

Lastly, what it means to love is, in Ephesians, elaborated in terms of the analogies with Christ's love for the Church and one's love for oneself (vv. 25b-33a). "Ten words addressed to husbands in Colossians, become one hundred and forty-three in Ephesians."<sup>164</sup>

Paul's view on married women is consistent in Ephesians and Colossians. Both husband and wife are called to a mutual selfgiving that is to be done "in the Lord", and this, therefore, rules out the idea that one member is superior to the other. Yet this does not preclude the husband's headship or the wife's submission. As the

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<sup>164</sup>Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), 355.

husband lovingly cares for and respects his wife, so she too, on her part, acts in a way that recognizes and respects the divine role and responsibility given to her husband.

But one may ask, "Why are the Ephesian and Colossian household rules different?" In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul may deliberately be attempting to tone down the patriarchal marital structure of his day. Both "headship" and "submission" are grounded in Christ.<sup>165</sup> In the Colossian *Haustafeln*, Paul seems to have been attempting to correct problems perhaps created by a misunderstanding of the implications of his teaching about freedom and oneness in Christ<sup>166</sup> (see a detailed study of Gal. 3:28 below).

### CONCLUSION

Colossians 3:18-4:1 is parallel to Ephesians 5:21-33 though much briefer, especially the account on the duties of husbands and wives. The overall principle upon which the duties of husbands and wives is based is 3: 17 where "all things are to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus".

The duties that are expected of each partner in the pairs, wife/husband, fathers (parents)/children, and slave/master are clearly spelt out. Wives, who had few, if any rights in the maledominated society of that time, are addressed as free, responsible persons. This is liberating for them, and allows them to live their lives as full members of the Christian community. Paul is very categorical about what the role of the wives is: their role is to submit to their own husbands, an attitude which is in line with the divine order of headship assigned to their husbands. The criterion for this submissive attitude, as we have seen in the exegesis, is that "it is fitting" in the Lord. Paul is not urging wives to do that which is fitting in the culture and the norms of the

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<sup>165</sup>Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 156.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

readers of his letter. Rather, he is urging submissiveness on the grounds that, this is the manner of behaviour expected of those who are "in the Lord". For Christian wives, the Lord Jesus is the yardstick for determining what is fitting (3:18).

This submission is never to be forced on the wife by the husband. It is to be voluntary, as the verb ὑποτασσέσθε (middle reflexive voice) shows. The sphere in which this submission is to be lived out is "in the Lord" (locative dative). This makes voluntary submission an expression of being in the Lord, an ethic patterned after Jesus' own conduct in relation to God the father. Furthermore, as shown above, what is "fitting" (ἀρέσκον), as the use of the imperfect tense demonstrates, implies an ongoing action begun in the past, and continuing now and into the future.

The exhortation to husbands is twofold. First, positively, they are exhorted to love their wives caringly, unselfishly, sacrificially, focussing on their well-being. This means not just loving in word, but by action (cf. Eph. 5:45-33). This is a gigantic call to self-denial, not to domineering over the objects of their love. Second, negatively, Paul urges husbands not to be "harsh" with their wives. No bitterness. No anger. Love and harshness simply cannot go together. A deep-seated and ongoing resentment towards one's wife must be avoided at all costs. Underlying all these exhortations is the general call to both husband and wife, in whatever they do, to do it out of reverence for Christ Jesus (3:17).

How this is to be worked out in the day-to-day lives of believing husbands and wives will be looked into in chapter four, where I seek to apply some of these truths to the 'African context'.

## THE DOMESTIC CODE IN PETER

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE FUNCTION OF THE "HOUSEHOLD CODE" IN 1 PETER

First a word about the term "Household Code". Is it a misnomer? The designation "household code" is inadequate for this genre and tradition, says Goppelt.<sup>167</sup> In 1 Peter 2:13-3:7, we find more material than about the "household". For this reason, Goppelt rightly prefers the use of the term "Station code". This, he says, does more justice to the sequence in Colossians and Ephesians, since they are not restricted fundamentally to the Christian household, and conform, moreover, to the instruction in Romans 13:1. The term "station" should be understood not in the modern sense, but in that of the Reformation. One's "station" is here the place in society's institutions to which one is assigned by God's sovereignty in history, the 'role' with which one is charged.<sup>168</sup> However, in this study we shall use the phrase "Household Code", since our focus is on the relationship between husband and wife.

What then, is the function of the "Household Code" in 1 Peter? Different functions have been suggested by various writers. These include an adologetic function, Daraenetic, social ordering of society, and missionary. These, as researched by Balch,<sup>169</sup> are summarised below.

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<sup>167</sup>Leonard Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*, trans. and augmented by John E. Alsup (Grand Rapids, MichiGan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 165

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>David L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 81-121.

### A. Apologetic Function

In arriving at this view, Balch has examined the Book of 1 Peter, and noted from its content that the "Household Code" was a Christian apology (a "defense for the faith of Christians in a pagan world") to the Greco-Roman society, as we can ascertain from some texts below.

1. 1 Peter 1:18b - "Futile ways inherited from your fathers", and "lawless idolatries" (cf. 4:3b) were frankly rejected. This led to Christians being slandered and persecuted.
2. 1 Peter 2:11-12, 15 - Pagans glorifying God. Through good conduct, the Christians are to point the non-believers to God.
3. 1 Peter 3:8-9: Here, the exhortation to unity and harmony (3.8) sums up the exhortation about household relationships. It seems that the harmony sought in 1 Peter is primarily domestic harmony between husbands-wives, and masters-slaves, which is then expected to flow into the Christian community in general.
4. 1 Peter 3:15: "Be prepared to make a defense". This refers to the hope that is in a believer (cf. Josephus, *Against Apion*, 11:147).<sup>170</sup> Josephus' defense of the Jews involved the presentation of Moses's "constitution" which included "marriage laws" demanding the wife's submissiveness (11:99) and "the law of slaves" (11:215). But in the Code in 1 Peter, the response was non-verbal good conduct (see 2:12, 15, 22, 23; 3:1,9; but 3:6). Also, in 3:15, a verbal response is assumed. The "defence" is to be given to anyone who asks - not necessarily and specifically to a legal representative of the governor. Note the parallel between  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu$  ("account", 3:15) by Christians,

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<sup>170</sup> Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, 54,55,73,75-76,90.

and the  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\nu$  ("account", 4:15) to be given by the pagans in the future "to the one prepared to judge the living and the dead". This one has a judicial flavour to it.

In conclusion, this view assumes that the code in 1 Peter exhorted Christians to the kind of 'good conduct' of which a Roman governor would have approved. A judicial trial of Christians at that time does not seem to have been a reality.<sup>171</sup> There is no allusion in 1 Peter to state persecution because the Christians refused to worship the emperor. Rather, certain of the slaves and wives in the households headed by non-believing masters and husbands converted to Christianity. This made some persons in Roman society to react by accusing these converts of "being immoral, perhaps seditious, and certainly insubordinate."<sup>172</sup> It was to this situation that the author directed the apologia in 1Peter.

### B. The Paraenetic Function

According to Goppelt,<sup>173</sup> 1 Peter develops a unified focus: the existence of Christians in a non-Christian society, and overcoming that society by being prepared to bear oppression (i.e. to "suffer"). The theme of suffering almost appears to have grown in an unmotivated way out of general paraenesis. For Goppelt, then, thematic focus is the question of how to live in society - the fundamental problem of every social ethic. It is within this context that the domestic code is seen by him. In such a context, where conflict is unavoidable, Peter calls upon Christians, especially wives and slaves, to accept duties assigned to them. It makes sense, therefore, that in 2:13f,

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 95

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 18-20.

the readers are called upon to submit themselves to governing authorities, slaves to masters, and wives to their husbands. So, it is no wonder that Goppelt sees the code in 1 Peter as paraenetic, calling Christians to "good" or "proper conduct" ( ἀγαθοποιεῖν ). But what does this "good conduct" or "proper conduct" mean in the code of 1 Peter?

For Goppelt,<sup>174</sup> ἀγαθοποιεῖν ("proper conduct") represents, in the "Household" code of 1 Peter, a specifically New Testament statement of a Christian social ethic. How the proper conduct of Christians in the "Household" of society achieves shape in its realization is to be derived from the key words of the "Station" code itself. One such key term is ὑποτασσεσθαί ("to be submissive"). "Submission" is to be practised according to criteria for which the decisive motivation is made clear in the words, fiery institution of man for the Lord's sake" (2:13).

Other writers and interpreters of the New Testament codes, too, have argued that these texts are general ethical exhortations not addressed to any specific situation. Dibelius, as cited by Balch, for example, argues that, because the imminent hope of the *paz-ousia* had faded, the church acculturated to Roman society.<sup>175</sup> But we know that in 1 Peter, there is still hope for the imminent coming of the glory of the Lord (see 4:13; cf. 1:6, 13, 17; 4:5,7). That could not have been the motive for the adoption of the code in 1 Peter. Moreover, it was society that 'slandered' Christians who did not seem to conform to the Roman social-political customs. The code in 1 Peter, then, is certainly paraenetic: the author is exhorting the readers to a common kind of conduct.

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<sup>174</sup>Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>175</sup>Balch, Let Wives be Submissive, 106.

### C. Societal "Ordering"- A Possible Function?

Could social unrest have been of such magnitude that Peter had to address it in the "Household Code" in 1 Peter? Some writers have argued that social unrest on the part of wives and slaves within the Church, possibly stimulated by Galatians 3:28, could have warranted the exhortations to the wives and slaves in 2:18 3:7.<sup>176</sup> The issue in 1 Peter was not that Christians slaves (and wives) were politically revolutionary, nor that they were demanding their freedom from their masters. It was simply that, having become Christians, they refused to worship the traditional gods of their masters. If there were any revolts at all, these were limited to 131-71 B.C.<sup>177</sup> These were in the time of mass enslavement by the Romans, and all, apparently, occurred on Italian or Sicilian soil. In any case, it is known that some Christians sold themselves into slavery, "and provided for others with the price they received for themselves" (1 Clement 55:2; cf. 1 Cor. 13:3).

On the other hand, Crouch sees 1 Corinthians 7 as exhorting slaves to "abandon their concern for freedom".<sup>178</sup> This is in line with Schroeder's argument that texts like Galatians 3:28 created unrest on the part of many Christian slaves by fostering a misunderstanding of the gospel - they thought that such theological texts nullified all obligations to a master. The 'formula' in Galatians 3:28 was understood differently by different parties.

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 107, Citing James E. Crouch, The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafeln,

109 (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972), 124.

This brings us to yet another most likely function of the "Household Code" in 1 Peter.

#### D. The Missionary Function

Several scholars suggest that 1 Peter 2:12 gives a missionary purpose to the whole household code (see Selywn;<sup>179</sup> Schroeder)<sup>180</sup>. In 1 Peter 3:1, the use of the term *κερδοθησονται*, a future passive indicative of *κερδαίνω* ("to win, to gain") implies winning over the non-believing husbands to Christian faith and belief. Also, Sarah's "obedience" to Abraham is presented as a model for the Christian wives' missionary conduct (3:1,6).

While the behaviour of the wives in 1 Peter 3:1 was expected to convert their husbands, the behaviour outlined in the domestic code as a whole had a function similar to the apologetics written by the Hellenistic Jews, Philo<sup>181</sup> and Josephus<sup>182</sup> - these apologies did not have a missionary intent. The author of 1 Peter exhorted these Christians to live in family relations which Greco-Roman culture had defined as 'normal' and 'proper'. He hoped that this would cause Roman masters, husbands, and

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<sup>179</sup>Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The Epistle of St. Peter*, repr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1983), 171.

<sup>180</sup>Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, 108, citing David Schroeder, *Haustafeln*, 138, 157-158.

<sup>181</sup>See Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, 108, citing two German Scholars, Jacob Berneys, and Paul Windland.

<sup>182</sup>See David L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, 108, citing Josephus, *Against Apion*, 11: 145-295, in *Society of Biblical Literature* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 1:187-192.

governors to cease criticising, but instead, begin to praise persons who had rejected the traditional gods for faith in Christ.<sup>183</sup>

In summary, we have seen that the "Household Code" in 1 Peter has several functions: apologetic, paraenetic and missionary, but not a response to unrest stemming from within the church caused by a misunderstanding of Gal. 3:28. Of the missionary function, and for wives in particular, Goppelt says that this missionary aspect (3:1-2) is at the same time its overall point of view.<sup>184</sup> He also observes that the key phrase for the "Household Code" in 1 Peter is "proper conduct" (v.6b): for the Christian wife, what "proper conduct" is in marriage, is developed in verses 3-6b (see below) with the aid of paraenetic traditions.<sup>185</sup> The paraenetic function, thus, seems to stand out over and above the other functions of the code. So, the exhortations of 1 Peter regarding the living out of marriage in view of both the present conflict, and the new existence, develop principles of New Testament social ethics that to this day give guidance.

After this rather lengthy but necessary introductory background, we now turn to the outline of 1 Peter, general and specific. The general one is an outline of the whole book, the specific one pertains to the duties of wives and husbands. In arriving

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<sup>183</sup>Ibid.

<sup>184</sup>Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 217-218.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

at these outlines, I have considered materials from Balch<sup>186</sup> (Appendix 1, p. 129), Michaels,<sup>187</sup> and Goppelt.<sup>188</sup>

### THE OUTLINE OF 1 PETER: GENERAL

- Introduction. 1:1-2: Address and Greetings
- I. 1:3-2:10: A Heavenly Inheritance and New Life of the Faithful
  - II. 2:11-4:11: Responsible Participation in the Institutions of Society
  - III. 4:12-5:11: Renewed Exhortations
  - IV. 5:12-14: Personal Note and Closing Greetings

Our main focus in this study, though, is on the "Responsible Participation in the Institutions of Society", what Goppelt calls the "Station Code" (2:11-4:11), and Balch calls the "Interim Ethics of Submission" (p. 129). Specifically, we shall focus in on the responsibilities of the people of God in marriage (3:1-7).

### RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN THE INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIETY:

#### 2:11-4:11

##### A. 2:11 - 3:12: *The "Household Code" in 1 Peter*

1. 2:11-12: Christians Living in the World
2. 2:13-17: Submission to Governing Authorities
3. 2:18-25: Submission to Masters
4. 3:1-6: Submission to Husbands
5. 3:7: Respect of Husbands for their Wives

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<sup>186</sup>Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, 128-129.

<sup>187</sup>Ramsey J. Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 49 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publishers, 1988), xxxvii.

<sup>188</sup>Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 155ff.

6. 3:12: Summary and Old Testament Quotation
- B. 3:13 - 17 *Suffering for Right and Wrong*.
- C. 3:18 - 4:6 *Christ's Suffering and Ours*.
- D. 4:7 - 11 *Final Exhortation to Service*.

### Relationship of 2:11 - 4:11 to 1:3-2:10

1 Peter 1: 3-2: 10 lays a foundation for the social situation of the aliens (foreigners), the addressees of the letter. They are called to an existence that expresses itself in hope, faith and brotherly love.<sup>189</sup>

1 Peter 2:11-4:11, on the other hand, is the centre and focus of the letter. It flows out of the first part (1:3-2:10). It has a paraenetic note to it. Christians are to be engaged responsibly in the institutions of society - in this case the "Station Codes" (citizens to government, slaves to masters, and marital couples in their homes). All these fall within 2:11-3:12. Moreover, they are called to overcome the conflicts that come about from these institutions through their willingness to suffer (3:13-4:11).<sup>190</sup>

As can be seen from the outline above, 1 Peter 3:1-7 is sandwiched within the section 2:11-4:11, what seems to be the second major part in the Book: The Realization of Christian existence in the structures of society, and more specifically, within 2:11 - 3:12: Responsible Participation in the Institutions of Society.<sup>191</sup> It is fitting, therefore, that we examine the immediately preceding and following contexts of 3:1-7.

### The Preceding Context: 2:13-25

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid. , 20.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 153-155.

Though 2:13-25 is the context that immediately precedes 3:1-7, in a sense, verses 11 and 12, too, are part of that preceding context. The direct address in 2:11 (cf 4:12) indicates a new beginning, a change from statement to exhortation, by the use of the phrase "Beloved, I beg you," thus introducing paraenesis. What follows thereafter can almost be divided by simple reference to the exhortation to "be submissive" (2:13, 18; 3:1). The appeal of 2:11 is best understood as a heading for 2:11:-4:11, the command to "abstain from fleshy lusts". Peter's assumption seems to be that the first and most immediate conflict is within the Christian himself/herself. This is preliminary to the emphasis on the Christian's "honourable conduct among the gentiles" (v.12).<sup>192</sup> The conflict in society is won not by aggressive behaviour but by a 'good conduct.' This, hopefully, according to Peter, would help change the minds of the accusers of the Christians, and in effect, help them "overcome evil with good."

Section 2:13-17, then, forms a transition from a "case-study" (2:12) to the "Household duty code". The advice to the wives (3:16) is similar to the advice to domestic slaves (2:18-25). This makes 2:13-25 to be the context immediately preceding 3:1-7 (cf. Col. 3:22-4:1; Eph. 6:5-9). The section 2:18-25 can be divided into three Darts, as follows:

- (i) A call to Submission..... verse 18(cf. 2:13-14).
- (ii) Admonition about what pleases God ... verse 19-20 (cf. 2 : 1 5- 1 7)
- (iii) A precedent of Christ's Suffering....verses 21-25.

The point of this section is not 'submission' (or deference) for its own sake, but rather the proper response to hostility or mistreatment by those who are in positions of 'power' . Whereas the Christian wives are to follow the precedent of Sarah (3:6) who did what was right and precious in the sight of God (3:4), the

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<sup>192</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 115.

precedent for the slaves is Christ himself, who entrusted his whole life to God, the righteous Judge (2:23-24). Doing good is commendable before God (2:20b), much as doing good earns Christian citizens the praise of the authorities (2:14), "silences the ignorance of foolish men" (2:15), and, for the Christian wives, it qualifies them to become daughters (literally, 'children' ) of Sarah and other such holy women of old.

#### **The Following Context: 3:8-12**

These verses (8-12) are a summary of the domestic harmony between husband, wife and slaves.<sup>193</sup> Best argues that social codes have no such endings.<sup>194</sup> But the Petrine adaption of this code begins with advice directed to all believers regardless of their station in life (2:13-17). Moreover, the words  $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \tau\epsilon\varsigma$  ("And finally, all of you. . .") reinforce explicitly the models of Christian character or discipleship presented to household slaves, and to wives and husbands. The phrase  $\tau\acute{o}\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \tau\acute{\epsilon}\ \lambda\omicron\varsigma$  certainly suggests that Peter is now drawing a line of thought to its conclusion. Also, the adjectives and participles of verses 8-9 maintain the participial form for exhortations used throughout much of 2:11-3:7.<sup>195</sup> This section, says Goppelt, is clearly appropriating the paraenetic tradition that we meet also in 1 Thess. 5:12b-5, and especially in Romans 12:10, 14, 16f.<sup>196</sup>

As for the repetition of the participles, this can be seen in the use of

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<sup>193</sup>Balch, Let Wives be Submissive, 88.

<sup>194</sup>Ernest Best, 1 Peter, vol. 21, The New Century Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants, 1971), 128-129.

<sup>195</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 174.

<sup>196</sup>Goppelt, 1 Peter, 229-230.

ἐπιπτεῖσάντες ("to look at", "observe", in 2:12, cf 3:1); ὑποτασόμενοι ("to be in subjection, to subject one's self", in 2:18, cf 3:1) and ἀγαθοποιοῦντας ("as to do good", "to do right", in 2:15, 20; cf. 3:6 and 3:12). A further examination of these verses reveals that they are about Christian harmony, which the author has already emphasised earlier on (see 2:22,23; cf 3:10d). The quotation of Psalm 34:12-16 in 1 Peter 3:10-12 stresses 'peace' in the household, thus summarising the *'Haustafeln'*.

It seems therefore, that the harmony sought in 1 Peter is primarily domestic harmony, between husband, wife and slaves and not harmony among Christians in general.<sup>197</sup> So much for the following and preceding contexts. We are now ready for an in-depth study of 3:1-7, beginning with its form and structure.

#### The Form and Structure of 1 Peter 3:1-7

1 Peter 3: 1-7 is part of the "Household" duty code which began in 2:13. The advice to wives, like the preceding advice to domestic slaves may be divided into three parts, namely:

- (i) Exhortation to submission .... (vv. 1-2)
- (ii) A word of admonition.... (vv. 3-4)
- (iii) A specific precedent.... (vv. 5-6)

The concluding advice to husbands (v.7) has no parallel either to the paragraph 2:13-17 (submission to governing authorities) or to 2:18-25 (submission of the slaves to masters). Part (i) gives this section the characteristic of a household duty code. Parts (ii) and (iii) give the code its distinct flavour and function in 1 Peter: i.e. submission' or 'deference' in certain social relationship, defined as "doing good", which God requires, despite hostility or danger ( cf. 2:15 20).<sup>198</sup>

<sup>197</sup>Balch, Let Wives be Submissive, 90.

According to Michaels, the appeal to precedent is drastic in character. This precedent is in two parts, a general one (v.5), and a specific one (v.6), where Sarah's example is mentioned. There is a link between this section and the exhortation in 3:1 by the use of the phrase ὑποτασόμενοι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ("being submissive to their own husbands"). Although the expression is imperatival in verse 1,<sup>199</sup> here, in verse 5, it is circumstantial,<sup>200</sup> thus rounding off the argument of verses 1-5.

Verse 6 is very crucial. First, it brings the ancient precedent to bear on the experience of the readers ("you have become her children"). Secondly, it reminds them of the prospect, though slim, of hostility or suffering. Thirdly, it points to the Old Testament, Genesis 18:12, where Sarah called Abraham ("lord"). All these three points will be fully developed in the relevant section of exegesis below.

Noteworthy is the resemblance of the material on women's "adornment" (vv. 3-4) with 1 Timothy, 2:9-10, though Peter may not have had this passage in mind.

Finally, the concluding advice to husbands in verse 7 does not have the usual expression, "husbands, love your wives," which characterises other New Testament Codes, Colossians 3:19 and Ephesians 5:25, 33. Yet the call to understand and to honour the wives is an appeal to "love" and to "care" for them all the same.

Let us now turn to the exegetical study of 3:1-7.

