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Adam Was Formed First, Then Eve:  
Implications of Order  
(Gen 2:18-25)

Presented by Rev. Mark McGinniss  
December 4, 2007

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FACULTY  
CHAPEL SERIES

Part Two: *Women Pastors and the Word of God*  
Presented by the Faculty of Baptist Bible Seminary

**Adam Was Formed First, Then Eve: Implications of Order (Gen 2:18-25)<sup>1</sup>**  
**Part two in the series: “Women Pastors and the Word of God”**

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 December 4, 2007

**INTRODUCTION**

Are you firstborn? Are you the youngest? Are you the dreaded middle child?  
 Are you the only child? Are you either the second, third or fourth born, those who get  
 lost in the family birth order?

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is an expansion of a sermon delivered on the same topic at Baptist Bible Seminary Chapel, December 4, 2007. What will be expanded in this paper is not necessarily the exegetical work but the implications of that work. While there is major disagreements over the role of women in marriage and the church (which has its genesis in the first book of the Bible), the disagreements do not always stem from exegesis. For instance in her commentary on “Genesis” in the *Women’s Bible Commentary*, Susan Niditch, observes well the exegetical facts of the creation order: “Man is the first of God’s creations in Genesis 2.... The creation of other living beings (2:18) is motivated by God’s concern that ‘it is not good that the man should be alone.... So, out of man’s own rib, God forms woman.” Susan Niditch, “Genesis” in the *Women’s Bible Commentary* (Louisville: WJK, 1998), 16. While Niditch and I would agree on the exegetical evidence of the creation order itself, as a feminist scholar, she would heartedly disagree with the implications I (and the apostle Paul) draw from the text. James Hurley captures this dynamic well when he writes concerning the fact that the woman was made for the man and not the other way around: “For the sake of providing such a companion and helper, God formed the woman. There can be no question that she was made for his sake rather than vice versa. *Problems begin to arise as men and women interpret this fact.*” Hurley strikes the proverbial nail on the head with his astute observation. James Hurley, *Men and Women in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 213 (emphasis is mine).

An exception to this general observation is a deconstructive reading of the Genesis account. Here there is disagreement concerning implication and exegesis. According to Dmitri Slivniak, there are a number of double meanings in Genesis 2-3. For instance eating of the tree of knowledge is both good and bad; the results of the curse are both good and bad; the female both precedes the man and is a later supplement to him, and the relationship between male and female is both a unity and a hierarchy. Dmitri M. Slivniak, “The Garden of Double Meaning: Deconstructing Hierarchical Oppositions in the Garden Story,” *JSOT* 27 no 4 (2003): 456-57. While I may agree with his last observation, his polar opposite approach has no exegetical basis in the text.

While the focus of this series is women pastors, the issue of the role of women reaches well beyond the pulpits of our local evangelical churches. According to Susanne Scholz this issue, concerning gender and the Bible, has political ramifications as well. Because of the political impact of conservatives recently (according to Scholz), she issues a warning cry for “progressive feminist exegetes” to take note of the political and publishing gains of the scholarly community of evangelical scholars whose “right-wing scholarly organizations and publications flourish.” Susanne Scholz, “Review Essay: The Christian Right’s Discourse on Gender and the Bible,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21 no. 1 (Spring 2005): 83. Scholz summarizes her historical review of the evangelical positions on male and female roles by stating, “This review illustrates the Christian Right’s theological, exegetical, and political conservatism regarding gender and the Bible. As we have seen, the evangelical argumentation quickly turns exegetically tiresome and theologically predictable” (ibid., 100). It is somewhat surprising that she believes such “tiresome exegesis” “promises to illuminate not only the specifics of evangelical Bible reading but also the turn to the right in American and global politics, culture and religion” (ibid.). An evangelical (male or female) could only pray that such “predictable theology” would have such influence!

Whether you realize it or not, there are a number of implications concerning your birth order. Some are even backed by science. For instance, CNN reports (October 12, 2007), “Norwegian scientists analyzed test results and birth data from more than 241,000 military conscripts and found that oldest children had an average IQ of 103, second children came in at 101, and third-borns were at 100.”<sup>2</sup>

While these findings will certainly cause debate, the implication should not be missed: first-born are the brightest! The youngest while not ignorant, simply do not measure up to their oldest brother. If your older brother is the type who reads CNN (and wants to remind you of your spot in the family-pecking order), he may have already passed on this bit of birth order trivia to you.