#### EXEGESIS: 1 PETER 3:1-7

Verse 1 ὁμοίως [αἰ] γυναῖκες ὑποτασόμενοι

<sup>198</sup>Michaels 1 Peter, 155-156.

<sup>199</sup>Selwyn, The Epistle of St. Peter, 180.

<sup>200</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 156.

τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν, ἴνα καὶ εἰ τινες ἀπει-  
θουσιν τῷ λόγῳ, διὰ τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν  
ἀναστροφῆς ἄνευ λόγου κερδῆθησονταί.

("Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the Word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives".)

ὁμοίως ("likewise," "in like manner"), is an adverb, a connective in the sense of "also", "too".<sup>201</sup> which seems to be connected to 2:18 - wives have to honour their husbands as slaves do their masters.<sup>202</sup>

ὑποτασσομεναί is a present middle participle of ὑποτασσομαι ("to be in subjection", "to subject one's self", "being submissive"). Here, the participle is being used as an imperative, following the precedent of 2:13, 18 (cf. Eph. 5:21)<sup>203</sup>. Selwyn and Michaels base their argument on Moulton (New Testament Greek, pp. 181f.; 223, 240). The term is used in "passages of sober and deliberate injunction", says Selwyn.<sup>204</sup> This is in accordance with Lightfoot's comment: "The absolute participle, being (so far as regards colour) neutral, in itself, takes its colour from the general complexion of the sentence".<sup>205</sup>

<sup>201</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>202</sup>Selwyn, The Epistle of St. Peter, 182.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid., cf. Michaels, 1 Peter, 157.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid., 387.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., citing J.B. Lightfoot, St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon (London: Mcmillan & Co., 1879), repr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959). See David Daube, "Participle and Imperative uses in 1 Peter," in Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eaker Book House, 1983), 367-387.

ἰδίοις ("Your own"), as in verse 5b (cf. E-oh. 5:22; Titus 2:5) is used because γυναῖκες and ἄνδρες can mean, respectively, either "women" and "men", or "wives" and "husbands" (BAGD, 66:1; 168:1,2). The context here is the marriage relationship, not men and women viewed generally. ἰδίοις, here delivers the passage from any charge of inculcating the 'inferiority' of women to men. It shows that the subordination is one of function, within the intimate circle of the home. "In the home", says Selwyn, a husband is the head.<sup>206</sup>

καὶ εἰ τινες (lit. "even if any") shows that the women Peter has in mind are by no means only the wives of unbelieving husbands. Though these words represent only a possibility, yet it is on this possibility that Peter concentrates.<sup>207</sup>

ἀπειθοῦσιν τῷ λόγῳ ("who are disobedient to the word") points to unbelieving 'husbands, those who deprive themselves of the "word" (cf. 2:8). The "Word", here, refers to the "gospel message", which claims men's obedience, the refusal of which is fatal. Some husbands could have been among those actively slandering the Christians (see 2:12, 15; 3:9,16). In view of the fact that the society may have seen these women as 'insubordinate' by their nonconformity to their husbands' pagan religions, Peter's unqualified advice to the Christian wives to "defer to your husbands is fitting".<sup>208</sup>

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>207</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 157.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid.

κερδῆθησονται, is a future passive indicative of κερδαίνω meaning, "to win over", "to gain". Here, it means "to win over to a point of view", and so, almost to "convert".<sup>209</sup>

ἀνευ λόγου (without a word,) - There is wordplay here: those "disobedient to the Word" (see above), will, "without a word", be converted. This is not to forbid verbal testimony on the part of the wives. Rather, by not verbalizing the "Word" ("Gospel") to their husbands, the wives would attract them to Christ by their virtue.<sup>210</sup> A husband who deprives himself of the "Word" ("Gospel") should "without a word" (not "the Word" ) (and not of course, "without the Word") be won over by his wife's manner of life, won over, i.e. for faith<sup>211</sup>

Verse 2 Ἐποπτεύσαντες τῆν ἐν φόβῳ ἀγνήν ἀναστρω-

σθῆν ὑμῶν "When they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear".)

Ἐποπτεύσαντες, is an aorist active participle of ἐποπτεύω which means "to look at", "observe". (ie. implies a recognition of the "natural law" as operative in the heathen mind, and a sensitiveness to the effect of Christian conduct on public opinion). It is this "observing" of the works or conduct of Christians that leads the non-believers to God. The use of the aorist participle (cf. a present participle in 2:12) is presumably because it states the cause rather than the occasion of the change of attitude.<sup>212</sup> ἄγνος ("Pure, clean, chaste"). The "chaste"

<sup>209</sup>Selwyn, The Epistle of St Peter, 183.

<sup>210</sup>Balch, Let Wives be Submissive, 99. cf. Michaels, 1 Peter, 157

<sup>211</sup>Goppelt, 1Peter, 219.

<sup>212</sup>Selwyn, The Epistle of St. Peter, 183.

bearing of the Christian wife is intimately bound-up with those instincts of reverence which are essential ingredients of the Christian life in general (cf. 1:17; 2:18; Phil. 4:8; 1Tim 5: 22; Titus 2: 5); also Kelly,<sup>213</sup> who says that this "purity" is not limited to sexual purity.

The next two verses explain how the Christian wife is to adorn herself in order to win over her husband for herself and the Gospel.

Verse 3 ἵν' ἔστω οὐχ ὁ ἐξωθεν ἐμπλοκῆς τριχῶν καὶ περιθέσεως χρυσίων ἢ ἐνδύσεως ἱματίων κόσμος

("Do not let your adornment be merely outward - arranging the hair and wearing gold, or putting on fine clothing".)

The οὐχ ("not") of this verse anticipates the ἀλλὰ (rather") of verse 4. The negative side of this verse is built around three similarly constructed pairs:

- (i) ἐμπλοκῆς τριχῶν literally "braiding of hair"
- (ii) περιθέσεως χρυσίων literally "putting on of gold things"
- (iii) ἐνδύσεως ἱματίων literally "wearing of clothes"

Though fine dress is symptomatic of luxurious living (cf. Luke 16:19), here, according to Balch, and he may be right, the outward adornment ( κόσμος ) may have been perceived by non-believing husbands as similar to the dressing of the

<sup>213</sup>John Norman D. Kelly, A Commentary to the Epistles of Peter and of Jude, (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). 128-129.

female adherents of the Eastern cults of Artemis and Isis.<sup>214</sup> Also, the genitive noun of action, say, "putting on of gold" ("jewelry"), depicts the expenditure of work and time that this way of making oneself attractive requires.<sup>215</sup>

Verse 4 ἄλλ' ὁ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος  
ἐν τῷ πραέως καὶ ἡσυχίου  
πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐνώπιον  
τοῦ θεοῦ πολυτέλης.

("rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God").

("rather" - introduces a consistent contrast between ἐξωθεν

("external") and κρυπτός ("hidden"); between κοσμος ("adornment") and ἄνθρωπος ("person") and between "hair", "gold", "clothes" and the "heart" of a woman. The contrast in each case is between human beings' values and what God values.

πραέως ("meek", "gentle") refers to the humble and gentle attitude which expresses itself in a patient submissiveness (cf. Matt 5:5) ὁ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος ("the hidden person of the heart"). This does not refer to the inner side of the person, but the whole human being as determined from within, from the heart.<sup>216</sup> It is the place where one's allegiance to Christ as Lord should be firmly rooted (cf. 3: 1 5.).<sup>217</sup> In this case, the heart suggests sincerity (cf. 1:22).

<sup>214</sup>Balch, Let Wives be Submissive, 101-102.

<sup>215</sup>Ibid.

<sup>216</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 161.

ἐν τῷ ἀφθάρτῳ, ("with the incorruptible"): the ἐν ("in") here, "found in", expressing itself in".<sup>218</sup> Having talked of "the incorruptible inheritance (1:4), the redemption "not with perishable thin-as" (1:8). and the rebirth "not from the planting of perishable seed but from imperishable" (1:23), the Apostle Peter now turns to the imperishable quality in the redeemed and reborn Christian women. This quality is described as belonging to a "gentle and quiet spirit".

It should be noted that these are not virtues intended for women alone, as a "spirit of humility" is enjoined for both men and women (see 1 Cor. 4:21 Gal 6:1); so, too, "quietness" ἡσυχίος -see 2 Thess. 3: 12; 1 Thess 4:11.; 1 Tim 2:2). The disposition being described here as "spirit" -( πνεύματος ), is said to be "very precious in the sight of God". The word used for precious πολυτέλης ("very valuable, costly") is used here of a "lavish, choice, adornment" of the hearts of the Christian women. It is the same word used by Peter of the cornerstone (.2:6). quoting Isaiah 28:16. Indeed, as in 1 Samuel 16:6-7, God is more interested in what goes on in the heart than in the outward appearance of a person (cf. Matt. 6:4,6,18).

Verse 5 οὕτως γὰρ καὶ αἱ ἁγία γυναῖκες  
αἱ ἐλπίζουσαι ... τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν

"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands".

οὕτως ("thus"), resumes what has been said in verses 1 - 4.

γὰρ ("for"), as in verse 21 of chapter 2, is a connective introducing

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Selwyn, The Epistle of St. Peter, 184.

illustrative material as Peter draws from Old Testament support. , an enclitic particle ("at that time", "long ago", "formerly"), here introduces a parallel with the past (cf. 3:20 of Jesus and of the spirits in prison who "formerly were disobedient".)

αἱ ἁγία γυναῖκες ("the holy women") - signify the women who pre-eminently represented the holiness of Israel, that is, the "saints", being 'Christians' before the coming of Christ, hence examples to be emulated by Peter's readers.<sup>219</sup> I Peter 3:5, like Hebrews 11. is directing attention to a "cloud of witnesses" who have travelled the same path of hoping faith (cf. Heb. 12:1). But probably Peter may have Sarah, Rebecca, Rachael and Leah (the wives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob respectively) in mind. These women ἐλπίζουσαί ("hoped", "trusted") in God (cf. who in "hope" believed, Rom 4:18). Every devout Jewish mother hoped that she might be the mother of the Messiah.<sup>220</sup>

ἐκοσμοῦν ἑαυτάς ("adorned themselves"): ἐκοσμοῦν is an imperfect active indicative of κοσμέω ("to adorn", "decorate"), which tense (imperfect) implies that the action of adorning was customary - "they used to adorn themselves." In other words, it was characteristic of these holy women to "adorn" themselves. Holiness has a beauty about it, does it not?

ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ("being submissive to their own husbands"). How is the participle being used here? The possibilities include:

- (i) As an imperative, resuming the command of verse 1, above,<sup>221</sup>

- (ii) In a circumstantial manner, these words being examples from the Old Testament for the Christian wives to emulate.<sup>222</sup>

Even though possibility (ii) is plausible, yet it does not rule out possibility (i). The whole context, 3:1-6 demands that the imperatival force be maintained, as already suggested in verse 1. From the example of the ancient women, we note three qualities that stand out: "subordination", active well-doing, and serenity. To put it differently: "a meek spirit by subjection", or, because they were subject, "these women adorned themselves with something precious"<sup>223</sup>

Verse 6 ὥς Σάρρα ὑπήκουσεν τῷ Ἀβραάμ κυρίου αὐτὸν καλοῦσα, ἧς ἐγενήθητε τέκνα ἀγαθοποιῶσαί καὶ μὴ φοβούμεναι μηδεμίαν πτόησιν

("...as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose children you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror".)

ὥς ("as") introduces a concrete example (BAGD, 897.4a). Sarah is "the mother par excellence" of the Hebrew race, the "chosen people". The author's immediate source of this example may be "the one who bore you", words found in Isaiah 51:2. But the occasion alluded to here, is that found in Genesis 18:1-15, where an angel told Abraham that they (him and his wife) were soon to have a child in their old age. It was then that Sarah laughed, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Gen. 18:12). But she was afraid when the angel

<sup>219</sup>Goppelt, 1 Peter, 223.

<sup>220</sup>Selwyn, The Epistle of St. Peter, 185.

<sup>221</sup>Ibid

<sup>222</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 183.

<sup>223</sup>Charles A. Bigg, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude, vol. 60, The International Critical Commentary (Edinbura-h: T & T. Clark, 1978), 153.

confronted her with the truth about her laughter.<sup>224</sup> Michaels raises the following questions regarding this verse:

- (1) Why quote Abraham who was a believer anyway?
- (2) What is the significance of the use of *Κυριος* ("lord") here (cf. all other uses in 1 Peter: 1:3, 25; 2:3, 13; 3:12, 15 are to do with Jesus Christ)?
- (3) What is the relation of *ὑποτασσόμενα* ("be in subjection") to *ὑπακούω* ("to obey", "listen to"), considering that "obedience" is used of slaves and children in the Colossian and Ephesian codes? cf. (1), (2), (3) above!
- (4) Is the context of Sarah's remark in Genesis 18:12 'deference' or amused scepticism?

With regard to the first question, as to why Abraham, a believer is quoted, Selwyn believes that it was to stress the importance of peace between husband and wife. In any case, the interpreters of verse 6 pick out one word, "lord", and conclude that Sarah is a pattern for "obedience". The focus here is on Sarah, not Abraham. Secondly, why did Sarah address Abraham as "lord"? Because it was customary in those days for women to address their husbands thus.<sup>225</sup> Sarah's use of the word shows how she understood her relation to Abraham. He was master of the house, was he not? "The term need not, however, imply the distance and impersonality which we attribute to it", says Hurley.<sup>226</sup>

<sup>224</sup>Michaels, *1 Peter*, 165.

<sup>225</sup>Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 224

<sup>226</sup>Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 154

Thirdly, concerning the relationship between "submission" and "obedience", Balch<sup>227</sup> thinks that Peter in 1 Peter 3:6 reflects a rabbinic interpretation of Genesis 18:12, though the method of exegesis differs. Both the stress on seeking "harmony" (3:8) and the exhortation to "seek peace" (3:12, quoting Ps. 34:15b) are meant to stress the importance of Christians seeking peace and harmony in their household relationships and within society. Since winning converts was also a purpose of the wives' submission given in 1 Peter 3: 1, one can see virtue as part of "obedience" to husbands on the part of the wives. Sarah, by calling Abraham "lord," is certainly in line with her understanding of inward adornment which, for her, entails submission to her husband (v. 5), and the possession of a "quiet spirit" (v.4).

Lastly, on the question of context (question number 4 above), Michaels notes that the context of Sarah's remark was one of scepticism, not of "deference" to her "lord". The reader should note that the stress of verse 6 is on the "hierarchical", peaceful relationship between Abraham and Sarah, with the focus being on Sarah, as a specific example of "submissiveness". Peter focuses on the word "lord", and from it, despite the context of Genesis 18:115, draws the conclusion that Sarah was "obedient" and "submissive" to her husband. This is not to say that "submission" is equated to 'obediences Sarah's obedience should be understood as an illustration of her submission to her husband.

*ἡ ἐγέννηθητε τὰ τέκνα* ("you have become her children") - The verb *ἐγέννηθητε* an aorist passive indicative of *γενναίω*, to become"), insinuates that they were formerly pagans<sup>228</sup> At a point in time now past, the persons being addressed became "children" ("daughters", so NKJV) of Sarah,

<sup>227</sup>Balch. *Let Wives be Submissive*, 104-105.

<sup>228</sup>Kelly, *The Epistle of Peter and of Jude*, 131.

probably referring to their conversion and baptism.<sup>229</sup> The focus here is on spiritual and not physical descent. Some, though, have suggested that the women being addressed were formerly Gentiles, since Jewesses were already Sarah's "children" by birth. But the words  $\tau\epsilon\kappa\upsilon\alpha$  and  $\upsilon\acute{\iota}\omicron\iota$  ("children" and "sons") connote spiritual affinity rather than physical (cf. Matt. 5:9,45; 10:19; Jn. 8:39). Christian wives would be true "daughters" of Sarah through being in the spiritual tradition which derived from her. But there are conditions for this spiritual state to become a reality.

First, such women have to  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\alpha\theta\omicron\pi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\chi$  ("to do good"). This participle can be understood in two ways, (i) as having an imperatival force and conditional: "do good if you truly want to be Sarah's daughters", or, (ii) it may be explanatory: "Christian wives have become Sarah's daughters in that they do good."<sup>230</sup> The imperitival force seems likely here, because the participle in a question ("to do good") interprets  $\upsilon\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\sigma\omicron\mu\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$  ("be submissive"). A wife shows true "submission" to her husband by "doing good" (CF 2:15, "doing the will of God"). To take it as imperitival is in keeping with the other household duty codes.

Secondly, there is an exhortation,  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \mu\eta\ \theta\omicron\beta\omicron\upsilon\mu\epsilon\upsilon\alpha\ \mu\eta\delta\epsilon\upsilon\iota\alpha\upsilon$   $\pi\iota\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  ("and do not be afraid with any "terror"). It is not stated what could be the source of "terror" in this case, though the words from Proverbs 3:25 ("let nothing frighten you") are a possible allusion. The word  $\pi\iota\omicron\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  ("terror") occurs in the New Testament only here,<sup>231</sup> where it may connote active frightening action, "intimidation" or passive "fear", "fright" as a cognate accusative. The former

<sup>229</sup>Goppelt, I Peter, 224-225.

<sup>230</sup>Michaels, I Peter, 166-167. cf. Francis Wriah Beare, The First Epistle of Peter, and ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 157.

<sup>231</sup>Goppelt, I Peter, 225.

(i.e. active frightening action) is probable, given the mixed nature of the marriages. For, if the husband is not a believer, one can understand how the wife in such a situation may be under a constant threat of being "put away" because of not participating in the husband's pagan religious rituals, on account of her faith in Christ.

The usage of  $\theta\omicron\beta\omicron\varsigma$  ("fear") in 1 Peter is in a positive sense (i.e "reverence", cf. 1:17, 2:17; 2:17-18; 3:2,16). But here and in 3:14 both are probably based on Proverbs 3:25. Both accentuate the idea of fear by the use of a cognate accusative.<sup>232</sup> "Fear" is something to be avoided.<sup>233</sup> Maybe Selwyn is right by implying that Peter may simply be expressing in a negative way, something that could as well be said positively: "Let the Christian wives do good in serenity of spirit, and leave all else calmly in God's hands" (cf. 4:19).

Balch<sup>234</sup> sees in the phrase "let nothing terrify you" an apologetic goal in the Christian wives' behaviour. If the Christians were (as may have been the case) being persecuted, then Peter's exhortation to praiseworthy conduct (even before the governor, 2:14) would be called for. In case that fails (3:13-14), they were not to be afraid (3:6,14), but were to deliver themselves to the faithful creator (4:19).

So much for the responsibilities of the Christian wives. Peter from here, directs his attention to the responsibilities of married men.

Verse 7  $\omicron\acute{\iota}\ \alpha\upsilon\delta\epsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\omicron}\mu\omicron\iota\omega\varsigma,\ \sigma\upsilon\nu\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha$

<sup>232</sup>Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter, 185: cf. Beare, The First Epistle of Peter, 157.

<sup>233</sup>Michaels, I Peter, 167.

<sup>234</sup>Balch, Let Wives be Submissive, 105.

γυνῶσιν ὡς ἄσθενεστερῷ σκεῦει τῆς γυναίκεως

. . . ("Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as a weaker vessel...").

In this verse, Peter now turns to the duty of the husbands, opening his remarks with the characteristic ὁμοίως ("likewise"). By so doing, he links the present exhortation to husbands to what has gone before (3:1). Also, the address to husbands follows the scheme of the Household code as it is shaped in 3:1ff: address, exhortation, and purpose clause giving the grounds for the exhortation.

συνοικουῦτες, a present active participle of συνεικέω ("live together", "dwell") is used here as an imperative.<sup>235</sup> How are the husbands to do this? With knowledge κατὰ γυνῶσιν (literally, "according to knowledge"). The phrase with κατὰ is adverbial (BAGD, 470.2; 5b.b)<sup>236</sup>.

γυνῶσιν, here, implies understanding. It means Christian insight and tact, a conscious sensitivity to God's will.<sup>237</sup> An intellectual element is also included in this knowledge. Some see a similarity between knowledge here, and knowledge in I Corinthians 8:1-13, where Paul defines γινώσκω as "love", consisting not in intellectual superiority, but in understanding, sympathy and respect for the "weak".<sup>238</sup>

ὡς ἄσθενεστερῷ σκευεῖ τῆς γυναίκεως ("to the woman as a weaker vessel"). The syntax of the dative makes it hard to know whether to take it

<sup>235</sup>Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter, 186

<sup>236</sup>Cf. Michaels, 1 Peter, 168

<sup>237</sup>Kelly, The Epistles of Peter and of Jude, 132. cf. Selwyn, The First Epistle of St. Peter, 186.

<sup>238</sup>Michaels, 1 Peter, 168. cf. Kelly, The Epistles of Peter and of Jude, 132-133.

with the previous συνοικουῦτες ("dwell"), or with ἀπονεμονῆς τιμῆν ("giving honour"), thus rendering the resulting translation as either:

- "know how to live with a woman ... showing (her) respect"

or

- "know how to live with (your wives), showing respect to a woman."

The ὡς καὶ, after the mention of Τιμῆν ("respect", "honour") makes the former option the most likely because it implies a further and deeper ground for the respect.<sup>239</sup>

ἀπονεμονῆς is a present active participle of ἀπονεμω ("to assign", "to show", "to pay"). It is used here in the sense of "to show honour to someone". Peter could be saying "value your wife, show her respect, reverence her", as your equal and partner in the presence of God.<sup>240</sup>

On ἄσθενεστερῷ ("to the weaker one"), a comparative of ἄσθενης ("weak"), we note that this cannot be held to apply to intellect, character, or ability; nor to health, though the notion that women are "weaker" than men was a commonplace in the ancient world.<sup>241</sup> Peter does not use it to denigrate women. Rather, he uses it to foster "respect" (Τιμη), the core of his advice to Christian husbands. The word "weaker" is comparative with the man: he is the stronger one. This could imply "physical weakness of a wife or it could be pointing to her weaker position with respect to authority".<sup>242</sup> Most probably, it could be because a wife is weaker to husband (REB). When 3:1-7 is put in the context of 2:13-

<sup>239</sup>Ibid.

<sup>240</sup>Mark R. Littleton, Submission is for Husbands, Too, (Denver, Colorado: Accent Books, 1988), 77.