It is not only statistics that demonstrate that birth order has certain implications. I am a NY Giant’s football fan. Each Sunday I grow wearier of the announcers’ numerous comparisons between Eli and his older brother. If I as a fan am fatigued by the weekly sibling comparison, can you imagine, Eli?<sup>3</sup> The Manning’s are an example of the implication of birth order in sports: the younger brother is always playing in the Super Bowl shadow of his accomplished eldest brother. Maybe Eli has an excuse: oldest siblings tend to be taller: Peyton’s 6’5” and Eli is a measly 6’4”.

There are also behavioral implications. First born are anecdotally known as “natural leaders and problem solvers, with strong organizational and reasoning skills.”<sup>4</sup> Twenty-one of the first twenty-three astronauts were first born.<sup>5</sup>

Middle children are likely “to be great negotiators and peacemakers, with laid-back attitudes and a love of socializing. As such, they’re thought to be natural schmoozers and consensus builders when they grow up. ... (they) are prone to rebelliousness and competitiveness.”<sup>6</sup> The middle child may even be known as the proverbial “problem child” in the family.

The last born “have the most experienced parents... (and) they’re the least likely to be disciplined. Popular wisdom ... has it that youngest kids are doted on, and because of it become adept at wrapping people around their little fingers and clowning to get attention. Youngest children may suffer from other people’s assumptions that they are spoiled, stubborn, and manipulative.”<sup>7</sup> Arguably, there seems to be some scientific evidence (and more wives-tales) that demonstrate there are certain implications for birth order.

In a similar way (but with the highest degree of certainty because it is from God’s word) there are implications of the created order in Genesis as well. These are not implications of birth order, but implications from the created order of man and woman.

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<sup>2</sup> Deborah Skoinik, “Does Birth Order Matter? What Every Parent Needs to Know,” CNN.com. <http://www.cnn.com/2007/HEALTH/family/10/12/par.birth.order/index.html> accessed November 21, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, after a dismal passing performance on Sunday, November 25, 2007, in which the Giants lost at home to the Minnesota Viking, Ian O’Connor made this statement: “Stand around big brother Peyton at his locker and you feel a confidence, a certainty, a player’s blind belief in himself. Stand around Eli at his locker and you feel something entirely different.” Ian O’Connor, “Eli Doesn’t Exactly Radiate Leadership,” *NFL on Fox* <http://msn.foxsports.com/nfl/story/7498244?MSNHPhMA> accessed November 28, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

For it is scripturally demonstrable that there are certain and far-reaching implications that flow from the creation order of man and woman. For it was Adam that God created first, then Eve.

## GENESIS 2

The biblical truths that are laid out in Genesis 1 and 2 have implications that ripple throughout the rest of scripture and into our ministries today. In this study of “Women Pastors and the Word of God,” it is important to begin in Genesis for this is the foundation. Pamela Scalise is certainly correct to recognize, “The accounts of creation and the fall...provide the foundation for a biblical and hence Christian understanding of God’s purpose in creating men and women and the nature of our relationship to one another and God.”<sup>8</sup> Raymond Ortlund concurs: “One way or the other, all the additional Biblical texts on manhood and womanhood must be interpreted consistently with these chapters. They lay the very foundation of biblical manhood and womanhood.”<sup>9</sup>

While both Genesis 1 and 2 concern the creation of man, it is Genesis 2 that highlights the creation of the woman. It is from this text the implications of the created order of man and woman flow.

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’<sup>19</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.<sup>20</sup> And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.<sup>22</sup> And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.<sup>23</sup> And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.’<sup>24</sup> For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.<sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (2:18-25).<sup>10</sup>

Before we look at this text specifically, we need to lay it out in its larger context. In this case it is not difficult because there is only one chapter before it. In chapter one of Genesis Moses records that God has created the heavens and the earth. In only twenty-two verses Moses paints with fairly large brush strokes an artistic recounting of this very

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<sup>8</sup> Pamela Scalise, “Women in Ministry: Reclaiming Our Old Testament Heritage,” *Review & Expositor* 83 no. 1 (Winter 1986): 7.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossways Books, 1991), 95.

<sup>10</sup> Scripture is from the *NASB* unless otherwise noted.

good creation. Now that everything is good must be clearly understood. For to quote Bob Cratchit, “This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story (implications) I am going to relate.”<sup>11</sup>

Everything in God’s creation is good. To crown his creation God undertakes to make humans.

Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’<sup>27</sup> And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’<sup>29</sup> Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;<sup>30</sup> and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food’; and it was so.<sup>31</sup> And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (1:26-31).

Not only is the creation good, it is טוב קָאָד, “very good.”

The first man and woman are created in God’s image, equally sharing in his blessing to rule over his creatures (26). However, even in their equality the man and woman are created differently. There are two distinct biological sexes: male and female (27). In this manner they are able to fulfill God’s command to be fruitful and multiply. God creates man: male and female. And God is well-pleased with his divine work.

## GENESIS 2:18-25

Like the impressionistic artistry of a Monet, Moses completes the creation account of the heavens, the earth and its earthly sovereigns and creatures in Genesis 1. The reader mentally perceives the painting. He understands the whole but not all the details. He can appreciate the beauty and the goodness of the entirety; yet, it lacks the fine details. Genesis 2:18-25 provides the finer brush strokes that create a fuller picture of the creation of woman and reveals the implications of this creation order. Stephen Clarks suggests, “Genesis 2 includes a much more developed treatment of the two sexes and their relationship. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that the central concern of at least verses 18-25 in Genesis 2 is the relationship of men and women.”<sup>12</sup> Ortlund recognizes the differences in the two accounts and rightly notes, “While Genesis 1 teaches the

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccerew2?id=DicChri.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1> accessed November 21, 2007. This is an apropos quote given the time of year.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980), 15.

equality of the sexes as God's image-bearers and vice-rulers on the earth, Genesis 2 adds another, complex dimension to Biblical manhood and womanhood."<sup>13</sup>

### Genesis 2:18-20

Up to this point everything in creation according to God is good. Make no mistake. Moses is purposeful in his repetition of “good,” טוב, throughout chapter one and his climaxing “very good” in 1:31. The reader needs to understand that everything is good so he can comprehend the divine evaluation in 2:18. Here something is not good: “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone...’” The reader realizes that unlike the account of chapter 1, the man’s creation at the hand of God has preceded the woman’s by some unknown time interval. The man is alone in the garden without suitable companionship. While there may be some benefits of Adam being alone, God says that it was not good for the man to be by himself, אִתּוֹ לֹא טוֹב הָיְתָה לָאָדָם׃<sup>14</sup> To remedy the “not good” situation of the man, God takes it upon himself to make, עֲשֵׂה, a helper, עֵצֶר, or “one who helps,”<sup>15</sup> or a “help, support, helper.”<sup>16</sup> However, this is not just any helper, but one who is “suitable for him,” or according to *BDB*, “corresponding to him, i.e. equal and adequate to himself.”<sup>17</sup> *TWOT* suggests this helper is one “that which corresponds to.”<sup>18</sup>

This yet unknown, future creature of God, comes with a fixed responsibility. This “creature” will be designed by God to help the man. But help the man do what? I would suggest four activities that the text has already stated:

- Rule over God’s creation on earth (1:26, 28)
- Multiply and fill the earth (1:28)
- Keep the garden (2:15)
- Obey God (2:16).

God had previously given these four commands to Adam.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, it seems logical to conclude that this “helper” would correspond to the man in such a way as to assist him in carrying out these divine directives.

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<sup>13</sup> Ortlund, 99.

<sup>14</sup> Adam would not have to remember to put the seat down, share the remote, or have to hang up his clothes ☺.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 740.

<sup>16</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 660-61.

<sup>17</sup> *BDB*, 617.

<sup>18</sup> *TWOT*, 550.

<sup>19</sup> Scalise recognizes two of the four: “God’s image has many implications, but the most immediate one in this passage is that it qualifies the humans for their joint task of having dominion over the rest of God’s creatures. The second part of their God-ordained responsibility, to procreate and populate the earth (1:28), is possible because of the differentiation into two sexes” (Scalise, 7).

So, God, the divine artisan, sets out on his self-appointed task. The workmanship of God to find a suitable helper has a four-fold process and a subsequent result. First, God starts his project with the same material Adam is made from:

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (2:7).

Second, to find a suitable helper the same craftsman, God, utilizes the identical raw material, the earth.

Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’<sup>19</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name (2:18-19).

This seems a logical starting point to look for a corresponding helper: same creator and same building material because this is where Adam had his beginning: at God’s hand from the dust. Third, God brings his creation to Adam, “...to see what he would call them” (2:19). God allows the man the privilege of being part of the creation process. God creates and man, as God’s earthly regent, names all the creatures.

...and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.<sup>20</sup> And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field.... (2:19-20).