<sup>241</sup>Kelly, The Epistles of Peter and of Jude, 133. cf. Michaels 1 Peter, 169

<sup>242</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 156.

3:12, it becomes apparent that Peter may be thinking of 'submission' and "authority" (cf. 2:13, 18; 3:1); more so when he says "wives in the same way be submissive to your husbands..." (3:1).

The word  $\sigma\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$  ("vessel", "jar", "instrument"), though usually used of material objects, is here taken metaphorically of the human body (see BAGD, 754.2; 133; cf. 1 Thess 4:4; 2 Cor. 4:7).

But one may ask, "Why does weakness deserve respect?" Could Peter have been aware of Paul's discussion of "bestowing honour to those members of our body that seem weaker" (see 1 Cor. 12:22-24)? I wonder. Goppelt suggests that the wife is described thus because she belongs to those who are to receive special attention and are of  $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$  ("love").<sup>243</sup> Given the social and legal standing of wives in that setting (see chapter two), this kind of advice by Peter was called for. But this does not cancel what was expected of a wife (3:1ff).<sup>244</sup> Anyhow, the other motivation for the husband to give honour to his wife is that both husband and wife are joint heirs of the "grace of life"

$\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\tau\omicron\varsigma \zeta\omega\eta\varsigma$  : here, "grace", is used as an appositional (epexegetical) genitive: it is "grace consisting of life". This certainly is a reference to God's gracious gift of eternal life.<sup>245</sup> Peter has already alluded to this inheritance of Christians in 1:4.

$\epsilon\gamma\kappa\acute{o}\pi\tau\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$  a present passive infinitive of  $\epsilon\gamma\kappa\omicron\pi\tau\omega$  ("to hinder", "interrupt", literally, "to cut it on"), is used here with the preposition to express purpose. Access to God in prayer can be hindered by lack of fellowship between husband and wife.

<sup>243</sup>Goppelt, 1 Peter, 227.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid.

<sup>245</sup>Bigg, The Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude, 155.

Concerning the place of  $\acute{\upsilon}\mu\omega\upsilon$  ("your") in the phrase  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma \tau\omicron\mu\eta \acute{\epsilon}\gamma\kappa\acute{o}\pi\tau\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota \tau\omicron\varsigma \pi\acute{\rho}\omicron\sigma\epsilon\upsilon\chi\epsilon\varsigma \acute{\upsilon}\mu\omega\upsilon$  (that your prayers may not be hindered), two views are discernible. Does it refer to the prayers of only the Christian husbands, or does  $\acute{\upsilon}\mu\omega\upsilon$  refer to the prayers of both husband and wife? The former could be implied, because of the address at the opening of verse 7.  $\text{Οἱ ἀνδρες}$  ("Husbands") seems to be a collective address to husbands. Alternatively, since both husband and wife are normally involved in relational disorders, it could refer to both the prayers of husband and wife (cf. 1 Cor. 7:5). This would then explain how, if the wife is "injured" by the husband her sighs can come between the husband's prayers and God's hearing.<sup>246</sup> The two would find it difficult to come together if there is injustice on the part of either of them. Even if they did come together to pray, such prayers would most likely be "hindered." So, the  $\acute{\upsilon}\mu\omega\upsilon$  here, most probably refers to the prayers of both the husband and the wife.<sup>247</sup>

Arising from the exegesis above, let us now summarise the duties that wives and husbands are called to do. We shall first discuss those of the wife.

#### DUTY OF THE WIVES

Peter wrote to a suffering church about the meaning of Christian life under oppressive governments, oppressive slave masters, and possibly oppressive non-believing husbands. For the Christian wives, as for the slaves, he holds up the example of Christ, who did not revile when reviled, nor threaten when he suffered, but instead, committed himself to Him who judges righteously (2:23).

<sup>246</sup>Goppelt, 1 Peter, 228.

<sup>247</sup>Ibid.

Then, as now, women married to non-believers were faced with an especially difficult position. Yet Peter exhorts them to submission. What a difficult calling! Why did Peter take this line of thought? Tucker and Liefeld, in their Book, Daughters of the Church <sup>248</sup> posit the following as possible reasons. First, persecuted Christians do not seek the highest places for themselves but are willing to take subordinate positions. I do not believe this to be a valid reason (see below).

Secondly, Tucker and Liefeld argue that Peter may have been accommodating to the generally accepted norms of role relationships. If this be the case, then why did he quote an Old Testament precedent of Sarah to buttress his point? Further, Peter insists on "what is good", and "pleasing to the Lord". These seem to be timeless qualities expected of all believing wives. Moreover, the Christian women addressed by Peter had already taken a stand against the pagan worship of the day.

Tucker and Liefeld also highlight the issue of the obedience shown to Abraham by Sarah, especially calling him "lord".<sup>249</sup> They say this would equate submission to obedience (i.e. defining submission as obedience). This was appropriate in her society. But surely there are ways in which a Christian woman of today can show similar "obedience" to her husband without necessarily calling him "lord".

The point is that the call by Peter for wifely submission is not because culture demands it, nor because women are "inferior", but it is for the Lord's sake. From our discussion above, there is a missionary dimension to it: it will win the non-believing husbands to the faith. This kind of behaviour is an adornment from within the heart, which is most beautiful and precious, even well pleasing to God. The gentle and quiet

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<sup>248</sup>Ruth A Tucker and Walter Liefeld, Daughters of the Church: Women Ministry From New Testament Times to the Present (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987) 462-63.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid.

spirit, though, is not presented as distinctively feminine, as our discussion above has revealed.

This kind of behaviour to which Peter calls the Christian wives is justifiable on other grounds. It has already been lived out by holy women of the Old Testament such as Sarah. She called her husband "lord". Though this pertained to the culture of that time (and certainly need not be mimicked by the wives of today, because Peter does not command it), yet her use of that word demonstrates how she understood her relation to her husband. Being her "master", Abraham was, too, the "head" of the household. Abraham did not demand that Sarah submit to him. At least the text does not indicate that he did.

Furthermore, like Sarah, Christian women of the new covenant must be known for doing what is good and right. This is God's will for them, as for slaves and Christians in general (.cf. 2:15.; 3:16,17). Because of their position and privilege of being in Christ, nothing short of doing good is expected of them. Why should anything cause terror to those who are in Christ?

### **DUTY OF THE HUSBANDS**

If the Christian wife is called to be submissive to her husband, then the husband is summoned to honour and to respect his wife. That honour has to be undergirded by considerate understanding - living with the wife "according to knowledge".

The knowledge Peter writes about has to do with Christian insight and tact, a conscious sensitivity to God's will. It has to do with "love" - consisting not in intellectual superiority, but in understanding, sympathy, and respect for the "weak". "Weaker" here, is used to foster respect for the wife. This is the core of Peter's advice to Christian husbands. The weaker "position" of the wife may be with respect to "authority" (see the exegesis, above).

Besides, the wife is a "fellow heir", with the husband, of the grace of God which is eternal life. There is an eschatological dimension to Peter's exhortation to husbands: Wives are equally heirs of God's gift of eternal life. Failure by the husband to recognize this fact will affect his fellowship, both with his wife and with God. Their prayers would be hindered and rendered ineffective. Piety will become meaningless, false, and useless if it is not expressed in mutual love and respect for each other. Peter's exhortations, then, are as appropriate today as they were when he wrote.

## CONCLUSION

Reading 1 Peter reveals that many of the Christians had rejected 'traditional' religion (1:18b), and some of these were wives and slaves of non-believing husbands and masters. It is no wonder that the Apostle Peter exhorted Christians to the kind of behaviour that would silence the negative reactions which such conversions Generated (2:11-12, 15).

Despite its adaption from the Aristotelian teaching on the topics, "Concerning Household Management",<sup>250</sup> the form of the exhortations has been modified and Christianized to meet the needs of the slaves and the wives caught up in such households. If Paul's exhortation to women was built on the example of Christ and his Church, then Peter's exhortation is founded on the imitation of holy women who did "what was good and right", "what was pleasing and was of great worth in the sight of God". Wives are exhorted to submissiveness after the manner of Sarah who is held forth as a model for them to follow. Sarah and other such holy women of old were gentle, quiet, and chaste in their conduct. Such behaviour if adopted by the readers of Peter's letter might win some of their non-believing husbands to Christ. Peter

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<sup>250</sup>Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive*, 33ff.

presents this view of submissiveness, not from the grounds of the culture of the day, but from the example of Christ, especially Christ's suffering and his self-sacrifice.

Husbands, too, are exhorted to live with understanding, bestowing honour and respect to their wives, knowing that both husband and wife are "fellow-heirs" of God's grace, which consists of eternal life. They have an obligation to understand the relatively "weaker" and "subordinate position" of their wives with respect to their own "position of authority". Peter in no way has the intention of demeaning the Christian wives, nor does he cast them into an inferior status by his counsel. Rather, it is through striving to understand and to respect their wives that husbands may, hopefully, avoid hurting the feelings of their wives, and also guard against a breach of fellowship with God. Failure to heed Peter's admonitions (3:7) will render the prayers of both husband and wife ineffective. A lack of respect and honour for the wife will put a barrier not only between him and his wife, but also between the husband and God.

It is not out of line, therefore, to conclude that Peter's exhortation to wives, especially the call to submissiveness, is a call to recognize the husband as one giving direction for the home. This "authority position" that husbands occupy in the household, as far as Christians are concerned, is not culture-based, but God-given. Being aware of the sort of abuses of "authority" in that context, Peter goes on to limit and regulate the role of husbands. He calls upon them to recognize the fact that their wives are "fellow heirs with them of the grace of life". For God to answer their prayers, husbands must give honour and respect to their wives.

Similarly, Christian wives have a duty to be pure, to reflect spiritual beauty through meekness and quietness of spirit, not through verbal utterances (3:1,2). There is a missionary dimension in that kind of behaviour: non-believing husbands might be won to Christ. Both the Bible and experience prove that a wife can win over her

husband for herself and for the Lord by submitting to him. This is strength, not weakness. Submission, then, though perceived by some as "weakness", becomes a wife's strength and power.<sup>251</sup> What liberating news for women married to non-believing husbands, even in our day! The wider implications of such behaviour is that there might be a blessed harmony in the households where there are believing wives. If Sarah, the wife of Abraham could live such a life, then the readers of Peter's letter, then, and now, should emulate her example, and truly become her "children" in the Lord.

Thus, the words of Peter, as those of Paul, as reflected in the texts already studied, offer ground for viewing the "headship" of the husband in the home as appropriate today as it was when the Apostles wrote.

#### **B. MARITAL SUBMISSION AND AUTHORITY IN OTHER RELATED PAULINE TEXTS**

This section sets out to highlight other issues raised by Paul in relation to husbands and wives. Though not addressing specific marital relations in marriage, Paul dives teaching in these texts which has a bearing on what we have covered before. They cover teaching on "women and order in worship" (1 Cor. 11:2-16), "silence of women in worship" (1 Cor. 14:33b-35), and "women and the exercise of authority" (1 Tim. 2:8-15). These will be covered in the order they appear here. The other Pauline text concerning which books and articles have been written is Galatians 3:28. Paul, here, has said, "... In Christ ... there is neither male or female..." How does this text apply to the aforementioned imperatives by Paul in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3? The relation of this text to other Pauline texts is the subject of section III C. below.

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<sup>251</sup>See A Biblical Approach to Marriage and Family in Africa (Machakos, Kenya: The Theological Advisory Group, Scott Theological College, 1994), 124.

#### **WOMEN AND ORDER IN WORSHIP: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16**

Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is responding to a letter from the Corinthians on hair and hair coverings. Paul's response to the letter (which letter is not available to us) is complex. It raises a number of issues. The researcher does not intend to do an exegetical study of this passage but only points out those issues pertinent to the question of "submission" and "authority" as they apply to the overall theme of this study.

##### **a. The question of "headship".**

What does Paul mean by "the head of every woman is man" (11:3)? For a detailed discussion on "headship", see the section on Ephesians 5:21-33, above. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, some see κεφαλή as meaning "source", others see it as meaning "authority over", or "rule". For the meaning "source", see our discussion on Ephesians, especially Catherine Kroger's comments as noted there.

The man/woman parallel may fit the meaning "source" because: (1) Adam is the "source" of Eve, for she was physically taken out of him; (2) she had no prior existence before that time; (3) Adam had no part in making her. But the meaning for κεφαλή in 11:3 should take into account all the three parallels: God/Christ, Christ/man, and man/woman. But then the meaning "source" does not seem to apply to the God/Christ parallel. This makes the meaning "head-over" more applicable in the context.

If κεφαλή means "head-over," then the following set of parallels can be established:<sup>252</sup>

- (i) man/woman - in the home, the husband is the head over his wife. In the church, certain men act as head by being elders, teachers, and leaders over

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<sup>252</sup> Hurley, Man and Woman, 167

the worship. And so, too, in society some men are over women, in say, business, medicine, and Government;

- (ii) Christ/man (  $\alpha\nu\eta\rho/\alpha\nu\delta\rho\omicron\varsigma$  means "man" and husband and)- In the home -Christ is head over all husbands. They are to model their behaviour after his. Even in the church, Christ is "head-over" all pastors, elders and teachers.
- (iii) God/Christ:- As "last Adam" (cf. - Cor. 15:45), Christ was obedient to God's authority ("headship"), even to the point of death (Phil. 2:8).

This set of parallels is self-consistent and does not do violence to either Pauline, nor New Testament theology. Paul seems to be teaching a hierarchy of headship, and that it seems to be ordered: God, Christ, man, woman.<sup>253</sup> Also, Schieler ("  $\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\eta$ ", TDNT 3:679) argues that "head" here means, "one who stands over another in the sense of being the ground of his being".

J.A. Fitzmyer, on "*Kephale* in 1 Corinthians 11:3", (Interpretation, vol. 47, no. 1 (1993-52-5):52-55) concludes that to argue that  $\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\eta$  could not have meant "authority-over" in Paul's day is not enough reason to dismiss this meaning as intended by Paul in 1 Cor. 11:3. The evidence brought forth, above, shows that it was certainly possible for a Hellenistic Jewish writer such as Paul to use the word in that sense. Hence the traditional understanding of "head-over" has to be retained.

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<sup>253</sup> Robert L. Saucy, "The Negative Case Against the Ordination of Women," in Perspectives on Evangelical Theology, eds. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 277-286.

## b. The decorum of Women in Worship

The decorum of women in worship was a real problem among Christians at Corinth. This is why they sought Paul's advice about it. Paul's solution to the problem in chapter 11 is in four parts:

an appeal to the order in creation, an appeal to angels, an appeal to nature, and then one to the customs of the churches in general,

- (i) **Appeal to Order in Creation:** "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God" (11:3). The reference is to Genesis 2:21- 25. Women's decorum in worship, for Paul, is to be honouring both to God and to their husbands (11:5). But he also asserts their equality to men on the basis of redemption: " in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (vv. 11-12, cf. Genesis 1:26-L7).
- (ii) **Appeal to the Angels (v.10):** Paul seems to have been asking that things be done decently and in order because of the presence of angels in the meetings of the Corinthian Christians. This is a difficult verse, but it may have to do with (i) angels invisibly present at church worship, (ii) women should not offend guardian angels, because of divine order, (iii) the "sign of authority" is both a sign of man's authority with respect to the woman and a sign of her authority with respect to the rest of creation, in particular angels.<sup>254</sup>(iii) **Appeal to Nature (vv. 13-15):** Paul argues that from the very nature of things, where nature means God's design for nature rather than simply the way things happen to be or what society is doing, women ought to have a covering over their heads.

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<sup>254</sup>See Hurley, Man and Woman, 175-178 for details.

(iv) **Appeal to Customs of the Churches in General (v. 16):** Paul could have had in mind the churches of the Gentile mission, but also the church at Jerusalem. The bottom line of Paul's argument seems to be that women had a right to pray and prophecy in the Corinthian congregations if they had this "sign of authority" over their heads (v.10). The freedom of Christian women in worship does not overthrow, but rather, stands alongside a hierarchical marital relationship. This presupposes a pattern of male leadership in the church itself.

### Conclusion

From the above, Paul appeals to a christological hierarchy and to the creational relation of Adam and Eve, which are not dependent on the cultural setting of the Corinthians (vv.8-10). By beginning to wear their hair loose in the manner of men, some women of the Corinthian congregation had begun to reject their relation to men, which, according to Paul was tantamount to rejecting a "divine ordering" of relations. A woman's hair should continue to be a sign of her place within the divinely-ordained hierarchy of God, Christ, man, and woman. This order concerns function and role. It in no way implies personal superiority on the part of the husband, any more than do the orders between parents and children, governments and citizens or church leaders and church members.

### ARE WOMEN TO BE "SILENT" IN WORSHIP SERVICES?

#### 1 CORINTHIANS 14:33b -35

In verses 33b-35, Paul is addressing the particular problem of wives in relation to the prophets, whether the prophet is their own husband or another man in the congregation.

Marital relations come into play here, too, hence our interest in this passage. But how is it that Paul in 1 Corinthians permits women to pray and prophecy, then only three chapters later (1 Corinthians 14:33b - 35) he commands them to be silent in the assembly? What do we make of these verses?

Four basic methods of dealing with this passage have been proposed.<sup>255</sup> These are: (a) The "text is not authentic"; (b) Paul is inconsistent and contradicts himself; (c) chapter 11 did not give permission for women to speak; and (d) chapters 14 and 11 are discussing different situations. We shall briefly comment on these proposals in the order they appear.

#### a. "The Text is not Authentic"

A number of scholars have felt that this passage is an interpolation ("insertion") by someone other than Paul. Key among them, according to Craig S. Keener,<sup>256</sup> are some of the world's leading textual critics, such as Wayne Meek, Hans Conzelmann, Robin Scroggs, F.F. Bruce, and Gordon Fee. In support of this it has been observed that, if verses 33b-35 are omitted, the wording of the text flows very smoothly from verse 33a to verses 36 and following. But who has the right to cut out parts of Scripture as it now stands? A few manuscripts edit the text, though, but they do not omit it. Instead, they transpose verses 34-35 to follow 14:40 (eg. the "Western" D, F, G; 88, The Greek New Testament 3rd ed, corrected UBS (1983), p.611). Though the text is difficult, the solution does not lie in removing it.

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<sup>255</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 185-194.

<sup>256</sup>Craig S. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 74. For Gordon Fee's strong and convincing arguments, see The First Epistle to the Corinthians (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987). 699-705.

**b. "Paul is inconsistent"**

Some scholars see Paul as inconsistent in his application of the Gospel, because they seem to be unable to reconcile 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 with 11:5. How could such a man as Paul be inconsistent when it comes to matters of faith and life? In any case, such a view calls into question the sufficiency of Scripture and sets the interpreter above the author and the Scripture. The silence that Paul imposes is not universal silence but one dictated by circumstances. What Paul was regulating was the tendency to judge the words of the prophets and the asking of unnecessary questions. In the ancient world, according to Walter L. Liefeld,<sup>257</sup> questions were a means of teaching and of challenging a speaker.

**c. "Chapter 11 did not Permit Women to Speak?" (Hurley)**

But here it appears that Paul did not have any objection to women speaking - praying and/or prophesying (11:5). He seems to be saying that such activities are acceptable so long as the women had some form of "covering" on their heads. So, Paul did permit women to speak. In fact, a perusal of Romans 16 shows that he had women as part of his itinerant missionary team. These women must have been involved in praying, prophesying and "teaching". Priscilla and her husband, Aquilla are recorded as teachers of Apollos (Acts 18:26).

**d. "Chapters 14 and 11 are Discussing Different Situations,"**

Hurley has a detailed analysis of this view (pp. 187-194). The issues that he covers include some answers to the following questions: about the nature of the meetings -

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<sup>257</sup>Walter S. Liefeld, "Women, Submission and Ministry in First Corinthians," in Women, Authority and the Bible, ed. Alvera Mickelson (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 150.

were they formal or informal? (cf. "segregated church services"?<sup>258</sup>). Was it only women who were supposed to be silent? But worship entails a presence of men and women, single and married, besides children. Were the women uneducated or badly behaved? But Paul deals with the unruly members elsewhere (see 11:31, 34; 14:24, 29, 31). But why would Paul want to silence all women because only some of them were unruly?

Paul's thrust in these verses (33b-35) seems to be on cautioning women not to judge the prophets. To understand why this could have been so calls for a brief examination of the circumstances which were obtaining at Corinth. It is to these that we now turn.

**Circumstances at Corinth**

We know that Paul describes some of the Corinthian Christians as "carnal". They were immature and quick to take sides against each other (1 Cor. 1:11-12; 3:1-4). They were disorderly and selfish in their conduct at the Lord's supper, and for this, they get a "beating" from Paul (11:17-34). Moreover, attempts to show that there may have been two separate meetings of the church (one where women could speak.. and another where they could not) have not been fruitful, according to Liefeld.<sup>259</sup> But why would Paul want women "silent"? In seeking answers to this question, we need to take the following observations into account.

First, as pagan converts to Christianity, many Corinthians would have had a vivid memory of the madness of their previous worship - "the cultic frenzy, the

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<sup>258</sup>Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, 76.

<sup>259</sup>Liefeld, "Women, Submission and Ministry", 153. C.F. Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, 76.

exchange of sex roles, the change of clothing, and the authoritarian attitude on the part of the women" .<sup>260</sup>

Secondly, there was a sense of decorum (i. e. that which is proper, seemly, congruent, in keeping with propriety and good behaviour). Other pagan rites (e.g. those of Isis) were concerned about this. Paul, too, who was concerned about honour and shame, propriety and order, could have recalled this back-around.

Lastly, considering the elevated status of teachers within Judaism, we can easily see why, even though women were fully accepted by the church, their public function might have been limited. Therefore, Paul, who was so keenly aware of the social implications of the Gospel, was careful to teach these things so as to avoid offence to those in this particular culture.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Aware of these circumstances, we can say that the "silence" imposed on women in verse 34 is not a universal one, but one dictated by local circumstances. Nor is Paul writing to impose an arbitrary permanent restriction of women's ministry. He counsels the "submission" of women in order to avoid feverish pagan practices. Here,, the "submission" is unique in that there 'i-s no mention of to whom the women should submit (cf. other uses this word in Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:23; Roms 13:1). I suppose that Liefeld is right in assuming that, here, we have an absolute use of the term in the middle voice with the meaning, "be submissive in attitude".<sup>261</sup> After all, like the prophets in verse 32, women should be submissive for the sake of order.