We are not told if God smiled when Adam named the lama or did he silently wonder what the man was thinking when he christened the loon or was the LORD impressed when he named the lion. All the reader knows is that God allows any and every name that Adam assigns to each creature to stand. For the first time, man exercises authority over the creatures.<sup>20</sup> But the result of this divine creation has not solved the negative situation for the man: “...but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him” (2:20). After this divine creation and human inspection, no creature is discovered that matches the divine description, “a helper suitable for him.”

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<sup>20</sup> There is a discernable four-fold-progression in seeking to remedy this “not good” situation of the man by God: 1) The creation material for man is mentioned : dust, 2) God is the same creator of man, 3) God brings the animals to Adam, 4) Adam names the animals. This four-fold progression is duplicated with some minor variations in Genesis 2:21-23.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE CREATED ORDER GENESIS 2:18-20

There are five implications of the created order from Genesis 2:18-20. Although we do not know the exact ripple effects of these biblical facts at this point in Genesis, their ramifications will be felt through the rest of the Bible and into ministry today.

- Adam is created first.

At this point in the Genesis account, the reader does not know who comes next but it is certain the man is first. Even a feminist such as Niditch recognizes this fact.<sup>21</sup>

- Adam's ruling authority over creation is evidenced by God allowing him to name every creature.<sup>22</sup>
- This "suitable helper" is designed "for him."

Carol Meyers summarizes the potential interpretations of this "helper" well.<sup>23</sup> She notes that the reader is not left to guess what kind of helper this yet-to-be-created-one will be. She recognizes the significance of the prepositional phrases, "for him," לְ, and "for Adam," לְאָדָם, (2:18, 20) in identifying what kind of helper this will be. Yet, she concludes, "The prepositional phrase establishes a nonhierarchical relationship between the two."<sup>24</sup> While I agree with Meyers that the view of the relationship between the man and the woman in Genesis 1-2 is complementary, the prepositional phrases to which she refers "for him" (2:18) and "for Adam" (2:20) sets Adam as the one who is to be assisted by the one who is yet to be created. The helper is "for him." While the relationship may not be "hierarchical" as Meyers claims, Adam is the standard. This helper is identified in relationship to the man and not without. Jerome Gellman observes that the man is the "created person" and the woman is the "created-for" person.<sup>25</sup> James Hurley states unequivocally, "Adam was made and no appropriate companion and helper was found for him. For the sake of providing such a companion and helper, God formed the woman. There can be no question that she was made for his sake rather than vice versa."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Niditch, 16.

<sup>22</sup> The implication of naming and authority is discussed when Adam names the woman on page 11.

<sup>23</sup> Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford Press, 1988), 85.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Jerome Gellman, "Gender and Sexuality in the Garden of Eden," *Theology and Sexuality* 12 no. 3 (2006): 330.

<sup>26</sup> Hurley, 214.

- Man is incomplete without this helper and this condition is not good.
- This helper already comes with an additional divinely appointed task. While the reader recognizes that both the man and woman are given the equal responsibility to rule over creation (1:26-28), this helper will be a “helper” to the man.<sup>27</sup>

### Genesis 2:21-25

Although man has worked with God and has exercised his authority over the creatures, God still finds him in the same position: “but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him” (2:20). Although God does not repeat his evaluation of the situation, the astute reader knows that it is still not good for man to be alone (2:18). God sets about to remedy the situation in Genesis 2:21-25.

There is another four-fold process which parallels the previous search for a helper. This striking parallel heightens the anticipation of the reader: Will Adam find a suitable helper? Unlike the previous endeavor, this time Adam needs to be asleep.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept (2:21a).

While in a supernaturally induced sleep, God opens Adam’s flesh and takes one of his ribs.

He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place (2:21b).

In the first attempt seeking a helper, God utilized the same material he used to create man, dust. Now God takes a part of man himself, a rib.

And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man (2:22).

In this four-fold creative process of seeking a helper, the first two items are slightly different from 2:19. 1) This time the creation material is not from the ground but from man himself. 2) God, as the master architect, builds, בנה, from the male rib a woman.<sup>28</sup> 3) God brings this new creature to the man (2:22). 4) Adam names the woman. God bringing the woman to the man has the feel of a ceremony. This is the same type of “ceremony” as Adam naming the animals when God had brought them to the man in Genesis 2:19. Speaking of this incident Gellman believes, “It is a classic naming ceremony, if not by terminology, then surely by form.”<sup>29</sup> Although the text does not state it explicitly, God is waiting in the background to see what the man will call this uniquely

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<sup>27</sup> You need to consult the rest of the papers in this series to see the specific ramifications of these implications that had their beginnings in this creation account.

<sup>28</sup> Previously God had “formed, יצר, the animals from the dust.

<sup>29</sup> Gellman, 332. He also believes Adam’s naming of Eve after their fall is a second naming ceremony in which he reasserts “his dominion over her after the failure of her obedience with the forbidden fruit” (ibid., 333).

made creation. Based on Adam's response God is not disappointed nor does he have to guess if a suitable helper has been found. As Adam lays eyes on this divine creation taken from himself and formed by the hand of God, he breaks out in what some call a hymn of joy:

This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man (2:23).

While the text is silent, the reader is quite sure that an implication of Adam's proclamation is that a suitable helper that corresponds to him has indeed been found. Woman has climaxed the creative work of God. He is finished. He has accomplished his purpose. Man has a suitable helper, corresponding perfectly to himself.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE CREATED ORDER GENESIS 2:21-25**

There are nine specific implications concerning the relationship between man and woman in Genesis 2:21-25.<sup>30</sup>

- God created them, male and female. They are different sexes.<sup>31</sup>
- Man had no part in woman's creation. He was a passive creature (i.e. asleep).<sup>32</sup>

Trible observes, "To claim that the rib means inferiority or subordination is to assign the man qualities over the woman which are not in the narrative itself."<sup>33</sup> She is quite right. The creation of the woman from the rib of man simply reminds woman (and man) that she originates from man (1 Cor 11:12). It is not a sign of inferiority nor is it an implication of inferiority.

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<sup>30</sup> These "bullet statements" are actually biblical facts. The text affirms these truths. I am using the term, "implication" to mean that they have significance for the rest of scripture and ministry itself. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1993), 583. The following papers in this series will delineate the significance of these creation facts.

<sup>31</sup> While this implication seems obvious in evangelical circles, it is one that needs to be affirmed afresh in our day. Gwen Saylor believes the creation account does not have as its focus a denial of the possibility of an "Adam and Steve" rather than an "Adam and Eve." Saylor does not believe Genesis is meant to answer questions concerning sexuality: "The conceptual grid imposed by the assumption that the text addresses general questions of sexuality as those questions are articulated today leads to exegetical observations that simply do not hold." Gwen Saylor, "Adam and Eve/Adam and Steve? A Challenge to the Hermeneutical "Complementary Argument," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 33 no. 5 (October 2006): 413. Saylor is attacking the foundation of the distinctiveness of the sexes and thus argues that a union of a "Adam and Steve" is not prohibited in this Genesis account. However, Niditch, another feminist, believes this account "indicates that humankind is found in two varieties, the male and the female, and this humanity in its complementarity is a reflection of the deity" (Niditch, 16). Following Niditch, an "Adam and Steve" does not reflect two distinct sexes or any sort of complementary aspect of God.

<sup>32</sup> Because of this creation fact, man's authority is not derived from his contribution to the creation of woman.

<sup>33</sup> Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *JAAR* 61 no 1 (March 1973): 37.

- Woman's creation is divinely unique among all God's creatures and is intimately tied with the man.
- The creation of woman makes what is not good, man being alone, joyous.
- Woman is created second, after the man.

This implication of order of the woman's creation is not a sign of inferiority. Phyllis Tribble is certainly accurate to note, "The creation of man first and of the woman last constitutes a ring composition whereby the two creatures are parallel. In no way does the order disparage woman."<sup>34</sup> Tribble is certainly correct. The order does not disparage women. It is simply the result of the exercise of the divine will. It is much like being born second in a family; it had nothing to do with the second-born! While the order certainly does not disparage the woman, there are certain implications because she is created second.

- Adam exercises authority by naming woman.

Gellman notes, "Scholars maintain that in the ancient world, giving a name implied domination or power over that which was named."<sup>35</sup> This implication is not a sign of inferiority of the woman but simply an implication of her creation order. Mary Kassian writes concerning the naming of the woman: "This in no way belittles the woman or assigns to her a lesser role. It simply reflects the difference between the roles that God assigned to each."<sup>36</sup>

Tribble, herself a feminist, affirms that by naming the animals Adam "exercises power over them."<sup>37</sup> While Tribble would not agree, Adam's naming the woman (2:23), which parallels his naming the animals, implies his authority over the woman as well.