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<sup>260</sup>Ibid., 151

<sup>261</sup>Ibid. , 150.

We conclude that it is not Paul's intention to disallow women's ministry of prayer and prophecy in public, nor does he consider women inferior to men. Neither does he command that women must wear veils. As redeemed persons, women should pray and prophesy in the assembly of God's people, this, even in a society where these practices were suspect when undertaken by them. But Paul's concern is how to apply biblical principles to social perceptions and social relationships. That is why, according to Liefeld, we cannot, on the basis of passages in 1 Corinthians deny women full participation in any form of ministry that does not create a demonstrable social offence to their husbands, or be an impediment to the society's acceptance of the Gospel. I strongly concur. But why does Paul single out wives in verses 34-35? It may be that they were the cause of the problem at hand, and therefore, the ones needing a word of caution. 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 should, therefore, be seen as a corrective measure to a local problem in Corinth where some married women were judging prophets. Paul calls upon them (wives) to respect order during worship by asking questions of their husbands at home. By so doing, Paul upholds the authority structure of the home. He does not forbid their "speaking" during worship, but redirects their questions to another time and place.<sup>262</sup>

#### WOMEN AND THE EXERCISE OF "AUTHORITY": 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15

1 Timothy 2:8-15 is one of the texts that has been a centre of controversy among scholars. Some of the issues that arise from it include (1) the meaning of  $\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \lambda \upsilon$  (translated "usurp authority" - KJV, but simply as "to have authority" - *NIV, NKJV.* ); (b) the intention of Paul: was he giving a universal

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<sup>262</sup>Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178.

command normative for all time in all places?; (c.) Paul's reference to the order of creation and the fall.

The present researcher's intention is not to delve deep into the arguments and counter-arguments that scholars have got into, as article after article has been produced about 1 Timothy 2:8-15. The readers can consult the following authors for detailed accounts on the matter: Douglas J. Moo<sup>263</sup>, Philip B. Payne<sup>264</sup>, D. J. Moo<sup>265</sup>, Catherine Clark Kroeger<sup>266</sup>, David M. Scholer<sup>267</sup>, Ronald W. Pierce<sup>268</sup>, and James B. Hurley.<sup>269</sup> The researcher has had direct access to all of them.

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<sup>263</sup>Douglas J. Moo, "Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance," Trinity Journal, n.s.1 (1980): 62-93.

<sup>264</sup>Philip B. Payne, "Libertarian Women in Ephesians: A Response to Douglas J. Moo's Article, 1 Timothy 2: 11-15: Meaning and Significance.." Trinity Journal n.s.2 (1981): 169-97.

<sup>265</sup>Douglas J. Moo, "The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15: A Rejoinder," Trinity Journal n.s. 2 (1981): 198-222.

<sup>266</sup>Catherine Clark Kroeger, "1 Timothy 2:12- A Classicists View," in Women, Authority, and the Bible, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 232-238. See also, Richard Clark Kroeger, and Catherine Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), 75-104.

<sup>267</sup>David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry," in Women, Authority ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986), 225-44.

<sup>268</sup>Ronald W. Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990's, 1 Timothy 2:8-15: a Test Case", Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, 36, no.3 (September, 1993): 343-355.

<sup>269</sup>James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 195z23. Also see Steve Motyer, "Expounding 1 Timothy 2:8-15," VoxEvangelica 24 (1994):91-102.

**a. The meaning of αὐθιγεῖν (to have authority")**

Numerous churches have barred women from ministry on the basis of this verb. It is reasoned that if it forbids any kind of authority over men, and if a given church ministry is understood to carry authority, then women cannot participate in any such ministry.

The problem is that this verb is a *hapax Legomenon* (i.e. it is used only here, and nowhere else in the New Testament). But for uses elsewhere, see Wisdom 12:6; Maccabees 2:29. It is not a common word for "exercising authority". Catherine Kroeger has done extensive studies on the verb. She assigns such other meanings to this verb as: "sexual aggression", "murder", "suicide", apart from the usual meaning "to have authority". Her other meanings include, "begin", "be responsible for", "rule", "dominate", "usurp power or rights", "claim ownership, sovereignty or authority". In her understanding, according to Liefeld, the most straight forward translation of verse 12 would be, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to declare herself the originator of man."<sup>270</sup> Unfortunately, most of these other meanings, apart from "authority-over", seem so far removed from the context of 1 Timothy that many scholars are sceptical of Kroeger's conclusions, though, in the New Testament period, the word did convey ideas of initiating action, originating something, and domineering.

As for the word διδάσκω ("teach") some argue that it diminished in church usage while the use of κατηχεω increased.<sup>271</sup> This latter verb related more narrowly to the instruction of converts rather than to teaching in a

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<sup>270</sup>Liefeld, "Women, Submision and Ministry", 246.

<sup>271</sup>Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present (Grand Rapids michigan; Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 460.

broader sense.<sup>272</sup> The  $\Sigma\iota\ \Sigma\alpha\sigma\ \kappa\bar{\omega}$  word group seems to have been used in a more formal sense, as the following comments reveal. (1) Teachers were accorded greater honour in Judaism than in the Greco-Roman world and in the early church. (2) Christian teachers were involved in a significant and sensitive task, namely, the transmission of the traditions of Jesus and those of the early apostles. Given the widespread feeling against women teachers in the ancient world,<sup>273</sup> it would not be surprising if the Christian church was hesitant to have its sacred traditions publicly conveyed by women. Women in Judaism were not permitted to teach the Torah. (3) Moreover, in a world that would not accept the testimony of women as witnesses, the ministry of women then may have been a liability (note that in 1 Corinthians 15, the list of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ does not include the name of a single woman!). It has been shown that even the ancient Greeks accepted women prophets but rejected women teachers.<sup>274</sup>

Can we then say, that the prohibition against women teaching was indeed limited to an historical context? Kroeger asserts that the verb  $\Sigma\iota\ \Sigma\alpha\sigma\ \kappa\bar{\omega}$  ("teach") only prohibits "erroneous teaching". If that be the case then why did Paul not clearly say, "I do not permit a woman to teach error"? This would have been expressed by Paul if that was what he had intended to say. To suggest that the verb refers to "erroneous teaching" goes beyond the natural meaning of the text.

<sup>272</sup>Ibid.

<sup>273</sup>David M. Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry," in *Women, Authority, and the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986): 207, citing James Sigountos, and Myron Shank, "Public Roles of Women in the Pauline Church: A Reappraisal of the Evidence" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 26 (1983):283-95.

<sup>274</sup> Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 460.

This brings us to the second issue of what Paul's intention in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 could have been.

#### b. What did Paul intend to teach in 1 Timothy 2:11-12?

Verse 11 and 12 should be taken together. Both have the term  $\eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\iota\alpha$  ("quietness", "peacefulness", "silence"), which seems to bracket all else that Paul is saying. Verse 11 makes a positive statement: "let a woman learn in silence". Verse 12 makes a negative one: "I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to have authority over a man." Structurally, these verses could be expressed thus,

so as to bring out the "bracketing" role of  $\eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\iota\alpha$ : Greek:

v. 11  $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\iota\alpha\ \mu\alpha\upsilon\theta\alpha\upsilon\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omega\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \pi\alpha\sigma\eta\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\chi\eta\ \eta\ \eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\iota\alpha$

v. 12  $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\sigma\kappa\epsilon\iota\upsilon\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\ \gamma\upsilon\upsilon\alpha\iota\kappa\iota\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\tau\upsilon\pi\epsilon\pi\omega\ \omicron\upsilon\delta\epsilon\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\epsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\iota\upsilon\ \grave{\alpha}\nu\delta\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \grave{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\grave{\alpha}\ \acute{\epsilon}\iota\upsilon\alpha\iota\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\iota\alpha$

*Translation:*

v.11 - a woman / in silence / let her 'Learn / in all submission

v.12 - to teach / a woman / I do not permit, nor to/have authority over a man/ but to be in silence.

Note that Paul calls for  $\eta\sigma\upsilon\chi\iota\alpha$  ("quietness", "peacefulness" "silence") and  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\chi\eta$  ("submission", "subjection") from  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\sigma\omega$  ("submit", "to be subject"). It is peacefulness and restfulness that Paul calls for on the part of women, and this, in connection with the manner of learning. Women are not prohibited from learning (see 1 Corinthians 14). But here, Paul is speaking of teaching situations.

"In quietness" and "in all submission" are in apposition to one another. Verse 12 forbids teaching and exercising authority over men in a domineering manner. Both

verses have the same situation in mind: women are not to teach "domineeringly", but are to learn quietly.

It is, therefore, correct to say that Paul here, specifically disallowed women who may have been involved in usurping leadership at the Church in Ephesus. His concern was that Christian women should not force their teaching on the existing leadership of the Church. Given the influence of the fertility cults from which they would have been converted into Christianity, some of these women could easily have been tempted to aggressively challenge the existing religious order. Forceful teaching, by the way, would have been wrong even on the part of men too, though in this particular context it is specifically applied to women.<sup>275</sup>

#### **Paul's Reference to Creation Order and the Fall: 1 Timothy 2:13-14**

Paul gives two reasons to buttress his teaching in verses 11-12. First, Adam was the one created first, then Eve. Second, argument from the historical order of the fall is appealed to by him.

In considering the first reason, the particle *γὰρ* ("for") is very significant. Does it have a causal force (introducing a reason, Moo<sup>276</sup> and others); or an explanatory force (=introducing an illustration, so Scholer<sup>277</sup>.) This casts two

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<sup>275</sup>Ronald W. Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: 1 Timothy 2:8-15: A Test Case," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 36, no.3 (September 1993): 353.

<sup>276</sup>Moo. "1 Timothy 2:11-15," 62-93.

<sup>277</sup>Scholer, "1 Timothy 2:9-15," 225-44.

views which have been designated "traditionalist", and "liberationist", respectively.<sup>278</sup>

#### **A "Traditionalist View"**

Based on Genesis 3, Paul seems to be saying that Eve was not at fault, she was deceived. Adam on the other hand was not deceived.. but deliberately, and with understanding, chose to sin. But Paul in Romans 5 shows how Adam was squarely to bear the responsibility of their sin. So, according to Powell, the ("for") at the opening of verse 13 is used by Paul to argue that women should not "teach". That makes it to have a causal rather than an explanatory force.

Waltke, in an article, "Shared Leadership or Male Headship" (Christianity Today, Vol 30, no. 4 [1986]: 131) argues that hierarchy was ordained before the fall. As the Son does what pleases the Father, so also the Spirit does what pleases the Son (John 16:31ff). He argues that man has "veto" power over his wife at home (1 Cor. 11:3). Church Government must be consistent with government at home. He gives an Old Testament precedent: "no women priests who taught the Torah"; and a New Testament precedent: "no women apostles were appointed by Christ". So why are women not to teach (1 Tim. 2:12)? First, because of the historical order of the fall. In I Corinthians 11:5-16, women can say and prophesy but not "teach" or "rule" in the official church meetings. Secondly, Adam was formed first, so had "priority" over Eve.

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<sup>278</sup>C. Powell, "A Statement of Genders: Some Hermeneutical Reflections," Themelios 17 (April-May 1982): 15-19.

### A "Liberationist View"

Those who hold this view argue that the  $\gamma \acute{\alpha} \rho$  ('for') in 1 Timothy 2:13 is explanatory, not causal (i.e. giving illustration for the prohibition). Eve is cited as an example not to be followed. But why Eve at this point? Paul is making a connection between understanding and knowledge, and teaching. He intends to encourage the truth by exposing false teaching. In the context of false teaching, or while women were uneducated, they were not to teach. Paul, according to Walter C. Kaiser, could be thinking of "spiritual formation or education" hence the use of  $\pi \lambda \alpha \sigma \omicron \omega$  (= "to mold", "to form", "to shape"), rather than the term  $\kappa \tau \iota \zeta \omega$  ("to create", "make" - see verse 13).<sup>279</sup> The implication is that when women have been taught, they would share in leadership. Is this certain?

But this view seems to rely on women being ignorant, and once they have become enlightened, it is no longer valid or necessary to put restrictions on their "teaching" ministry. This, says Powell,<sup>280</sup> and I concur, distracts from the absolute nature of the principle behind Paul's teaching, namely, that, no believer, male and/or female, has an automatic right to teach the word of God.

Disagreement on the interpretation of this passage is understandable, for "we must admit that the passages involving women's and men's roles are among the most difficult in Scripture, and this accounts for the sincere disagreement of godly, well educated interpreters".<sup>281</sup> But what are we to make of what Paul meant? And how does it apply to us today? This raises the issue of normativeness. If it was "normal"

<sup>279</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, "Shared Leadership or Male Headship," Christianity Today 30, no. 4 (1986): 121-131.

<sup>280</sup>Powell, "A Statement of Genders", 18.

<sup>281</sup>William W. Klein', Craig L. Blomberg, and L. Hubbard, Jr, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 410.

for women to "teach" at the Ephesian church, then what do we say about their ministry today?

Fee argues that the apostolic restriction of these women should not be misinterpreted "as a rule in all churches at all times", but rather is imposed because of the particular occasion of the letter.<sup>282</sup> Yet what Paul says must for Evangelicals have a timeless application (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:1-17 on sectarianism being carnal).

### Conclusion

So, it seems to me that Paul teaches a fundamental order in the church. It is an order in which woman is functioning under the authority ("leadership") of man (cf. "headship" of the man in the home). For Evangelical Christians it is an order that has to do with function and role, not spiritual or sexual equality before God. It is also an order that has nothing to do with geographical boundaries. That is why we should reject Hurley's argument that prohibits women from teaching men at "home", but allows for women missionaries teaching men in the "mission field".<sup>283</sup> "A jet flight does not change the nature of women or men to whom they may minister"<sup>284</sup> says Powell.

So what determines "authoritative teaching" should neither be sender, nor geographical location, but the word of God, correctly handled and applied. Without "humility, patience,, and hope regarding the status quo", says Pierce, and "without

<sup>282</sup>See Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s," 351, citing Gordon Fee, "Issues," 35.

<sup>283</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective, 250.

<sup>284</sup>Powell, "A Statement of Genders". 19.

controls, a passage like 1 Timothy 2:8-15 will continue to cause strife rather than unity in the church".<sup>285</sup>

### C "...NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE...": GALATIANS 3:28

In recent years, the words "neither male nor female" have come to be seen as heralding a revolution in the relationship of the sexes. They have been called the "Magna Carta of Humanity", especially the "Emancipation Proclamation for Women".<sup>286</sup> But do these words actually set aside all distinctions between the sexes? Do they herald the overthrow of "subordination" of either sex? Are they irrelevant, as some argue, to the issue of "submission" in marriage?

Proponents of the ordination of women frequently appeal to this text as evidence that redemption abolishes all order between man and woman. The real question, however -is: "What is the distinction between male and female which is overcome in Christ?" Put another way, when Paul says "you are all one in Christ", what is the "oneness" which male and female share in Christ? The issue here is not the functional order between man and woman at all. Rather, it is their spiritual status before God. The context of the verse,, as well as the whole book of Galatians seem to suggest that this is so, as we shall see below.

Before delving into the argument from the context, let us first comment on the syntax, word meanings, and religious distinctions that obtained at the time of Paul.

<sup>285</sup>Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s," 354-55.

<sup>286</sup>Ben Witherington, "Rite and Rights for Women-Galatians 3:28'," Journal of New Testament Studies 27, no.5 (October 1981): 593.

### Syntax

In verse 28, and in the original language, there is a change in wording from  $\text{οὐδὲ... οὐδὲ}$  ("neither ... nor ") to  $\text{καὶ}$  ("and") when it comes to the male /female parallel. Why this change? Could Paul have been signalling to his readers that the category male/female is very different from the others: Jew./Greek and slave/free? The point, though, is not that gender distinctions are obliterated. They are not (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2-16). The word study below shows that Paul was very careful in the choice of his words.

### Word Meanings

Paul uses specific words for "male" and "female" in the verse under study. These words are  $\alpha\rho\sigma\epsilon\upsilon$  ("male") and  $\theta\eta\lambda\upsilon$  ("female") whereas the usual words for man and woman are:  $\alpha\upsilon\rho\eta\rho$  ("man")  $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta$  ("woman"). Why does Paul not say, "there is neither man nor woman" but rather "male and female"? This is the question raised by Robert L. Saucy in Perspectives on Evangelical Theology.<sup>287</sup> I find his argument enlightening, and so have decided to summarise it here.

The terms  $\alpha\rho\sigma\epsilon\upsilon$  and  $\theta\eta\lambda\upsilon$  ("male" and "female") he says, denote a strong emphasis on sex and are used together to express emphatic sexual distinction (cf. Oepeke, " $\alpha\upsilon\rho\eta\rho$ ", TDNT 1.362). The terms  $\alpha\upsilon\rho\eta\rho$  and  $\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\eta$  ("man" and "woman"), on the other hand, denote man in relation to woman in terms of their dominant characteristics. It is these dominant characteristics which are particularly applicable in the functional relationship between man and woman.<sup>288</sup>

<sup>287</sup>Robert Saucy, "The Negative Case Against the Ordination of Women," in Perspectives on Evangelical Theology, eds. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 283.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid.

For example, in Genesis 1:27, they are called "male" and "female" (ἄνδρ, ἡμεν, ἡμεν or ἄρσεν, θηλυ) in relationship to God. But in Genesis 2, however, where we find the creation of man and woman in relation to each other.. and in the first marriage, the words "man" and "woman" are used. (Gen. 2:22-24, ἄνδρ, ἡμεν or ἄνθρωπος, ἡμεν). So, in using "male" and "female" in Galatians 3:28, Paul has Genesis 1 in mind. In Christ, male and female stand on equal terms spiritually before God, even as they did in the good creation prior to the fall. The treatment of women as inferior beings in Paul's day, has been overturned by the Gospel through redemption.

Why does Paul allude to Gen. 1:27? For Stendhal, Paul alludes to Gen 1:27, to show that in Christ, the creation order gender distinctions have been obliterated, or are now of no significance.<sup>289</sup> This seems unlikely, according to Witherington,<sup>290</sup> for the following reasons: (1) Paul does not claim that such distinctions have been obliterated, not anywhere in any of his letters. (2) We should suspect any interpretation of Paul which makes a sharp distinction between creation and 'new creation'. In Paul, redemption presupposes creation, and includes creation (cf. Rom. 8:18ff; Col. 1:20; Eph 1:10) - and Christ as Lord is mediator both of creation and redemption. (3) putting on Christ is "being renewed in knowledge in the image of the Creator" (cf. Col.:10-11, a parallel text to Gal. 3:28.).

What then did Paul imply by alluding to Gen. 1:27? For Paul, as for Jesus, says Witherington, "the family of faith takes priority over the physical family".<sup>291</sup>

<sup>289</sup>Ibid., 598.

<sup>290</sup>Witherington, "Rite and Rights for Women-Galatians 3:28," 595-6.

<sup>291</sup>Ibid.

Union with Christ ( ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ) transcends racial, social, and sexual distinctions, though it does not obliterate them.<sup>292</sup>

Moreover, the literary context (vv. 26-29) shows that Paul addresses the Galatians here as ὑμεῖς ("you") in verses 26, 28b and 29. Yet before, and after, he uses, ἡμεῖς ("we") in verses 23, 24, 25 and 4:3. Why this change from the first person plural to the second person in 3:26-29? It could be that we are dealing with an, early, perhaps pre-Pauline baptismal formula.<sup>293</sup> Gal. 3:28, and its parallels (Col. 3:11 and 1 Cor. 12:3), all have three elements in common, namely, (1) the language of baptism, pairing of characters, and (3) unity in Christ, whether expressed as being 'part of one Body, or as different members of the one Body.<sup>294</sup>

#### Religious Distinctions in New Testament Times

As we saw in chapter 2 there was discrimination with regard to the treatment of women, slaves, and Gentiles in the first century. Women were not accepted as equal with men in the public sphere of life, whether cultic, civil, or social. They were considered personally and religiously inferior to men. They sat separately in the synagogues.<sup>295</sup>

<sup>292</sup>Ibid., citing W. Grundmann, "Χριστῷ", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9 (1974). Schneemelcher, "ἕως", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 8 (1974).

<sup>293</sup>Ibid. 597, citing W.A. Meeks, "The Image of Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religion* 13, no. 3 (1974): 166ff, 180ff.

<sup>294</sup>Ibid.

<sup>295</sup>Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids-Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 71.

Slaves, too, in Judaism in the time of Jesus as for the Greek world, were in a lower level of society (see Saucy, quoting from K.H. Rengstorf "  $\Sigma\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$  ", TDNT 2.271).

"Greeks" (Gentiles) stood on inferior religious ground. In rabbinic Judaism, the non-Israelite was a stranger to God being far from him (. Eph. 2: 11-22) . A visible form of this separate existence of the Gentiles from the Jews was the structure of the Temple in the time of Jesus Christ. There were three courts: the court of Gentiles, the court of women, and the Holy Place. A f 'Five-foot high wall separated the court of Gentiles from the inner areas of the temple precincts.<sup>296</sup> It was these spiritual differences that called for Paul's words in Galatians 3:28. Recall the prayer of a Jewish man, who daily thanked God (see Chapter Two) that, "he was not made a woman.. a Gentile, or a slave" - the very three categories mentioned by Paul.

It is in order, now, to turn to the context of Galatians 3:28.

### Galatians 3:28 in Context

A review of Paul's argument of chapter 3 prior to verses 26-29 helps to provide a proper framework for interpretation. Paul's thesis is that faith,, not works,, provides the basis of salvation and that those who approach God by faith, be they Jews or Gentiles, will be blessed with "faithful" Abraham (3:6-14). Being Jewish has some advantage,, but it does not count for anything in Christ (,Phil. 3:4-11).