Concerning the naming of the woman Ortlund writes,

Adam welcomes Eve as his equal..., yet he names her.... God charged the man with naming the creatures and gave him freedom to exercise his own judgment in each case. In doing so, Adam brought the earthly creation under his dominion. This royal prerogative extended to Adam's naming his helper.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>35</sup> Gellman, 331.

<sup>36</sup> Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation and the Fall* (Westchester: Crossways, 1990), 19.

<sup>37</sup> Tribble, 36. Tribble believes Adam's authority over the woman is due to the Fall. According to her, this is where he called her Eve (ibid., 41).

<sup>38</sup> Ortlund, 102. Richard Davidson believes "that it is most probable that Adam does not name woman before the fall at all. The designation 'îššâ occurs in the narrative before Adam ever meets her

I have authority over my brother as it concerns my dad's will because I have been named the executor of my dad's estate. This is not because of ability but simply because of the implications of birth order.<sup>39</sup> My authority does not constitute inferiority on the parts of my brothers.

- Woman is man's helper: suitable for him (not vice-versa).<sup>40</sup>

Trible is right to note that this position by the woman is not one of inferiority.<sup>41</sup> However, she misses the implication that this term, "helper," does provide a different function for the woman than the man. While the man and woman are certainly equal in being made in the image of God, this implication recognizes a different and unique function for the woman in relationship to the man. Stephen Clark remarks, "Woman is created to be a helper for the man. . . . it does mean that her life is oriented towards his in such a way that direction for her life comes through him. In the narrative, the woman's role is understood in relationship to the man, which indicates some kind of subordination."<sup>42</sup> Again to quote Hurley, "Adam was made and no appropriate companion and helper was found for him. For the sake of providing such a companion and helper, God formed the woman. There can be no question that she was made for his sake rather than vice versa."<sup>43</sup> Ortlund recognizes that the man and woman are equal in being created in the image of God. However, he also realizes that "the woman is man's helper. Man was not created to help the woman, but the reverse."<sup>44</sup>

- Like man, woman is made in the image of God, as a sexual being (biologically different from the man), designed to share the rule over God's creation (1:26-28).
- Woman is silent and passive throughout the entire creation narrative.<sup>45</sup>

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(2:22)." Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 33. The text is clear that Adam is the speaker, וַיִּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים, and he is the one who names, this one that God brought to him, woman, הַיְהוָה יִקְרָא אֶתְּ אִשָּׁה. It seems Davidson misunderstands the perspective of the narrator in Genesis 2. The narrator is writing from a third person omniscient point of view. The reader understands that as the "story-teller," the narrator knows everything and may even share it with the reader before a character in the narrative reveals what he knows. Therefore, this does not imply that the woman was called woman before Adam named her.

<sup>39</sup> My parents were grateful for the cultural implications of birth order. They could name the first-born (the author) the executor of their will without creating hard feelings on the part of my two younger brothers for not being chosen. This is because naming the eldest as the executor of the will based on birth order is culturally acceptable if not usual.

<sup>40</sup> This implication is not suggesting that a husband avoid helping his wife in the kitchen or changing diapers. This is not an implication from the creation account. Man is to love his wife as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). This demonstration of Christ-like love would certainly find expression at the kitchen sink or the nursery's changing table.

<sup>41</sup> Tribble states that the term, "helper," "does not imply inferiority" (ibid.).

<sup>42</sup> Clark, 24-25.

<sup>43</sup> Hurley, 214.

<sup>44</sup> Ortlund, 102.

<sup>45</sup> The woman being silent is the characteristic the author wishes to present her to the reader. This much is certain. While many may balk at the suggestion, does her silence demonstrate submission? The

## A Future Implication

Moses interrupts the creation narrative and provides a future implication for what has just transpired. Because woman is the most suitable helper, corresponding perfectly to the man, evidenced by Adam's joyous poem, there is a universal implication for succeeding generations:

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh (2:24).

This creation of a perfect helper has set the stage for what we know as marriage today. A man will leave his family for her; will cleave to her and become one with her because she is his most suitable helper. The account closes with a summation of the relationship between the man and the woman.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (2:25).

Everything in God's creation is still good, even this new relationship between Adam and the woman.

## SOME ILLEGITIMATE IMPLICATIONS OF GENESIS 2:18-25

It is important to note some illegitimate implications that are drawn by certain scholars concerning the creation order of Genesis 2:18-25. These implications have significant impact on the interpretation (and application) of certain subsequent scriptures and our pulpit ministries today.