In the church at Galatia, the issue was primarily theological: it had to do with the place of the Law (,and circumcision) and the basis of acceptance with God. Perhaps lining-up of verse 26-29 will illustrate this point better:

v.26... "you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus"

<sup>296</sup>Markus Earth, "Ephesians 1-3," in The Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. 1 (1974).

v.27... "as many of you as who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ"

v.28... "you are all one in Christ Jesus"

v.29... "And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

As the context shows, there is no reference here made to functional equality in the church or in the home, nor in the state. The verses quoted above (26-29) are a climax of the Epistle to the Galatians. They are a hinge between 3:7-25 on Justification by faith apart from the Law, and 4:1-7 on sonship and adoption as a result of redemption through Christ. It is Paul's contention that both Jew and Gentile come to God on the basis of faith. This is the frame within which to read 3:28. Because all men have been condemned to be sinners (13:22), Paul insists that all men come before God on an equal footing, their race, state of bondage, and sex having no effect whatsoever on their right to stand before God.<sup>297</sup> But why did Paul not spell out the implications of 3:28 clearly enough for each category he names?

The following possible reasons have been suggested by Snodgrass:<sup>298</sup> (1) Doing so, especially on the part of slaves could Snodgrass: easily have led to an upheaval. (2) There was a fear that the Christian movement would be seen as a political force, which would easily have been stamped out. (3) There was also the expectation of *the parousia*, the soon return of our Lord. (4) There was no one saying , "you must be a free person or a male to become a Christian" (cf. the call for Gentiles to become circumcised before they were admitted to the faith - see 2:3, 7-9; 5: 1-6). Therefore, within its context, Galatians 3:28 addresses the question. "Who may

<sup>297</sup>Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution," in Women, Authority and the Bible, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (.Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 178.

<sup>298</sup>Ibid.

become a son of God, and on what basis?" The answer: any person regardless of race.. civil status , or sex, may do so by faith in Christ Jesus.

How then do we interpret this text (3:28) in relations to other Pauline texts? This is the subject of the paragraph that follows.

### **Galatians 3:28 in Relation to Other Pauline Texts**

Some have raised the following Questions in relation to Galatians 3:28. If there is no slave and free,, why does Paul proceed to give instructions to slaves and masters (Eph. 6:5-9)? How can Paul say "no male and female" and then proceed to order women to be "silent" in the churches, not to teach, and to "obey" their husbands (1 Cor. 14:33-36; Tim. 2:11-12.; Eph. 5:22-24)? "Either Paul contradicts himself, or the apparent contradiction is to be resolved by meticulous study",<sup>299</sup> says Hurley; and I hasten to add, "by the- Holy Spirit of God illumining our minds and enabling us to understand God's Word." My basic assumption for arguing along these lines is that the God who spoke in the past and whose Word was recorded in the Bible for our instruction and edification, continues to speak today to all humankind in Scripture. Paul, therefore, cannot be contradicting himself.

But from our discussion above, it is clear that Paul was not providing a teaching on relations within the body of Christ in Galatians 3:28. It would,, therefore, be wrong for us to attempt to answer all questions about male and female relations from this one text. That is why this particular text has to be looked at in the light of other Pauline texts on marital issues. Yet it must be emphasized that his point was the basis of membership in the body of Christ. To say that "all one" in Christ means

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<sup>299</sup>Hurley, Man and Woman, 127. For a fuller account on the relationship of Gal. 3: 28 to the 'Household Codes, ' see Stephen Motyer, "The Relationship Between Paul's Gospel of All One in Christ" (Galatians 3:28) and The Household Codes," VoxEvangelica 19 (1989): 32-48.

that there are no distinctions within the body of Christ is a blatant misconception The answer here is not the functional order between man and woman at all, but spiritual status before God. After all, has not Paul shown elsewhere, that the one body of Christ has many different members (1 Corinthians 12:12; Romans 12:4)? So, the unity in Christ is not at all undercut by the distinctions between believers. Therefore, we should see no conflict between Galatians '18 and other Pauline text--- teaching distinctions is gifts endowed by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ in general, and between Christian husbands and wives in particular.

Take for example, Galatians 3:8 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15. With respect to dating, 1 Timothy was probably written around A.D. 63, much later than --Galatians (.A.D. 49 or 551, depending on which date one adopts, an earlier or later one). So, could 1 Timothy be an exception to the rule of Galatians 3:28, namely that the Gospel had eradicated the old covenant phenomenon of gender roles in the Church? I think not. It seems that Paul deliberately restricted Christian liberty in this case for good reasons in this specific situation. But 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5 could be taken as representing a specific application of the fundamental principle stated earlier by Paul in Galatians 3:28.

Be that as it may, some still believe that if slavery and racial distinctions are 'set aside', why not sexual distinctions as well? This argument is weak on two grounds. First, slavery is not analogous to the relationship between man and woman in Scripture. The latter is grounded on creation.. the former is not.<sup>300</sup>Redemption frees us from the distortions of relationships between the sexes caused by the fall

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<sup>300</sup>Robert L. Saucy, "The Negative Case Against the Ordination of Women." in Perspectives on Evangelical Theology, eds. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 284. cf. Hurley, Man and Woman, 159.

(see -Genesis 3:16), and as Stott says, "It establishes the original intention of creation". It was to the beginning that Jesus went back in Matthew 19:4--6, thus confirming Genesis 1 and 2.<sup>301</sup>

Secondly, while some forms of slavery as such have been abolished, the principle of an order between employer and employee still remains. The consequences of slavery are still with us, especially in some quarters of the world today. But be it known that Scripture does not teach the eradication of the order of man and woman in salvation this side of eternity. After Jesus' second coming, yes, but not before.

A word about the Jewish/Gentile issue ("Greek") is in order, before we round off this discussion. As noted above, Paul is arguing over the issue of circumcision and the law and how this relates to the Christian community (Gal. 2:3, 7-9). He says, "In Christ neither circumcision,, nor uncircumcision has any value" (5:6; 6:15). He even wished his opponents not only to be circumcised, but also emasculated (5:12). For Paul, justification does not come by works, but by faith in Jesus Christ (2:16). Circumcision does not enable anyone to obtain a right standing before God. Apparently the Judaizers had succeeded in getting the Galatians to observe special days and months, seasons and years. Had the argument been extended to women, they too, would have been circumcised. Second, they could not observe times and seasons because of menstrual cycles which could render them 'unclean' at precisely the wrong moments. This would have put the males in a more privileged position over the females if the male-female fashion was upheld in that society.<sup>302</sup>In rabbinic Judaism, the salvation of women lay in getting married and having children. This

<sup>301</sup>John R. W. Stott, God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 221.

<sup>302</sup>Wetherincron, "Rites and Rights for Women," 595.

seemed to have been the norm in the Greek context, according to David Daube, who says that Sparta even imposed a fine on bachelors, and that remaining single was seen as a matter of public disgrace.<sup>303</sup> It seems, therefore, that the Judaizers may have been arguing that marriage was a duty for men and women. Paul's argument, then,, is that, in Christ, there is a place for women apart from men. The very fact that Paul speaks in terms of Jew/Gentile,....male/female means that he recognises that these distinctions exist. What he rejects is their abuse not their proper use.<sup>304</sup>

### Summary

For Paul, nobody should be excluded from the community of faith on the basis of race, social status, and gender. Faith is the universal basis of relating in Christ, not any such rites as the male initiatory rite of circumcision.. nor the distinction of clean and unclean; nor even the observance of times and seasons (cf. Gal. 2:11ff; 4:10). In short, Galatians 3:28 is not a call to abolish all earthly relations. Rather, it puts the relationship in the perspective of salvation history. All who are in Christ have the same status before God, but they do not necessarily have the same function.<sup>305</sup>

### D. BRIDGING EXEGESIS AND APPLICATION

The hermeneutical task- requires an understanding of the concrete situation to which the exegetical findings are to be applied, as well as an understanding of

<sup>303</sup>Ibid.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid.

<sup>305</sup>Collin Brown, "Man", in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology 2nd. ed. (1976).

Scripture.<sup>306</sup> It is not possible to transpose the biblical message unless the -Interpreter is familiar with the frame of reference within which the message is to become meaningful. Now,, the word which God spoke in the past has to become the same word to us in African context. But what is this African context? What is the local situation like?

In chapter one of this study, we have already started to analyse this context (see statement of the problem and the objectives of the study). We are now ready to answer the question: "What does God say, in his Word, to the marital practices obtaining in the local situation?" We shall attempt to bridge exegesis and application in three stages (i) By commenting on the relevance of theology to the task at hand.. (ii) by commenting on contextualization - what is it all about, and (iii) by hihghlighting the Iteso of North-Eastern Uganda, an ethnic group to which the writer of this thesis belongs, and which he has chosen f or the purpose of applying the findings of this study.

#### **(i) The Theological Dimension**

The Bible was written that God in and through it might communicate to humankind. It follows that the Bible must be read with an attitude of openness,, as God's Word, and with a view to conscientious response. Theology cannot, therefore, be reduced to the repetition of doctrinal formulations borrowed from other continents. For it to be appropriate to our African culture, it must reflect the merging of the horizons of the historical situation and the horizons of the text. It has to be received and

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<sup>306</sup>See the rather lengthy "Four-step Methodology for Legitimate Application" as suggested by William Klein, Graig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Introduction to Biblical Interrpretation (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 406-426.

expressed in the symbols and thought forms which are part of the culture to which it is addressed. It has to respond to the questions and concerns which are raised in our context. Theology will be faithful to the Word of God to the extent that it is based on Scripture. Hence the importance of accurate and faithful exegesis of Scripture. But much more important should be a willingness of the theologians to allow themselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit in their theological formulations. The same Spirit who inspired Scripture in the past is active today to interpret it as God's personal Word in a concrete historical situation.

What then is the task of African Theologians? To answer this question adequately, one has to look into the beginnings of the Christian faith to see how the Apostles did theology. It seems that the driving force in the contextualization of the gospel was their obedience to God's call to mission. It was in the carrying out of this missionary call that theological formulations came into being.

The way in which Christianity was communicated in the first century does, indeed, set a pattern for producing contextualized theology today. The pursuit of theology as a discipline for its own sake will not do for us in Africa today. Given the turmoil in our political and social climate today, I suggest that one of the places to begin to search for solutions is the home (husband and wife relations).

What does this mean in our case as Africans? It is to this we now turn.

#### **(ii) The Contextualization of the Biblical Message - Marital Principles**

In the past, some "Western" missionaries often assumed that their task was simply to extract the message directly from the biblical text and

transpose it to their recipients in the "mission field", in this case the African Church, with little consideration of the role of the cultural context in the whole interpretive process. This tended to go hand in hand with the dualistic view, where they assumed the notion that the "spiritual" world should be separated from the "material" world. Hence, there was an emphasis on the salvation of the soul rather than that of the whole person. As a result, the biblical message they taught was never fully internalized by most African Christians.

So, even in matters of marriage and family life, the cultural and traditional aspects still go hand in hand with the Christian (biblical) principles for most of the Africans. It is no wonder that the Gospel has not really touched on the dreams, customs and values of the traditional African people. If it had really done so, we would not be hearing such remarks as, "Christianity in Africa is one mile long, but only one inch deep." How tragic, given that the Gospel has been with us in Africa for over a century. What is needed, therefore, is a new kind of dialogue between the Gospel and the local situation through a hermeneutic whose purpose is to place the church and Christian marriages under the lordship of Christ. Only then will the contextualization of the Gospel be a manifestation of Christ's presence within the Christian homes and churches of Africa.

### (iii) Situation Analysis: The Iteso of North-Eastern Uganda

The writer has chosen the Iteso tribe of North-Eastern Uganda in East Africa to be a 'representative' ethnic group for the application of the biblical principles derived from the exegesis of Scripture. Some of the reasons for this choice are as follow: First.. it would be unrealistic to try to

apply the conclusions from this study to the whole of Africa,, which is such an immense, complex and culturally diverse continent, that one hesitates before saying anything general about any issue.

Secondly, this being a literary research, the writer did not have the opportunity to go to study the field situation among a number of tribes in Uganda, or even a select few here in Kenya. But having grown up in the Iteso culture, he has presumed upon his own world-view to help in the analysis of the concrete situation there.

Thirdly, the Iteso are a homogeneous and a populous tribe, the fifth largest in Uganda, according to the most recent population census (1991).<sup>307</sup> Although there are other Iteso living outside Teso (now Soroti and Kumi districts of Uganda i.e. in Tororo and Pallisa districts,<sup>308</sup> and some even in Western Kenya), it is only those within the Soroti and Kumi districts of North-Eastern Uganda that this study is able to take into account. One reason for this limitation is that those other Iteso outside of the said two districts, above, have to a large extent assimilated the practices of their non-Iteso neighbours into their current way of life. But, by and large, they too, would readily identify with my analysis of the marital issues obtaining in the Soroti and Kumi districts of North Eastern Uganda.

Fourthly, evangelism has been ongoing among the Iteso from as early as the 1910s. The church in Teso is alive and going strong. The Iteso have had the Bible translated into their own language, "*Ateso*" for almost as long as evangelism has been going on. Yet, the Iteso are notorious for being one

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<sup>307</sup>See Chapter four for the actual population figures.

<sup>308</sup>See Maps, Nos. 1 and 3 in the Appendices I and III.

of the leading polygamous communities in Uganda. How is it that the Gospel has not really touched that aspect of their lives?

The researcher hopes that other ethnic groups, too, from within Africa, can find similarities and insights for the application of the biblical marital principles to their own cultures. As we said earlier, it would be naive to believe that what obtains for the Iteso in Uganda is representative of the whole of Africa. Put for the present writer, this is but a beginning in the contextualization process of the biblical message, as far as marital and related issues are concerned.

In seeking to apply biblical (Pauline and Petrine) principles of marriage to this ethnic group, the writer has taken into account the changing practices with regard to marriage among the Iteso over the years. These changes have come about because of influences from within the culture, and from without. From within, there has been a growing resentment by the young people of the 'bride-price' demanded by the parents of the girls. This has tended to make the young people marry from outside of the tribe. There is also the issue of intermarriages arising from reasons other than the one given above. From without, there have been three main influences: the 'Western' type of education, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the migration of the Iteso from the rural areas to the urban centres within and outside of Uganda.

It is to this "African" perspective that we now turn in chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE: MARITAL RELATIONS AMONG THE ITESO OF NORTH EASTERN UGANDA

#### A. MARITAL RELATIONS (PAST AND PRESENT) AMONG THE ITESO.

##### Background

The researcher will cover such sub-topics as history, government, population, and coming of the gospel to Teso.

Geographically Teso, the land of the Iteso, a Nilo-hamitic tribe, has undergone structural changes and naming and re-naming over the years. Currently, it is the area covering Soroti and Kumi Districts. It is located in the North Eastern region of Uganda (see Appendices I-IV).

Historically, the Iteso were a nomadic pastoral people, closely and ethnically related to the Karimojong, another Nilo-hamitic People who presently live farther on in the north-eastern corner of Uganda, bordering north-western Kenya. The words *Teso* (the land of the Iteso), *Iteso* (the language of the Iteso), (a male person), *atesot* (a female person), and *Iteso* (the people of Teso) are all derived from one Karimojong word, *atesin<sup>1</sup>* (literally "graves"). Legend has it that the elders of the Iteso who now inhabit the present-day Karamoja (Moroto and Kotido Districts) cautioned the younger people who were pushing south-wards that, if they were not careful, they were going to end up as *atesin* ("graves"), meaning that they would be killed, and so end up dead and buried. Hence the name *Iteso* (plural). The younger people, on the other hand, noting that the older ones were getting tired of migratory movements,

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<sup>1</sup>Ivan Karp, *Fields of Change Among the Iteso of Kenya* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 16.

described their state as one of *ekaraki imojong* ("the old people who have become tired"), hence the name Karimojong. If the aforementioned is anything to go by, then it would be correct to say that the Karimojong (now occupying Moroto and Kotido Districts - see Appendices I & III) are the descendants of those people who grew weary and could not advance south-westwards in the migration history of the Iteso.

Having arrived in Teso, (the present Soroti and Kumi Districts (see Appendices II & IV), the Iteso assumed a semi-nomadic lifestyle, mixing livestock rearing with subsistence agriculture. Like their 'elders' (the Karimojong), the Iteso value cattle very much. Cows are central in their economic life and other transactions. A cow is used for bride-price; it is used for 'buying' land; it is sold for money for school fees, etc. But unlike the Karimojong, the Iteso have been 'changed' by Western-type education and the Gospel, since the early 1900s. They are now not as war-like and militant as the Karimojong still are.

### The Population

The Iteso used to be the second largest tribe in Uganda. To date, the Baganda still remain the most populous tribe, but the Iteso are now said to be the fifth largest in number, according to the 1991 population census figures (see below.). The population of Teso is 667,084, Soroti District having a population of 430,390<sup>2</sup> and Kumi District having a population of 236,694<sup>3</sup> persons. Many factors have contributed to this drop in the population of Teso. First, there has been insurgency

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<sup>2</sup>The 1991 Population and Housing Census: District -Summary Series", Soroti District (Entebbe, Uganda: Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 1992), 7.

<sup>3</sup>The 1991 Population and Housing Census: District Summary Series", Kumi District (Entebbe, Uganda: Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 1992), 7.

(1986 - 1991), in the area. Secondly, and arising from the this, many people have migrated to other parts of Uganda. Thirdly, the figures could have been 'tailored' during the 1991 population census to suit the Political goals of some persons.

### Government

The Iteso have not had kings and kingdoms like the Baganda or Banyoro of central and western Uganda, respectively. But this does not mean that they were not organised. They had a system of chiefs and chieftainships along clan and family lines. This made it easier for the colonialists to rule them through the Baganda vassals, whom they (the colonialists) used to subjugate, conquer and pacify the Iteso. Chief among the Baganda 'rulers' was Semei Kakungulu.

This occupation of Teso by the Baganda rulers forced the Iteso to learn *Luganda* (the language of the Baganda). *Luganda* was the language used for instruction in the church catechism, and also for rudimentary primary level instruction. In fact, most of the surviving elders in Teso today (say, people 60 years or older) are fluent in Luganda. My father, now about 65 years old, is fluent in both Luganda and Kiswahili, having served with the Kings African Rifles (KAR) in the Second World War (1939-1945). He was deployed in Egypt ("Misri", as he calls it), among other places.

### The Gospel Comes to Teso

The propagation of the Gospel in Teso dates back to the period of the subjugation of the Iteso by Semei Kakungulu, a Muganda vassal employed by the colonialists. He overran Teso by the beginning of the 1900s. Along with him were lay evangelists who apparently failed to have an effective Christian impact upon the Iteso. The Iteso could not see the relevance of the Gospel because it was associated with suffering and harassment by Kakungulu's henchmen.

Information on the spread of the Gospel in Teso is scanty. Much of what now follows is adapted from an essay written by a theological student in Bishop Tucker Theological College (Mukono, Uganda).<sup>4</sup> Following Kakungulu's conquest, Rev. Andereya Butulabude went and pitched in Kumi where he made some converts. Upon learning about Rev. Butulabude's evangelistic campaigns, Bishop Tucker, the then Bishop of the "Uganda Province" sent a Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary, Rev. Kitching, to join Rev. Butulabude at Kumi in 1908. By 1910, Rev. Kitching, had established a Mission Station at Ngora.<sup>5</sup> Later, more missionaries came to Teso. Dillistone, a carpenter and builder, and his wife, a medical sister, boosted the work at Ngora. A Lay Readers' Training Centre, a Primary School, and a Health Centre were set up at Ngora as mission work expanded. A church-stone for Ngora Church of Uganda was laid by Rev. G.G. Willis in 1912. Thereafter, instruction classes for baptism and confirmation were started.

A second mission station was opened at Kalaki in north-western Teso, and by 1913, another church was established at Amuria, near Kalaki.

Enock Epaku, then chief of Soroti, is said to have appealed to the missionaries for a church to be established in Soroti. This was done in 1915. Rev. Balimusi, a Muganda priest baptized the first converts in that church on August 12.. 1916. Soroti Parish, then consisted of Serere, Amuria, and Usuk "counties".

The Iteso people were not ordained to priesthood until 1941. The Baganda priests are said to have undermined them and dominated the leadership of the church

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<sup>4</sup>The article, "Clergy in the Church of Uganda with particular reference to Soroti Parish, Diocese of Soroti", was passed on to me by a friend, and has a code number, C012/005 (May, 1990).

<sup>5</sup>Tom Tuma, "Church Expansion to the East," in A Century of Christianity in Uganda: 1877-1977, eds., Tom Tuma and Phares Mutibwa (Nairobi, Uzima Press Ltd., 1978), 52.

in Teso. They referred to the Iteso as *bakundi* ("naked people"), and regarded them as barbaric and savage, thus unfit for Christian ministry. This attitude of the Baganda priests coupled with the fact that *Luganda*, and not *Ateso* was the language of instruction, greatly slowed down the growth of the Church in Teso.

To date, the Church of Uganda in Teso is large, second only to the Roman Catholic Church. It is under a bishop, who is based in Soroti town (The Rt. Rev. Gershom Ilukor, is the bishop of Soroti Diocese). To date there are eight archdeaconaries and fifty-five parishes<sup>6</sup> with about the same corresponding number of clergy in the Church of Uganda Diocese of Soroti.

Other denominations, especially the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG), Baptist, and Deliverance Church are now actively evangelising in many parts of Teso. Receptivity to the Gospel has been heightened by the suffering that the population of Teso was subjected to at the time of the insurgency (1986-1991).

But, despite the increased evangelism, the gospel message has yet to impact the tightly held beliefs and traditions of the Iteso with regard to marriage.

### **Marriage and its Meaning among the Iteso**

Marriage occupies a central role in the development of the Iteso. Literally everyone, (and I mean *everyone*) is expected to marry. It is an obligation that one can hardly avoid, except for very special reasons, namely: extreme poverty on the part of a man (.it is the men who pay the 'bride-price' - i.e. men marry, women are "married"), impotence, or some other developmental physical and/or mental abnormality.

Marriage ushers one into adulthood. The Iteso have no initiation rites as such (e.g.. circumcision). Boys are considered grown-up enough to marry when they are

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<sup>6</sup>The Churchman's Pocket Book and Diary (Kampala, Uganda: Centenary Publishing House, 1995).

able to build their own mud-huts within the homestead. It is then that they begin to cultivate friendships with the opposite sex. It would be to the parents' advantage if they heard that their son had started courting girls, and even brought them to his hut for a night. They would outwardly object to it, yet inwardly would not forbid such behaviour, unless they were 'born-again'.

I recall one holiday season I spent at home in Soroti, having completed High School, when my father inquired from one of my younger brothers whether, in our evening walks, we had passed via so-and-so's home. My brother told him, we had, but that we had not entered the homestead. "I see" .. was his only comment. To an outsider, the matter would be settled and left at that. But being an insider, I sensed that my father was already getting concerned that I had not, by the age of 19 or so, started to make "moves" towards the opposite sex. There were a number of decent and well-behaved girls in the said homestead. Such then is the concern that the Iteso parents have over the courtship and marriage of their children.

Marriage makes a young man or woman into an adult. It makes one 'somebody' in society. It gives 'completeness' to a person. It is marriage that makes the building up of a family possible. It is through a marital relationship that the bearing of legitimate children is possible. It was unthinkable, in the days long gone, that an unmarried girl would bear children in her father's home, let alone conceive when she was not married. Fathering or mothering a child was just unacceptable outside of marriage.

Marriage is also important among the Iteso because it brings people together. Marriage customs and practices (see below) bring the relatives of husband and wife together. In-laws become closely related to one another as a result of marriage', for they become integrated into the wider family of the couple. Even neighbours become part and parcel of this wider family. It is to them that the parents of both the groom and bride turn for help in entertaining and caring for guests during 'bride-price'

assessment, wedding, and other celebrations such as the naming ceremonies when children are born.

What Mbiti says about the bonds among family and clan members is very true: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am"<sup>7</sup>. This is an emphasis on community life rather than an individualistic life-style.

Marriage, then, is significant not just to the individuals concerned (bride and groom), but also to the immediate families of both persons, and to the clan and society at large. It is marriage that gives one status in society. For example, a polygamous man, who would usually have many wives and children would be held in high esteem among the Iteso. That would imply that such a one was 'rich' (possessing much property, food, and especially cows) since to marry used to cost a man anywhere between 5-30 or so cows, depending on several factors. For example, an educated girl (up to college), or a daughter of a rich man, would 'fetch' more cows than say, the correspondingly less educated one with poorer parents. Geographical location, too, in Teso mattered. Those from Usuk, a county next to Moroto District (See Appendix I), tended to demand a higher bride-price (*iboro luemanyit*) than elsewhere in Teso. This was partly because of the relatively higher population of cows in that area (in those days.), and also because the Karimojong, their neighbours, tended to demand a higher bride-price than the Iteso.<sup>8</sup> J.C.D Lawrence gives rather lower figures, in his account on marriage among the Iteso. His is an etic ("outsiders") view, though; mine is the emic ("insiders") one.

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<sup>7</sup>John S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975), 102.

<sup>8</sup>J.C.D. Lawrence, The Iteso: Fifty Years of Change in A Nilo-Hamitic Tribe of Uganda (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 202. He says that the maximum permitted bride-price, then, was (a) for an unmarried girl (*apese*) five head of cattle, and (b) for a previously married woman (*akobo*), three head of cattle.

### **Marriage Customs among the Iteso**

This is a wide topic. Marriage customs cover a lifespan: from childhood (whether one is born a boy or a girl) to death (what to do in the event of death of a spouse). Our "discussion, therefore, will focus on choosing a mate, engagement, wedding, setting up a family, the household, divorce and inheritance. Each of these will be commented on briefly.

#### **Choosing a Mate**

The exercise of choosing a mate used to be done by one's parents. If my own mother's case is anything to go by, then it helps to underline that fact. My mother was 'booked' -for marriage from the tender age of about 9-10 years. My father, she tells me took two cows to her parents' home, which sealed the contract between him and them. He was a 'parish' chief (*ejakait ka erony*) at the time, wielding some measure of 'power'. Moreover, he had served during the Second World War (1939-45) which made him a war-veteran. My mother was thereafter sent to 'help' in the service at the chief's homestead. In innocence, she excitedly went, feeling that it was just a service, for no one had explained to her what the arrangement meant.' They did not have to. And since the chief had inherited the widow of his deceased uncle, there was no reason for her to suspect anything. When she was about 15 or so, she was shown her own house. Thereafter the chief started paying her visits at night. She was alarmed! She could not understand what was going on, so she escaped back to her parents' home. It was then that they explained to her that the two cows they had received were part of her marriage bride-price. Formal arrangements were then made, and the chief added more cows, apart from other gifts to her parents. She went back to become the chief's first official wife, since the widow he had been living with did not live long thereafter. The present writer is the first born among five children whom

this lady left behind with my father, following their divorce (no further comments) in the early 1960s.

The point, though, is that, in these days of 'modernity' single persons now choose their own marriage partners. But they still have to 'clear' the arrangement with the parents of both the bridegroom (*eteran.*) and the bride (*ateran.*). Failure to do so may mean not getting a blessing from them, or in fact, getting a curse instead, though this happens very rarely.

#### **Engagement**

Engagement is a new concept which was not a norm in the Teso society. As we saw, marriages were most often arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. As such, there was hardly any time for the prospective candidates to get to know one another that intimately. There are instances where the parents of the prospective groom have even 'brought' a 'wife' for him in his absences (say, while he is at boarding school or college). On his home-coming, such a boy would be introduced to 'his wife'. How does one talk of engagement in such circumstances? It used to be that, despite such arranged marriages, the couple would slowly adjust to one other, and eventually 'love' for each other would develop. But now, even the thought of a parent giving advice to his son or daughter about whom to marry is repulsive to many youths and young adults.

#### **Wedding Ceremony**

The coming of Christianity and Western culture have modified the original understanding and practice regarding weddings among the Iteso. In the past, following the successful completion of bride-price negotiations, the bride (*ateran.*) would be escorted to the groom's home at night, veiled. The distances involved were usually short since the Iteso tended to marry from the neighbourhood. The bride

would simply be 'walked' to her new home by her sisters, relatives and friends. This reminds one of the wedding practice in Padan Aram, where Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, instead of Rachel. The former was "escorted" to Jacob's house in the evening (see Gen. 29:23). Such was the practice in Laban's country (Gen. 29:26), very much like it was in Teso.

Then would follow a time of festivities, the drinking of the Teso local brew (*ajon*) made out of finger millet, and the eating of meat, chicken and the like. This was also a time of dancing and making merry, especially by the youths. It would also be a time for demonstrating one's dancing skills, since this would be a way of advertising one's self to prospective suitors.

When the time was ripe for the bride and bridegroom to withdraw to their 'chambers I', they did so quietly, leaving the rest of the festivities to continue, often into the next morning. It is said that at least one close relative of the bride, a mature one, say an auntie or an elder sister', would be allowed into the 'bedroom' of the couple, to gauge the Performance of the bride during the 'act of marriage'. She would also be the one to assess the state of the bride: if she was truly a virgin, for she would keep a white cloth that would bear testimony to that fact. This, too, is reminiscent of the "proof" of virginity talked about in Deuteronomy 22:13-19.

Thereafter, one or two girls would normally be left behind to "assist" the bride when the rest of the "escorting" party (*enyamak*) returned to their homes. There would normally be much work for the young bride: cooking, fetching water from the well, gathering firewood, and threshing, winnowing and grinding millet to produce flour for *atap* (Kiswahili = *ugali-wimbi*, i.e. a kind of "bread" made from millet which is the main staple food for the Iteso. Such activities have been known to wear down brides, hence the provision "helpers" for her to accomplish these tasks.

After a period of two to four weeks, these other girls would also depart, leaving the bride to assume the responsibilities that go to make her a wife. Their "job" would have been accomplished.

### Setting Up a Family

Customarily, the location of the house(s) of the newly weds would normally be determined by the bride-groom's father. The site would usually be close to the parents' homestead, on the property (land) of the father. This would allow for a close monitoring of the newly weds, especially the wife, to see how she copes with work and how well she looks after the husband.

It would be the role of the mother-in-law to teach the wife of her son how to welcome visitors, to manage the farm-work, and to show respect for the elders of the clan. The bride would often have to cook enough food to feed the family of her parents in law. If that be a polygamous family, then it meant real work and sweat, because of the large numbers such families would consist of.

All in all, the pressure put upon the bride to succeed would be very great. But she had to cope, for failure to do so would bring her ridicule, and being called all sorts of names. To be described as "lazy" would be the last thing any bride would want.

Also, lurking behind the minds of the relatives of the groom would be the issue of offspring. Failure to conceive and bear a child within the first year of marriage would spell danger for the bride. Among the Iteso, as would probably be the case for most African ethnic groups, it would never be the husband's problem. The husband, it is assumed, provides the 'seeds' to the wife.; it is her responsibility to 'Terminate' them. Failure to do so meant she was barren. If another year or so went by without her giving birth to a child, then the husband was free to bring a second wife. But in most cases, there would even be threats of divorce. If a divorce took place,, this would enable the husband to bring back his cows from the pride-price paid to the

bride's parents, so that he would be able to transfer them to other presumptive in-laws. As Lawrence correctly observes: "Marriage is legalized by the payment of bride price and is dissolved by the repayment(- of bride-price."<sup>9</sup>

### **The Household**

If children are not born into a marriage, it would be quite problematic to accept such a marriage as a household. The household is the most important institution of the domestic domain. It is significant for (1) the economy - production and consumption occur here, it has rights over the most important forms of capital goods among the Iteso, namely cattle and land.; (2) kinship, (i.e. lineage solidarity) and (.3) children. It is the responsibility of the head of the household to discipline his children and to raise them up in the fear and respect of the clan norms. The headship of the household falls upon the husband. Given the significance of the household', its headship could not possibly be entrusted to the hands of the wives/women.

#### **(a) "Authority"**

The household head, who was always a male, represented his household in dealings with other households. Women were excluded in all 'political' activities. At marriage, a woman is transferred from a household headed by, and under the authority of, her father or father's successor,, to a household headed by, and under the authority of, her husband. That was considered the norm. Nobody asked why this should be so. But even now, anyone raising objections would be told, "But that is what is done in our culture" as if to say - "If culture be for us, who can be against us?"

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<sup>9</sup>Lawrence, *The Iteso*, 202.

#### **(b) Activities of Husband and Wife**

Customarily, a husband is required to prepare the fields for the sowing of seeds, while the wife does everything else, as we saw earlier. In practice, a husband often helps his wife with agricultural activities but never with the purely domestic activities of grinding millet, threshing millet, kitchen work, to name but a few.

One other most significant duty of an *atesot* (*wife*) is to make the local brew (*ajon* - see above). This activity is expected of all wives married to Iteso. *Ajon* is central in almost all functions and festivities, such as the naming of a child, weddings, funerals, and these days (with the onset of Christianity) Christmas festivities. Even non-Christians celebrate Christmas, but the emphasis is placed upon the festivities rather than on worship and prayer. Following the meal of food, *ajon* would have to be served on all such occasions. How could a wife function in such a society if she was not able to brew *ajon*?

What happens when one's wife becomes a Christian? In Teso, like in many other parts of Africa, to become a Christian is to cease from consuming alcoholic beverages. For a Christian wife to be married to a non-believing *etesot* is a big problem when it comes to the brewing of *ajon*. Refusal to brew *ajon* could precipitate a divorce.

#### **(c) A Husband's Relationship with the In-laws**

We shall discuss the relationships pertaining to the wife's father, mother, brothers and other maternal kin.

##### **(i) The wife's father**

The husband shows extreme respect, not avoidance,, to the father-in-law. But if there was something significant that the husband wanted to communicate to his father-in-law, (e.g. a joint business venture), he would

probably request his own father to share it with the father-in-law first, before he would bring it up.

**(ii) The Mother-in-law**

The mother-in-law is shown extreme respect bordering on fear by her son-in-law. I used to see my father literally "run" away at the sight of my maternal grandmother. The two were not supposed to meet face to face, nor to greet each other by the shaking of hands. They would usually communicate via 'go-betweens' - 'mediators' (or messengers). In a society where polygamy was rampant, and so, too, alcohol consumption, this was a way of making sure that no sexual offences occurred between a husband and his mother-in-law.

**(iii) The Brother of the Wife**

A brother has a superior relationship over his sister's husband. Because of this, he supervised the marriage in a way. Excessive beating and abuse of a wife will cause her brother to withdraw the wife's services. A woman, however, is not on equally close terms with just any brother it is only the full-brother who uses the cows of her bride-price for his own marriage. The bride-wealth cattle in the ideal Iteso model of marriage circulate from wife's brother to wife's brother. There are, by the way, three sources of cows for the bride-price. (1) The residual herd of the father, (2) the cows assigned to the mother of the bridegroom, and (3) the bride-price received from the marriages of the full sisters of the bridegroom (if any).

**(iv) The Maternal Kin**

Two most important relatives here are the mother's brother (*mamai*), whom the wife calls uncle, and the mother's sister, called aunt (*ija*). To the extent that a husband would value his own kith and kin, to that extent his wife would expect him to value her uncle (*mama'*) and her aunt (*ija*). The

aunt (*ija*), in any case, would have been a key person in her socialization. This is the person who would have Guided her in marital matters prior to her marriage. For a husband, therefore, to ignore her would be very painful to the wife.<sup>10</sup>

**Divorce**

Among the Iteso, it is the husband who customarily initiates a divorce. This would be on the grounds of infertility and failure to give birth on the part of the wife (so it was assumed). Also, if a wife gives birth to only daughters, and no sons, this may lead to polygamy rather than to divorce. Moreover,, for a wife to commit adultery, even once, would be a ground for divorce. Customarily, adultery practised by the husband is overlooked, and almost taken as normal among the Iteso (who are non-believers, of course). This may explain why the Iteso society is a highly polygamous one. A wife who complained about her husband's unfaithfulness was, in the days long gone, considered out of touch with reality!

**Inheritance**

A woman in Teso would usually not have a say about property following the death of her husband. The elders in the clan would be the determinants of the heir in the event of such a mishap. He would normally be the younger brother of the deceased man. He is also the one to inherit the widow, the children, land, and all other property of the deceased. At the meeting where such an heir would be chosen, women would be welcome but not expected to contribute to the discussions. The widow would only be informed who the heir would be, and she would be expected to

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<sup>10</sup>Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective, 2d. ed. (Grand Rapids., Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 161-177.

Comply. If she refused to consent to the verdict of the clan elders, then she would be expected to go back to her father's home,, whereupon her father and her brothers would be expected to pay back the bride-price in full. But because all the cows and money obtained from her by her parents would have been long spent, such a widow would opt to stay in the family of her 'departed' one. This would mean becoming wife number two or three of the heir to be, especially if he already had wives of his own.

The other alternative open to such a widow would be to remarry elsewhere, maybe to a man of her own choice, who would then supply her parents with the bride-price to pay back to the family of her deceased husband. Such was the case with the present writer's own mother.

To an outsider, such an arrangement is cruel,, especially to the women. Yes, but that is what the culture demands! That shows the status of women among my people. They were treated as a means of production and reproduction, as someone has remarked. They would be 'sold' and 're-sold' according to the whims of their husbands and the clan elders. They were almost equated with property', to be bought and dispatched depending on the circumstances.

However, the present state of affairs is much different from what obtained then. The coming of Christianity now gives a widow bargaining ground. She can now opt not to remarry, choosing rather to manage her own life and that of her children if she is a working person, and more so, if her in-laws are Christians. Also, the Christian community, in some cases, usually moves in to assist such a widow and her children, if her Pastor and his church elders are willing to mobilise support for them.

Practices such as wife-inheritance against the woman's consent do give a case for 'Women's Liberation', though patience and biblical teaching need to be applied wisely in such settings so that change of attitudes can be brought about, yet without giving offence to the Gospel.

### **Women in The Iteso Culture**

The picture that I have tried to paint, above, is that of married women. In this section, we want to look at the status of women in general as it obtains among the Iteso. We have seen that in marriage, a woman is handed over from the authority of her father (and to a certain extent that of the brothers) to the authority of the husband. She is more or less 'purchased' by her husband from her parents. In some cases, she has almost no say on whom to marry. She can own no property of her own. The children she gets with her husband 'belong' to him, and not to her, especially in the event of divorce. Her role seemed to be confined to the kitchen and the farm, never beyond that.

This state of affairs seems to follow the woman right from childhood. At birth, the Iteso seem to take pride in baby boys rather than girls. When growing up, preference is given to the boys over the girls. For example, it used to be assumed that schooling was for boys and not for girls. Girls were given the minimum education, if any, and left to stay at home, around mummy, awaiting marriage. At marriage, the role of a girl would be to bring home the much needed cows for the benefit of her father and brothers.

Upon marriage, the women in the Iteso culture became the most powerful means of production and reproduction. A woman was "a producer of Producers," as someone has said. Unlike the 'developed' countries, the means of production in Africa, by-and-large, is human beings, not the machines and tools of industrial development. Marriage and childbearing, therefore, take on a another dimension when viewed from this perspective. Not to marry and have children was considered an offence to the clan and a disservice to one's self.

Among my people, polygamy becomes entrenched in the fabric of society simply because, the more wives a person has, the more children he is likely to

produce. The more the children (and wives), the bigger the labour force to work the agricultural land. The bigger the labour force, the larger the production, especially of food. Also, the larger the family, the higher the status of the head of such family in society.

### **Polygamy Among the Iteso**

There are many causes of polygamy among my people. Although polygamy, strictly, refers to a family where there are multiple mates, in this study, I use the word polygamy to refer to the marriage of a man to more than one wife. The converse, polyandry, a marriage of a female to more than one husband, is simply unheard of among the Iteso. That could not be allowed to happen among my people.

There is no restriction on the number of wives a man may marry.<sup>11</sup> But a husband would customarily consult his first wife before marrying a second wife. He would customarily consult her, too, before bringing a concubine to live in his home.<sup>12</sup>

The commonest cause of polygamy in Teso is the failure of the wife to bear offspring, and especially male ones. This is because among the Iteso, inheritance is patrilineal. To fail to have son(s) is to fail to have a male person from within one's home to become heir. Rather than plan to have an heir from outside the home, the culture provided for another avenue, namely, marrying more wives, one of whom would most probably produce male offspring.

Another reason for polygamy is what we have alluded to above. As the household duties mounted, it would not be uncommon for the first wife to request for a "helper" to be provided by the husband. There are two sides to this proposal. First, the second wife, so desired, would help with the household chores. But,

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<sup>11</sup>Lawrence, *The Iteso*, 209.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

secondly, another wife would limit the man's sexual appetite to within the home, thus minimizing extra-marital affairs. Moreover, it would prevent him bringing home sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

But what does this mean for the women? First, it introduces divided "love" on the part of the man. It is impossible to love two (or more) wives equally. For the women, there is increased rivalry and jealousy, as well as bitterness towards one another. This brings uncertainty about one's abilities and capabilities. Secondly, there are certain days when a wife cannot see (or have) her husband, because those do not happen to be her days. Thirdly, competition tends to become the way of life for wives in such relationships. This has led to some wives seeking 'magic potions' to put into the food of the husband so as to try to win him over to themselves.

For the children growing up in such homes, life can be painfully hard. For instance, they experience less of the father's love, since they would usually be too many in number. Furthermore, the resources available to them for education and socio-economic well-being would simply not be sufficient. Moreover, the competition among the wives would eventually rub onto them, thus making them also develop their own ways and means for survival in such an atmosphere, whether for ill or for good.

For the girls growing up in such homes, life may even be harder. They either grow up to hate marriage (considering the hard life of their own mothers), or they may grow up learning how to outwit another woman, should they also happen to have "co-wives" in the future.

As for the man, what starts out good tends to end up sour. Initially, his ego may be boosted while the wives tend to be calm and submissive. But as the years go by, and the number of children increases, problems tend to multiply. Some men have even had to quit home altogether, preferring to start life all over again, usually in areas

quite far away from their own plots of land, thus leaving the many wives to sort out their own problems, and those of their children.

Let us briefly turn our attention to the status of children among the Iteso.

### **Children in the Iteso Culture**

Africans love children, The Iteso love them, too. They are an expected fruit of marriage. Children are loved for their own sake. But even much more, they are cherished because they add honour to their parents and to the extended family, clan and society. Because of this special love for children, it was customary, in those days, not to count one's children. This was believed to bring about bad omens - sickness or even death.

The Iteso, like almost all other African peoples, prized and still prize sons more than daughters. It is the boys who continue the lineage of the father, because it is they who do not 'leave' home. Daughters get married and so leave the household, and were therefore not expected to receive any inheritance (especially land) from their parents. The value attached to one's daughters was because they were the potential bride-wealth bringers, upon marriage.

Children are also valued because they add respect to and for a wife. A wife's value increases or diminishes with her ability, or otherwise, to 'give' children, especially boys, to her husband. It was generally believed that if a couple could not bear children, then the fault was with the wife, not the husband. Hence the pressure upon the husband to marry another wife(s), consequently polygamy. This unjust discrimination against women was partly because of ignorance, then, regarding the genetic constitution of the male sex chromosomes (XY), and the female sex chromosomes (XX). If the man does not supply the "Y", how would the wife be able to conceive a male, with the "XY" constitution?

I have to point out that even today, a Christian couple among the Iteso who do not have children of their own are looked upon, by some with suspicion. There is the unanswered question, "Why doesn't the man do something?" For the traditional Iteso, this something would most probably be taking a second wife.

With regard to the giving of names, especially naming a new-born baby, one again notes a bias in favour of the men. Although it is the older women of the clan, usually close aunts and grannies of the husband,, who actually give the name, the decision about the name is made by the men, the clan elders. The name is picked out from a pool of names of important and well respected departed ancestors of the husband. So, again, one can see the importance attached to the men over the women, the husband over the wife, with respect to the naming of children. But given the fact that a child belongs both to the father and the mother, could not the opinion of the mother be sought too, before the husband concludes this matter of naming the young one(s)?

Children of a marriage, by the way, invariably belong to the husband, even if he could not have been their real father.<sup>13</sup> But if a wife was pregnant at marriage, the child would belong to the wife's father.<sup>14</sup>

### **Husband and Wife Relations**

The Iteso society brings up its young people to know that a man is the 'head' of a woman; a husband, 'head' of the wife; and a father has absolute authority in the home over the mother, the children, and the property. So, when it comes to marriage, the wife does not have to be told who is 'incharge'. She knows it - it is the husband.

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<sup>13</sup>Lawrence, The Iteso, 210.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

A wife always addressed her husband as *ejakait* (the equivalent in English would be "master", or "chief"). This is a title that conferred upon the husband an authority and power that was assumed to reside in him anyway. And when talking to him, even when they were just the two of them, the wife would either assume a kneeling or sitting posture. Among the Iteso, as among most of the other Ugandan cultures, (especially the Baganda) the girls are taught that the way to show honour and respect to elders is to kneel before them. This showing of respect applies to the husbands, too, among my people.