### **Egalitarianism is not an implication of Genesis 2:18-25.**

That man and woman are completely and in every respect equal is not an implication of this text. Davidson has marshaled over fifty scholarly studies which conclude that "Gen 2, like Gen 1, contains no statement of dominance, subordination, or leadership/submission in the relationship to the sexes."<sup>46</sup> However, Meyers, herself a feminist scholar remarks, "Feminist have long looked to Genesis 1 for affirmation of sexual equality." However, she continues, "The structure and purpose of Genesis 1 simply does not address the social world of humans."<sup>47</sup> Thus, this chapter does not support an egalitarian position. Man and woman are equal based on their being created in the image of the creator (1:27). Davidson is quite correct to recognize the equality of the

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woman submits to God leading her to the man and in silence she submits to his naming her. (Naomi is an example of someone who chafes against her name (Ruth 1:20). However, the narrator never deigns to call her Mara as Naomi wished. Could it be that the narrator's desires to demonstrate to the readers that Naomi is not as empty as she thinks and therefore she need not be bitter since she has Ruth by her side?)

<sup>46</sup> Davidson, 34.

<sup>47</sup> Meyers, 86.

man and the woman based on their divine image in Genesis 1:27, when he assert, “Although the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ connote sexual (biological) differences, there is no hint of ontological superiority/inferiority.”<sup>48</sup> He is also exegetically accurate to note based on the same verse that “there is no hint of... functional leadership/submission between male and female.”<sup>49</sup> Based on a close reading of Genesis 1:27 alone, one would have to agree. However, he goes too far to extrapolate the same equality implications of Genesis 1:27 through Genesis 2.

Concerning Genesis 2 Meyers recognizes that male and female are complementary and do not share the same hierarchal relationship of a parent and child.<sup>50</sup> While the relationship between a husband and wife may not be the same as a parent-child, the text clearly shows a subordinate role of the woman based on her position in the created order and her function as a helper to the man.

### **Female inferiority is not an implication of Genesis 2:18-25**

Male and females are both created in the image of God. There is no inferiority in their divine creation. Dan Allender and Tremper Longman remind both sexes, “Men and women, though different, are equal in the eyes of God. Neither is closer to God; they are both his image.”<sup>51</sup> There is no inferiority based on the woman’s additional function to be a helper to the man either. Being the man’s helper is simply an extra task. Susan Foh states, “Though the woman’s being created second from the man and for the man does not indicate inferiority, it does indicate a difference in the way they are to function.”<sup>52</sup>

### **Male primogeniture is not due to the fall but creation itself. The curse and the fall (Genesis 3) did not change the created order of man and woman in Genesis 1-2.**<sup>53</sup>

Trible believes contrary: “The subordination of female to male signifies their shared sin.”<sup>54</sup> Del Birkey feels that patriarchy, while not the sin that caused the fall, “is the foremost of sins within humankind’s fundamental breakdown of the union between men and women,” which occurred at the fall.<sup>55</sup> It is granted that the fall complicated the

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<sup>48</sup> Davidson, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Meyers, 86. Since Meyers is a feminist, I do not believe she and I are using the term, “complementary,” similarly. I believe she views it in relationship to egalitarianism.

<sup>51</sup> Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, III, *Intimate Allies* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1995), 19.

<sup>52</sup> Susan Foh, *Women & the Word of God* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1979), 61.

<sup>53</sup> It is outside the scope of this paper to delineate those complications. Suffice to say, there is nothing in the text of Genesis 3 that changes the order of man or woman’s creation. (The Apostle Paul argues from this basis in I Timothy and I Corinthians). Also, there is nothing in that text that abolishes Adam’s authority which was demonstrated in his naming the animals and the woman. There is nothing in the fall narrative that abrogates the woman’s God-given responsibility to be a helper to the man.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>55</sup> Del Birkey, *The Fall of Patriarchy* (Tucson: Fenestra Books, 2005), 22. Birkey views patriarchy as a system of male rule with “perverse consequences” which persists even today among Christians (xii). What Birkey fails to consider is that in the garden God establishes male authority prior to any other social system being in place (i.e. patriarchy). While women have definitely suffered at the hands of sinful men, the authority invested in Adam in the garden is not congruent with the patriarchal system that develops later. Therefore, he exhibits incorrect methodology by arguing against patriarchy to disown the divine implications of Genesis 1 and 2. He sees no male authority in Genesis 1 or 2, only total equality.