The husband, on his part, would show honour to his wife by addressing her as *amucalat* (meaning "madam"). As the two lived longer together, it would not be uncommon for the husband to coin another name of honour for his wife (not her real name). For a man to do so would indicate that he loved his wife very much. For example, I know of a friend who addresses his wife as "broiler", because, to him, she has over the years become as sweet and tender as the chickens known as broilers.

When it came to meal times, the husband traditionally sat on a stool or chair to eat at table. The wife and children traditionally sat down, either on mats, or on the bare earth/floor to eat. To date, I have not seen my father and mother, or even my father and any of my 'step-mothers' sit to eat at the same table.

I believe the first time my father visited us (my wife and I) following our wedding, he must have been taken aback to find that we were sitting together at table to eat.

The kind of communication that went on between husband and wife is also worth noting. For example, I have never heard my father say "I love you" to any of his wives. It was always assumed that love existed among them somehow. Love was supposed to be seen in their actions, say the buying of meat (and other foods), and the giving of gifts to the wives (.especially clothes). The wives for their part went to great lengths to demonstrate their love by preparing nice dishes, the type their

husbands enjoyed, especially upon welcoming them back home if they had been away on a journey. But here, we must avoid judging the traditional African's way of showing love towards his/her spouse in the light of foreign and modern cultures. Just because one person says, "I love you", this may not necessarily show that such a person practically loves his spouse more than the one who does not say so. From within the culture, the African must be shown what it means to love his/her spouse in the light of biblical teaching.

But when it came to fidelity, this was the expected norm for wives but not for the husbands. This explains, how, for example a man could have as many as five or more wives, while the woman had only one husband. Here, again, the Iteso culture, as for other

African cultures, must be brought under the scrutiny of biblical teaching. If found wanting, practices in it that negate scriptural teaching must be discarded by Evangelicals.

### **Church Policy and the Iteso Marriage Practices**

It is now usual in Teso to see both traditional (customary) and Christian marriage go hand in hand. For example, following the bride-price assessment and the paying of bride-wealth, the couple, if Christian, would proceed to have a church marriage (wedding). If the couple are not Christians, then they would usually start living together as husband and wife without necessarily going to church for a wedding.

Otherwise, without a church wedding, the traditional marriage is regarded as a cohabitation - women in such relations are considered by the church as 'concubines' and not as proper wives. But to the traditional Iteso, such wives are fully recognized as such and their marriages are valid.

The offspring from such traditional marital relations would be considered 'illegitimate', as far as the church is concerned. Because of this, many Iteso have

stuck to their traditional ground and paid lip-service to being Christians. The church -Ls considered an off-shoot of the missionary movement, which has tended to deny them (the Iteso) the freedom to carry on with their polygamous and traditional approach to marriage.

### Summary and Conclusions

The situation analysis above has revealed the following about the Iteso and their marital practices:

1. Marriage is central to the Iteso culture. It is the men who marry, the women 'get married', because they contribute nothing towards the bride-price payable to their parents by the presumptive husbands.
2. Parents, in the past, used to have a bigger say in the choosing of mates for their children: Now, their role is limited to approving' or disapproving' the choices of their children.
3. In a home, the culture demands that the man be the head of the home. No one questions this practice, neither in the past, and not even today. Women and children are in a subordinate position in relation to that of men/husbands.
4. A wife relates to her husband almost as a citizen to a ruler, or a commoner to a chief. This is evidenced by her title of address to her husband: *ejakait* (= "chief").
5. Children are highly esteemed among the Iteso. They add honour and status to a wife, sons especially more so than the girls. Failure to bear children would relegate a wife to a life of loneliness, often in danger of being divorced, or being subjected to taunts and torments from the relatives of the husband and from wives her husband may subsequently take.
6. Polygamy is institutionalized among the Iteso of north-eastern Uganda. Because of this practice many have tended to pay lip-service to Christian life and

conduct. This has led to much nominalism in the Church, especially in the mainline (Anglican and Roman Catholic) Churches.

7. Divorce, when it does take place, is precipitated mainly by childlessness and unfaithfulness on the part of a wife. It is usually initiated by the husband and/or his parents and relatives.
8. Following the death of a husband, a widow does not have much say on property. If anything, she, together with her children and property are 'inherited' by an heir chosen by the dead man's clan elders.
9. The Church has tended to disregard the issue of polygamy in Teso and consequently, its witness has continued to be weak when it comes to giving counsel to men and women caught up in such a practice.
10. Movement from the rural to urban centres, the Western type of education, and Christianity, among others, have tended to weaken the traditional marital customs among the Iteso. Right now, it would be difficult to pinpoint a truly traditional Iteso way to choose a mate, to wed, or to relate to one's spouse.

What does Scripture say to such a culture, especially in relation to its marital practices? What do Paul and Peter specifically have to say to the Iteso marriage customs, and more specifically the relationships between husband and wife in a home? This is the subject matter of what now follows.

### B. APPLICATION

The stage is now set for applying the conclusions from exegesis to the Iteso traditional culture. But how do we do so without losing biblical authenticity, and the 'positive elements' in that culture? Western, African and Asian Christians seem to have erred when it comes to 'marrying' the Gospel and culture as this quotation from Bruce J. Nicholls' article shows:

In Western culture the Gospel is distorted accommodation to Platonic and Aristotelian Philosophy, by humanistic and enlightenment influence, and by egalitarian and Marxist ideologies. In Asia and Africa contextualization of the believing community must include the de-culturalization not only of these Western accretions, but also of the indigenous concepts that are contrary to the Word of God.<sup>15</sup>

According to one of my professors of Missiology, there are at least four different positions as to how Christians should approach culture, anywhere. These are as follows:

- (a) *Christ - Against - Culture* position
- (b) *Christ - In - Culture* position
- (c) *Christ - Above - Culture* position
- (d) *Christ - Above - but-Through-culture* position

These positions have already been well articulated by other missiologists/anthropologists, for example, Richard Niebuhr,<sup>16</sup> and Paul G. Hiebert<sup>17</sup> besides others.

It might appear that what I have done, above, is an amalgam of positions (a) and (c). However, I have in mind the Christ Above-but-Through-Culture Position (d), which takes into account practices such as 'submission' and 'authority', which already exist among the Iteso. But these now, must be understood in the light of the Gospel. This position is more relevant because it takes into account both the authenticity of

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<sup>15</sup>Bruce J. Nicholls, "Towards a Theology of Gospel and culture," in Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture, eds. John R.W. Stott and Robert Coote (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 49-62.

<sup>16</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1951), 45ff.

<sup>17</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 54-65.

the Bible and 'positive elements' in the culture in question. In our case, the 'negative elements' are so apparent that they by far outweigh the 'positive' ones.

Before God family is very important. So it should be to us. I suppose that is why God instituted the family unit (Gen. 2:24) before he instituted Government and the Church - the two other very important institutions of community here on earth. It is for this reason that I turn to creation, to open a way to all else that now follows.

### **Husband and Wife Relations: An Appeal to Creation**

In the Iteso culture, I do not know of any legend similar to that in Genesis 1 and 2, concerning the creation of man and woman in God's image and the creation of woman from man. When the Iteso culture reduces women to a subordinate status in relation to men, as we have seen from our earlier discussion, then those of us who are Christians must appeal to the creation accounts in order to 'deliver' women from the kind of oppression that the culture has assigned to them. We must argue from a biblical norm, and not from the views of current movements (e.g.. "Women's Liberation"), that women have a God-given dignity that neither culture, nor men can take away from them. Before God, man and woman are equal, honourable and precious beings. Both man and woman were given the mandate to multiply and to rule other creatures. Man, therefore, has no right to put down woman on the grounds of culture. Neither has a husband any right to demand the submission of his wife on cultural grounds. The Bible is clear in its mandate for upholding the dignity of every human being. This seems to be the message accruing from Genesis 1.

Yet, also from another creation account (Genesis 41), man is functionally the head of woman (.see chapter 2 above). God in his wisdom created man and woman, but assigned the role of leadership in a home to the man. "Adam was still the head.

He led"<sup>18</sup> It is a matter of husband being leader among equals. There are no superiority or inferiority overtones implied here. Genesis 2 teaches us that a woman and marriage were created by God for the purpose of giving companionship to humankind. For Adam was indeed "lonely" without a wife, and so a woman (Eve) was created to complement him, not to compete with him.

When the Iteso come to grips with these truths, I believe that the mistreatment of women, looking down upon them, and taking them as property, to be purchased and disposed of at the whims of men, will be chanced for the better. When this fundamental truth about the equality and dignity of all human beings before God has been grasped in Teso, then the value of women will supersede that of cows, which some of the Iteso, seem to 'worship' over and above God.

On the other hand, we should also reject 'liberationist' voices that call for the 'empowering' of women, especially if these voices are not grounded in Scripture. The Iteso, and all other cultures in Africa for that matter, must question the motives of such women's liberationist crusaders. They are not, and cannot be, as concerned as God himself for the cause of women, whom he himself created in his image. The Iteso, more especially the Evangelical ones, must uphold complementarily rather than competition among men and women in general, but in particular between husbands and wives. This stance is thoroughly biblical. And we, as Christians, can and must stand firmly on it, no matter what other cultures teach, advocate or encourage. For creation orders are basic and foundational in marital relations between husband and wife. No wonder, both Jesus (Matt. 19:5.; Mk. 10:7) and Paul went back to creation

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<sup>18</sup>Mark R. Little, Submission is for Husbands, Too (Denver, Colorado: Accent Books, 1988), 32.

Gen. 2:24) to buttress their teaching on marriage. Remember the Psalmist's cry: "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3).

### **Husband and Wife Relations: an Appeal to The Fall**

In Genesis 3, as we know, the root cause of strife and problems between men and women, husbands and wives, as indeed for all human beings, is SIN. It was after the fall that man started to treat his wife unlovingly and with suspicion, harshness and dominance. The traditional and non-Christian Iteso men are no exception when it comes to harshness and dominance of their wives. They are, moreover, known for beating their wives as a means to getting them to submit to them. The Word of God commends another lifestyle to them, for, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

The message for them, as for all human beings, is now: no more harshness and bitterness towards your wives (Col. 3:19); no more wife beating; no more infidelity and adultery, all of which may have been taken as norms among the Iteso. Rather, "husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph. 5:28). As men cherish and nourish their own bodies, so they should do to their wives, as the Lord does for the Church (cf. Eph. 5:29). This command to love one's wife implies the -Provision of the wife's physical and spiritual needs. Now the leadership and headship of the Iteso husbands should be undergirded by Scripture, not culture. It is to be patterned after that of Christ and his love for his Bride, the Church. The headship of the husband in the home demands responsibility, not repression; sacrificial love, not selfish 'bossing' of his wife.

The *atesot* (wife), on the other hand, who in the past had her own ways of setting even with her husband, also has a new call as she relates to him. Before, such a woman could manipulate her husband to get her own will to be done. She could even deny him the satisfaction of his conjugal rights in marriage. Or she could act in open

rebellion against him, if she felt she had taken enough of his verbal and /or physical abuse. So, although outwardly, the women in Teso behaved as though they were "submissive", most of them inwardly resented the kind of culture that treated them as second-class citizens. Now, the biblical message for them is that they are free to express their womanhood in their homes, but, not apart from the leadership and "authority" of their husbands. If that "authority" be after the manner of Christ's authority over the Church, then, as the Church submits to Christ, so the *ateso* Christian wives ought to submit to their own husbands in everything" that is not contrary to the will and/or Word of God (see Eph. 5:24).

According to St. Peter, the *ateso* Christian wives, as for all Christian wives, are to be submissive, even to husbands who are non-believers. Their submission has the power to bring such husbands to a saving faith in Christ (1 Peter 3:1-2). The bottom line is that, the loving, serving and honouring leadership of the husband will bring about the yielded submission, respect and honour from the wife. Anything less than *agape* love on the part of the husband may not bring about the desired submissiveness from the wife. Moreover, love, *agape* love, does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law (Rom. 13:10). believe that a husband's closest "neighbour" is his wife.

Only then can the effect of the fall on relations between husband and wife be redeemed, and marriage and family life become what God intended them to be prior to the fall. What obtained then was harmony, for we read: ". . . they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25).

### **Husband and Wife Relations: an Appeal to Redemption**

Some have argued that redemption in Christ nullifies the subordinate functional role of the wife vis-a-vis the leadership role of the husband. Longenecker, for example says, "Paul also lays emphasis on redemption in such a way as to indicate

that what God has done in Christ transcends what is true simply because of creation".<sup>19</sup> Let the *atesot* (wife) not rejoice over such statements. For Paul, it is not a matter of transcending creation but of transforming it in Christ", says Ben Witherington,<sup>20</sup> and rightly so. All that is done in Christ does not abolish, but fulfils the original purposes of God in creation. What is abolished in Christ is the distortion of the male/female relations as a result of sin. A truly redeemed wife should find submission to her husband "fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). A truly redeemed *atesot* (man) will aspire to "love his wife as Christ loved the church" (Eph. 5:25). and not demand her unquestionable submission solely on the grounds of his culture.

### **Men, Women and Marriage Customs among the Iteso**

As a result of redemption in Christ, a woman (or wife) in the Iteso culture must be allowed to have a say in all aspects of life, especially in matters of family life and marriage. Indeed, she must have a say in all matters that affect her and her womanhood. These include, among others, the choosing of a mate (cf. Rebekah, Gen. 24:57-58), the planning of a wedding, the setting up of a home following the wedding, the bearing and raising of children (and the number of children a couple should have), of inheritance, and even on issues surrounding separation and divorce. This has to take into account both the Law of the land (Uganda) and customary Law, though. Husbands should allow their wives to make their contributions in these areas. When that happens, only God knows what the results will be; but I know that many *ateso* wives have had hard times in their marriages because they have been 'muzzled' for far

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<sup>19</sup>R.N. Longenecker *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 92

<sup>20</sup>Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 244.

too long. Better to let them speak out, so their the husbands can listen to what they have to say, and hopefully, act wisely.

What is needed today is to look at the role of the wife in the Iteso culture through the glasses of Christianity, more so now than ever before, given that out there, are many other non-Christian voices calling for non-scriptural roles among husbands and wives. The role of the wife must go beyond reproduction and production. It must include homemaking (Titus 2:5), the rearing of God-fearing children, together with other roles that she may be involved in (. cf . Prov. 31: 10f f The *atesot* (wife) must be involved in decision making in her family, and also in her local church. This will hopefully enrich both family life and church life. The *etesot* (man) need not be apprehensive that his "headship" role will be at stake. Neither should it cause fear, for it is through her full involvement with him, especially in decision making, that his wife can truly be said to complement him.

A wife should be seen as a partner and a friend to her husband. The bond between husband and wife and between them both and their children will only become stronger if the Iteso men allow their wives to play their rightful roles in the home. All this must be done in love and out of respect one for the other.

A husband must learn to protect his wife from the physical and/or emotional stress that can arise from the demands of his parents and other relatives upon her. In the past, it was expected that one's wife should satisfy even the sexual needs of one's younger brothers. This, and other such similar practices must stop among the redeemed people of God.

Some kind of balance must be worked out,. that allows for attachment, but at the same time, detachment from one's own nuclear' family, and also the larger extended one. Each (Christian) couple has to work out ways and means under which such a balance can be arrived at.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I have tried to 'marry' Christianity and the Iteso culture. Under normal circumstances, it is not easy to expect that the traditional Iteso culture will readily give in to the demands of Christianity, say the demand of the latter that the Iteso give up polygamy in favour of monogamous marriages. But I believe that, with patience, a proper modelling of Christ by Christians in their homes and churches will move the Iteso to assimilate Christian norms for family life and marriage at their own pace.

The Bible, not television sets, and not even the contemporary agitation for abolition of male and female roles (in homes), is the answer to the questions that many in our African societies are asking today.

In the Bible, a husband can learn true biblical headship which does not lead to suppression of his wife. Rather, he will learn to be a leader after Jesus Christ's manner. He may not always be right. But his submission to the Lord Jesus Christ will enable him to become the kind of person his wife will gladly follow in submission, "as is fitting in the Lord", to the glory of God.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we bring this study to a close, under three sub-headings, namely, summary, recommendations, and conclusions.

#### Summary

##### Restatement of the Issue

There cannot be correct practice until there is correct theory. As my Education professor often remarks, "There is nothing as practical as good theory", no doubt, quoting Best and Khan.<sup>1</sup> It is upon this premise that I based my investigation on the meaning of submission and authority in marriage. This study had set out to discover what Paul and Peter meant when they told wives to "be submissive to their husbands", and what Paul meant by the "headship" of the husband in a home. This was called for because Evangelical Christians now live in a society whose moods are "freedom", "independence", and "liberation" (of women). We live in a society where the roles of husbands and wives are getting more and more confused, because people no longer feel comfortable with the biblical marital injunctions for husbands and wives.

In the search for the meaning of submission and authority in marriage, I formulated the following objectives for this study:

1. To exegetically elucidate the meaning of submission and headship as they relate to marriage.

2. To try to correct the misconception that "submission" implies "inferiority", and that "headship" has to do with male domination and "lordship".
3. To promote the dignity of the role of wives in marital life.
4. To demonstrate that the moods of today, such as "freedom", "independence", and "liberation", are human creations which are not consistent with the divine creation of both man and woman in God's image.
5. To suggest some implications of obeying the divine order of "submission" and "loving and serving headship" in marriage, especially among the Evangelical Iteso Christians.
6. To demonstrate from the biblical exegesis of relevant portions of Scripture that "submission" is for men, too.
7. To demonstrate from Scripture that the prerequisite for peace and harmony in Church and society is obedience to divine orders for wives and husbands (see figures 3 and 4 below).

A thorough reading of this thesis will, I trust, show that all these objectives have been addressed.

#### The Creational Orders and the Fall Perspective

We have seen from Genesis I that both men and women, are God's image bearers. Both are of equal worth and dignity. Both are created to have dominion over other creatures and nature.

Genesis 2 describes, in detail, first, the creation of man from the dust of the earth (2:7). Thereafter, the woman is created from man's "side". (literally, "built") Adam calls his wife "  $\text{׳} \hat{\text{I}} \check{\text{S}} \check{\text{S}} \hat{\text{A}}$  ("woman"), because she was taken out of man (  $\text{׳} \hat{\text{I}} \check{\text{S}}$  ) (2:23), suggesting, by that prerogative of naming, some form of "authority" over her. Even if others doubt this inference, yet we saw that Adam, once again, in 3:20 names his wife  $\text{Hawwâ}$  ("Eve" literally "living") because she was to

<sup>1</sup>John W. Best and James V. Khan, Research in Education, 6th. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 7.

become the mother of "all the living". God allowed Adam to define the woman,, in keeping with Adam's headship.

In Genesis 3 we noted that the headship) of man over his wife is reflected in his being called upon by God to answer for their disobedience (3:9). Moreover, the man's headship is decreed by God. The "authority" given to Adam in this case is not revoked elsewhere in Scripture, except that this male domination (part of the "curse") is, in the Epistles of Ephesians and Colossians, defined as "loving service", patterned after the manner for Christ's love for the Church.

Therefore, both before and after the fall, the divine order for Adam was that of going ahead as leader, while that of Eve was to be "responder" and "helper" for him. Before the fall, there was complete harmony between them. After the fall', though, the relation between Adam and Eve, as for all their descendants after them, became disordered. Since then, husbands tend towards "dominance" and "rulership", while wives tend to resist them through either open "rebellion", and/or "manipulation"

### **Jesus' Views on Marriage and Women**

The lot of the women within Roman, Greek and Jewish societies was bad, to say the least (see chapter two, above). It was Jesus who first positively confronted the status quo of his day and restored dignity to women and wives (see pp. 87-92, above). He did so, both in his teaching and by allowing women to become his disciples. We noted that although he did not attempt to reverse the role of the men in the home and community, he liberated women from a social stereotype to which they had been reduced, especially by the Jewish culture. His teaching gave women greater security in marriage (Matt. 19:3-9). By appealing to creation orders, he affirmed the permanence of marriage. In Matthew 19:10-12, Jesus permitted a single state as legitimate for those whom God would call to serve him as "eunuchs" for the sake of

the Kingdom of God. Paul must have taken his cue from Jesus' example, as we now see from what follows.

### **Submission and Authority in the Household Codes**

The Ephesian household code, as we saw, is headed by a theme of "mutual submission" (5:21). But "mutual submission" here is a call to Christians in general, as well as to husbands and wives in marriage. Yet verse 21 (see the section, ""The pivotal role of Eph. 5:21" in the exegesis section) does not preclude the husband's headship, nor the wife's submission to the leadership role of the husband.

Paul here defines the role of the husband in terms of servant leadership, just like that of Christ in relation to the Church. The wife's role is that of submitting herself (as the middle reflexive voice suggests) to her husband. This duty of the wife is to be exercised toward her own husband, and not to all men. Nor does Paul command the husband to make his wife submissive. We saw that if husbands are called to love sacrificially, and wives are to submit to their husbands ungrudgingly, then "love" and "submission" become two sides of the same coin (i.e. the giving up of one's interests for the sake of meeting the needs of the other).

In the Colossian household code, too, we saw that wives are called to be submissive to their husbands (3:18). The motivation for such an exhortation is that this is "fitting in the Lord". Husbands are exhorted, first, to love their wives and secondly, to desist from being "harsh" toward them (3-19). Paul was here reforming the Hellenistic (Stoic) codes of his day, and grounding them in a Christological context. As Ben Witherington fittingly puts it, "Being in Christ requires a reforming of traditional social structures, not a mere repudiation or reproduction of them."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 154.

In 1 Peter 3:1-7, we saw that Peter's approach, though maintaining the stance of wifely submission, is grounded, not on the example of Christ and his Church, but on the example of godly women of old. These women (cf. Sarah) did "what is right" and "of great worth in God's sight". Moreover, the behaviour envisaged of the wives in 1 Peter has a missionary dimension to it - that of winning unbelieving husbands to saving faith in Christ. The husbands on their part are called to honour their wives, and to live with them knowing that they (wives) are "weaker" vessels. We conjectured that this reference to the wives as "weaker" vessels may have something to do with their "subordinate" position as opposed to the relative position of strength of the husbands. This is so because we noted that the context of 1 Peter 2:13-3:7 discusses citizens, slaves, and wives with respect to suffering and subordinate roles (see 2:13, 18; 3:1). Peter's use of the word "likewise" in 3:1 is quite revealing. He also stresses the fact that both husband and wife are fellow-heirs of God's gift of eternal life. As such, a husband's inconsiderate treatment of his wife will hinder God's answer to their prayers.

In conclusion, both Peter and Paul present a view of marriage where a husband is the "head" of the wife. Neither of them grounds his teaching on the culture of the day despite the fact that they wrote to different groups. Paul bases his teaching on the example of Christ and his Church. Peter, on the other hand, appeals to the example of holy women of old who did not only "what is right", but also did that which was "of great worth in God's sight".

#### **Other Pauline Texts**

Bringing this teaching to the wider context of the New Testament, we saw that Paul taught that the "head of every woman is man" (1 Cor. 11:3,9). In other words, even in Christian worship meetings, a Christian wife should not deny the creation distinctions in her praying and prophesying. Apparently, some women had

begun to wear their hair loose in the manner of the men, thus attempting to deny their relationship with men as God intended. Paul saw women's hair as a sufficient sign, he did not intend that veils be mandatory during worship.

In 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35, we saw that Paul singles out wives to be "silent" because they were the source of the problem in the Corinthian Church. Instead of disrupting the service, wives were to ask questions of their husbands at home. The implication probably being that, wives in the congregation were not to "judge" the prophets, because in so doing, there would be a violation of the principle of headship in the home, if some of those prophesying were their husbands.

In 1 Timothy 2:8-15, Paul placed a ban on women teaching men for a specific reason. It appears that those who were in error did teach in a manner that was tantamount to usurping "authority". They taught in such a way that they exercised "authority" over men. This is advice given to correct a problem at hand. Abuse, here, does not rule out a proper use of the gift of teaching by competent women. Paul, again appeals to the order of creation (v.13), and the order of the fall (v.14) to strengthen his point.

#### **"...Neither Male nor Female...": Galatians 3:28**

Our study of this text has led us to the following conclusions. First, the fact that Paul refers to these categories "male" and "female", cf. "Jew"/"Greek" and "slave"/"free") implies that they do exist, and cannot be obliterated. But they should not be used to determine one's standing in Christ. Baptism into Christ does not depend on one's ethnic, social or sexual condition. Secondly, it implies that women (and men) may remain single if they have the "gift" to do so for the sake of the Kingdom of God (see p. 237, above). Furthermore, Paul combats the abuse and misuse of such distinctions, not their proper use.

Galatians 3:28, therefore, cannot be used to argue for an egalitarian view of marriage. The context forbids it. We know that here Paul is discussing who can be or remain in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13, Col. 3:11). Hence, I see no conflict between Galatians 3:28 and other Pauline teaching on "submission" and "authority" in marriage.

**Implications for the Iteso Christians**

Women in the traditional iteso culture live in a male directed and dominated society. The Iteso culture generally demands and assumes wifely submission. From the exegesis of the relevant texts on submission and authority in marriage, we have seen that neither Paul nor Peter base their teaching on the demands of culture. The conclusions that we have drawn on this matter must be brought to bear upon the traditional beliefs and practices of the 'Iteso. *Now*, the criterion for wifely submission should not be culture, but that which is "fitting in the Lord". The "headship" is now defined as "loving and serving" leadership. No more authoritarian leadership. Rather, the husband's headship has to mirror Jesus' leadership of his Body, the Church.

**Recommendations for further Research**

Arising from this study, I suggest the following topics for further research:

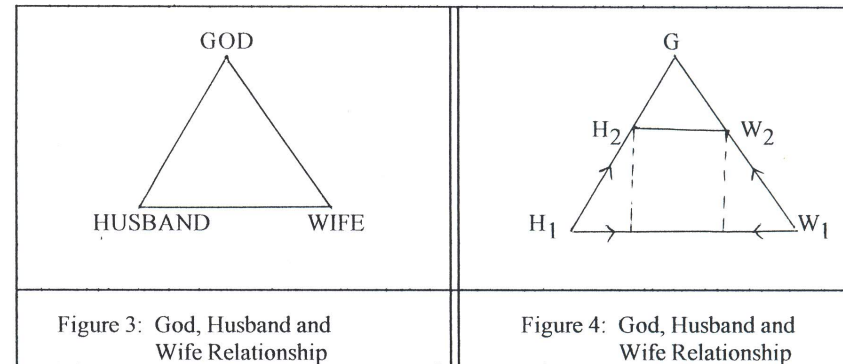
- (a) How do the Iteso Christian wives perceive their roles in marriage today?  
Research conducted along these lines would, perhaps, shed more light on the changes that have already taken place within Iteso traditional marital practices, given that external influences (e.g. Western-type education, religion, and urbanisation) are here with us.
- (b) If the husband is the head of his wife in marriage, how does that relationship change, or does it not, in worship and in the Church?

**Conclusion**

Left to themselves, without God's Word, husbands and their wives may never resolve the issue of who is in "authority" in the home. Our cultures (past, present and future), whether 'African', 'Western', or 'Eastern' simply do not have a lasting solution to this issue. God's Word is the only abiding blueprint on how husband and wife ought to relate to God and to each other. That makes the issue of marital relations thoroughly theological.

In other words, to live harmoniously with each other, both husband and wife need to heed God's Word. The closer a husband and wife, individually, get to know God's will for themselves in marriage, the closer, I believe, they will get to know and to love each other. Thus, to know God's Word on this issue of marital relationships, is to know the will of God for each partner.

Perhaps the diagram below will help to shed more light on what I am saying.



In figure 3, we see that God must be the third partner in husband and wife relations. This ought to be so because, God, after all, is creator of both husband and wife, and of the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24).

In figure 4, I am illustrating the fact that the farther away a husband (H<sub>1</sub>) is from God (G), the farther away he is from his wife (W<sub>1</sub>). But the closer both

husband ( $H_2$ ) and wife ( $W_2$ ) are to God (G), the closer they are to each other (cf. the horizontal lines,  $H_1 W_1$  and  $H_2 W_2$ )

To the extent that each marital partner is willing to submit to the role assigned to him/her in the Word of God, to that extent each of them will seek to honour God and to do what is expected of them in marriage. That means a husband's exercising of headship through sacrificial and selfless love, and on her part, a wife's willing submission and respect for her husband.

So, in a pluralistic and "modern" society which calls for "freedom", "liberation", and "independence" of the sexes, let us be careful in our biblical exegesis and interpretation, lest we be carried away with the spirit of the age. Rather, let us firmly hold on to Paul's teaching on wifely submission to the husbands' headship in marriage. Hopefully, we can avoid divisions within Christian families, and prevent the untold suffering that seem to characterise societies which have attempted to reverse the roles of men and women in marriage.

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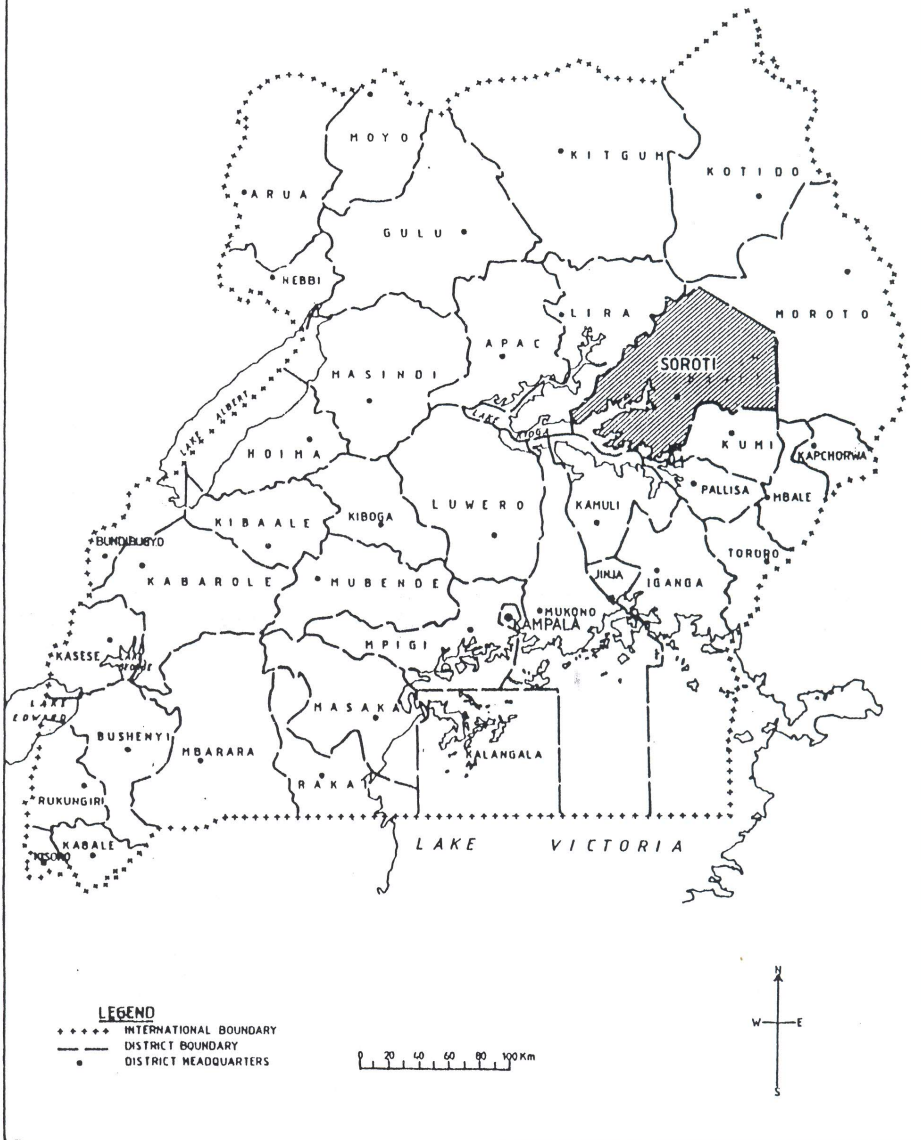
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## APPENDIX I

### THE MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING THE LOCATION OF SOROTI DISTRICT

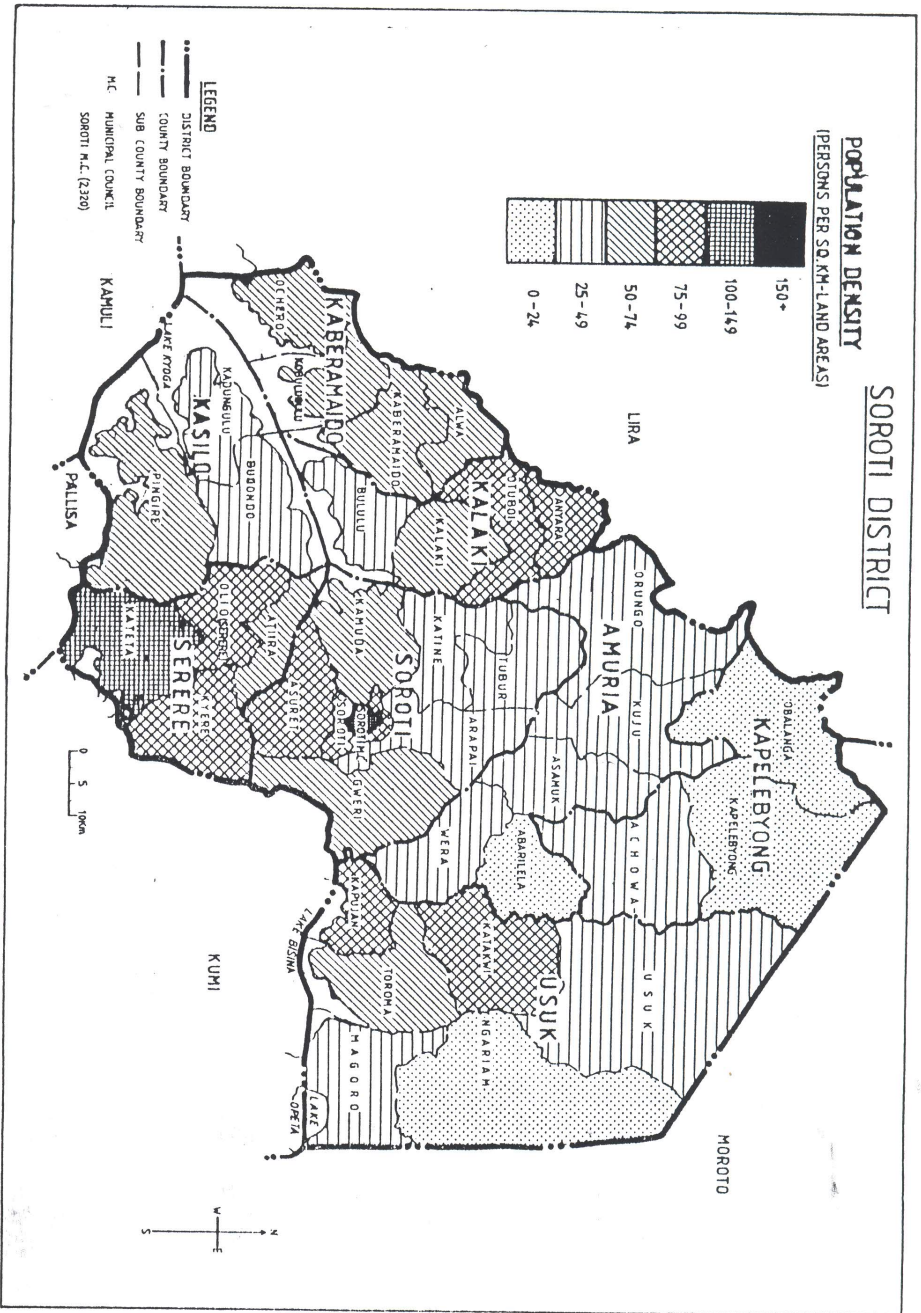
## UGANDA



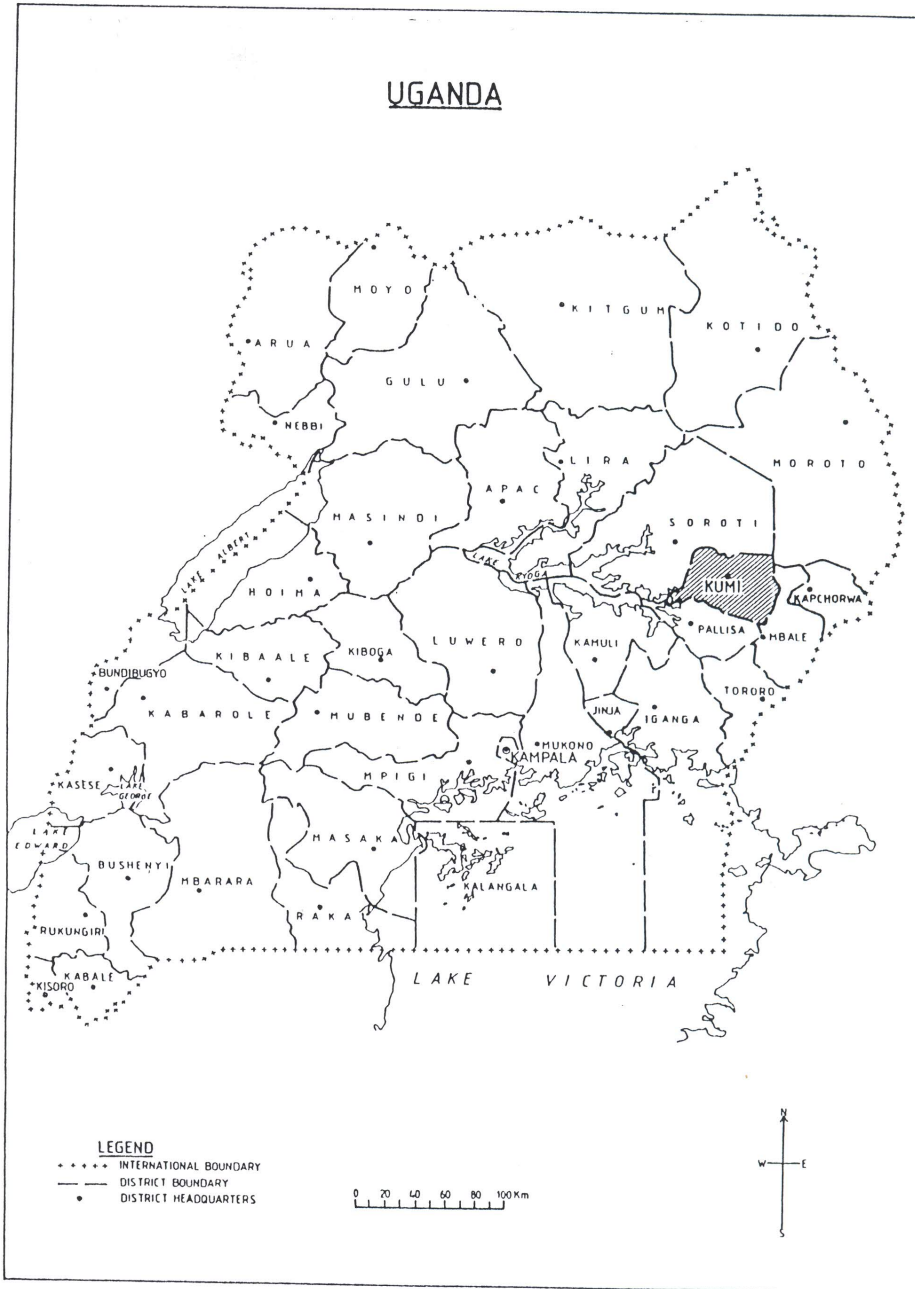
APPENDIX II  
THE MAP OF SOROTI DISTRICT

Source: The Population and Housing Census: ROROTI DISTRICT Summary Series, Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Entebbe, Uganda (October, 1992):2.

APPENDIX III  
 THE MAP OF UGANDA SHOWING THE  
 LOCATION OF KUMI DISTRICT



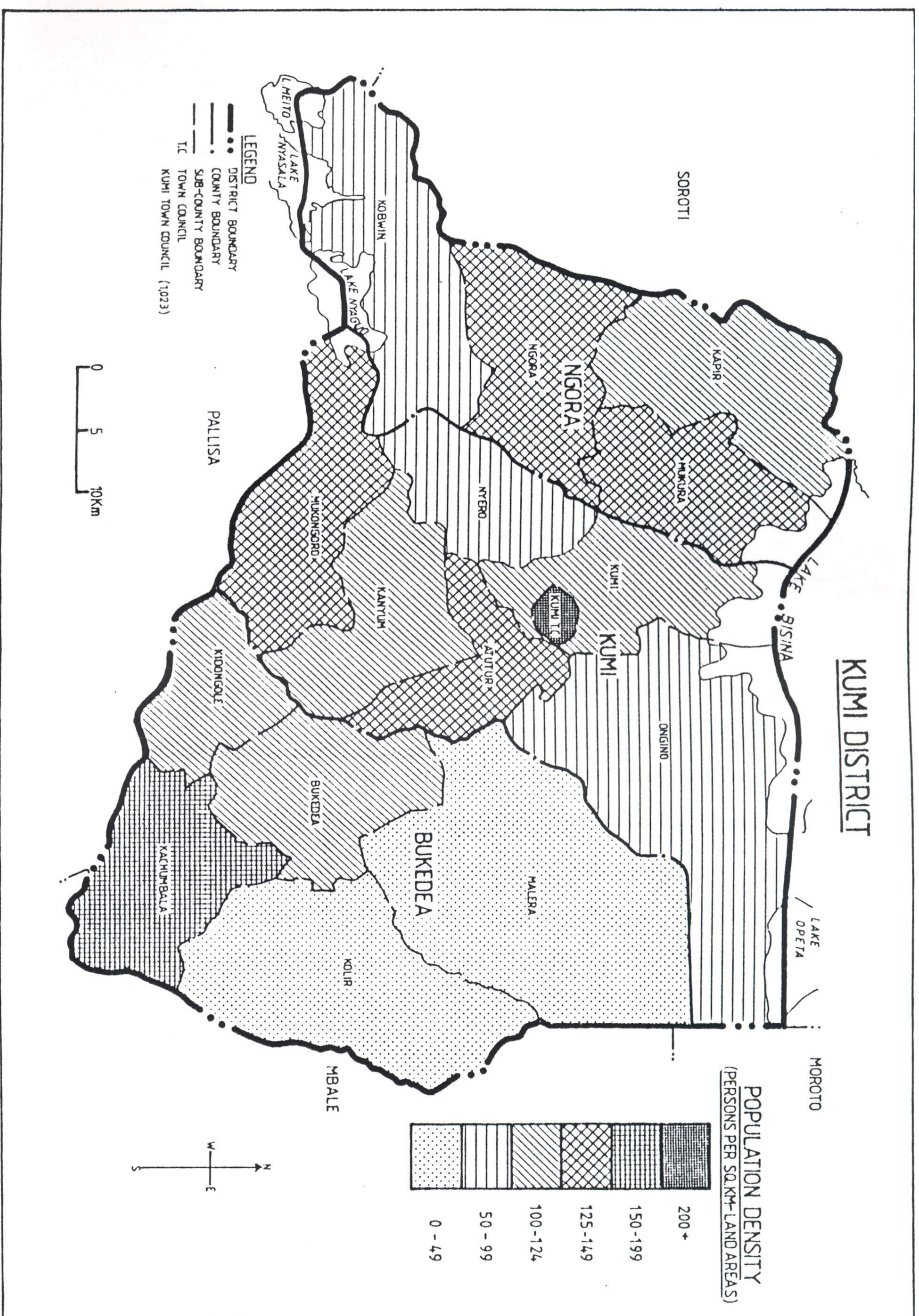
Source: The 1991 Population and Housing Census: SOROTI DISTRICT Summary Series, Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Entebbe, Uganda, (October, 1992):3



APPENDIX IV

THE MAP OF KUMI DISTRICT

Source: The 1991 Population and Housing Census: KUMI DISTRICT Summary Series, Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Entebbe, Uganda, (October, 1992):2.



Source: The 1991 Population and Housing Census: KUMI DISTRICT Summary Series, Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Entebbe, Uganda (October, 1992):3