relationship between man and the woman but it did not abolish nor change the implications of the created order.<sup>56</sup> The authority of the man and the subsequent subordination of the woman to his authority is an implication of the creation order and not a sad consequence of the fall.<sup>57</sup> James Hurley states,

Adam's responsibility to act as God's subordinate ruler, even after the fall, is reflected in Genesis 3:20 where he assigns the woman a new name in response to God's promise that... the woman will bring forth children to continue the race. His headship continued after the fall. It would be a mistake to say it began with the fall.<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

While it is left to keener minds in this series to expound the ramifications of these legitimate implications throughout the Old and New Testaments, the following is a summation of the biblical facts that are evident in the divinely created order of Adam and the woman in Genesis 1-2.

- Man and woman are made in the image of God, as sexual beings, designed to share the rule over God's creation (1:26-28).
- Adam is created first.
- Man is incomplete without a suitable helper and this condition is not good.

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“There is no indication here, nor in the entire Old Testament nor the New, that God mandated husbands to have authority over women in general, or over their wives in particular” (ibid., 53). Based on his research sociologist W. Bradford Wilcox argues against those who contend that patriarchal religion contributes to abuse against women and children. In an interview with *Christianity Today* Wilcox states, “Evangelical Protestant men who are married with children and who attend church regularly... have the lowest rates of domestic violence.” Douglas LeBlanc, “Affectionate Patriarchs,” *Christianity Today* (August 2004): 44.

While it is outside the scope of this paper to pursue, two scholars share interesting insights concerning the perspective of women who functioned under a patriarchal system. Individually they submit that the patriarchal system the OT may not have been perceived in the same manner as Birkey suggests. Carol Meyers writes, “In the context of the specific social and economic structures that characterized ancient Israel, the existence of gender asymmetry, with men accorded a set of advantages apparently to most women, must not automatically be perceived as oppressive.... Gender differences that appear hierarchal may not have functioned or been perceived as hierarchal within Israelite society” (Meyers, 34). Meir Malul observes, “Structural control as explained here is, however, far from the notion of control of that is envisaged by radical feminism. One could not talk of woman's oppression or subordination by a cruel male society... Women in ancient times hardly viewed the matters in these terms, neither would they have fathomed their modern meaning in the first place.” Meir Malul, *Knowledge, Control, and Sex: Studies in Biblical Thought, Culture and Worldview* (Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center Publication, 2002), 361.

<sup>56</sup> This will be demonstrated in subsequent papers in this series.

<sup>57</sup> To forestall any misunderstanding concerning how I understand the term, the following is offered as my general utilization of the term. Following Clark, “‘Subordination’ simply refers to the order of a relationship in which one person, the subordinate, depends upon another person for direction. The purpose of this order is to allow those in relationship to function together in unity” (Clark, 23-24).

<sup>58</sup> Hurley, 213.

- This “suitable helper” is designed “for Adam.”
- Woman is man’s helper: suitable for him (not the reverse).
- Man had no active part in woman’s creation.
- Woman is created second.
- Woman’s creation is unique among all God’s creatures and is intimately tied to the man.
- The creation of woman makes what is not good, man being alone, good.
- Adam’s authority is evidenced by God allowing him to name every creature.
- Adam exercises authority by naming woman.
- Woman is silent and passive through the entire creation narrative.

### **Application/Exhortation**

In Genesis 1-2 God speaks and everything is good. In Genesis 3 man has an opportunity to respond to the divine word (2:16-17). If man obeys, good will result. If he does not follow God’s word.... Unfortunately, we know all too well the rest of the story.

Today, God is still speaking through this creation narrative of Genesis and we have an opportunity to respond to it in how we do ministry. If we obey, good will be a natural consequence. If we do not, our pulpit ministries will certainly suffer.

I am not sure of all the implications of my birth order (although my younger brothers sometimes remind me of ones that suit them). However, I am convinced there are certain and sure implications of Adam being created first, then Eve for ministry today. From this individual text, we are not sure what the significance of those implications will be. However, Paul refers back to them in 1 Timothy 2:13, 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, and Ephesians 5:25-28. These implications that had their origins in Gen 1-2 will be identified in papers that will follow in this series by my respected colleagues at BBS.

However, at this point there needs to be a recognition, an appropriation and a commitment to the truth that God has indeed spoken and these facts of the creation order are true and must be followed. Moreover, they must be followed no matter where they lead, no matter what popular church practices they hinder or what others may say or practice themselves. We are called to obey God’s word.