

The ultimate and telling proof that equality and submission may coexist in glorious harmony is found in the mediatorial mission of the Son of God, "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God" (Nicaea), who completed it in the true liberation of submission to His Father (cf. John 8:21-47; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; cf. 11:3).

There is little need to multiply footnotes to document that this has been the view of historic orthodoxy to the present and, in fact, is still the majority view, although presently under vigorous attack. The very fact that its opponents call the view of historic orthodoxy "the traditional view" acknowledges its historical primacy.

There arises at this point, however, a matter worthy of serious consideration: If the Christian church has held this view for centuries with Bible in hand, then we may presume that there exists some good reason for that fact. The Lord Jesus Christ promised the church the gift of the permanently indwelling Spirit to provide understanding of the Scriptures (cf. John 16:12-15; Psalm 36:9). We have reason to believe that His promise has been kept, and that the church has received that light in understanding the Word of God. Widespread agreement in such understanding by orthodox believers should not be abandoned without the most careful consideration of objections, both exegetical and theological.

To treat the church's historical understanding of Scripture lightly is to forget that it is the believing body that, through the centuries, carries on the theological enterprise with the Word in hand and accompanied by the enlightening Spirit. Thus, the largest part of any theologian's work comes from reverent consideration and response to the Christian theological tradition. The creeds of the church, the results of serious spiritual and theological strife, are more important than the views of individuals. We should begin our discussions with the assumption that *the church is probably right*, unless exegetical and theological study compel us otherwise. "The proclamation of new discoveries," Abraham Kuyper, the famed founder of the Free University of Amsterdam, wrote, "is not always a proof of devotion to the truth, it is sometimes a tribute to self-esteem."⁶²

Conclusion

There is no reason to claim that Galatians 3:28 supports an egalitarianism of function in the church. It does plainly teach an egalitarianism of privilege in the covenantal union of believers in Christ. The Abrahamic promises, in their flowering by the Redeemer's saving work, belong universally to the family of God. Questions of roles and functions in that body can only be answered by a consideration of other and later New Testament teaching.

Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church:

Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19

George W. Knight III

The longest statement in the New Testament on the relationship of husbands and wives is Ephesians 5:21-33. The parallel account, Colossians 3:18-19, succinctly states the main points of Paul's teaching. We shall use the Ephesians account as the basis for this chapter and relate the Colossians material to it.

Before we inquire into the particular truths the apostle articulates in Ephesians 5:22-33, we should determine the flow of his presentation. Paul ties his previous discussion to his treatment of husbands and wives with a summary preview: "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (verse 21).¹ Then he addresses the respective parties: wives (verses 22-24) and husbands (verses 25-31). He asks wives to submit to their husbands as their heads as the church submits to Christ as her head. He asks husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Paul compares the relationship of husband and wife to that between Christ and the church (notice the comparatives "as" and "just as" in verses 22, 23, 24, 25).

Paul not only compares marriage to the relationship between Christ and His church but also expands on the latter. Thus, some verses focus almost exclusively on Christ and the church (e.g., verses 26, 27). After these instructions and comparisons, Paul cites Genesis 2:24 in verse 31 and makes a final reference to the relationship of Christ and His church in verse 32. He concludes by summarizing his instructions in verse 33 with two key concepts: a husband is to love his wife and a wife is to respect her husband.

This passage abounds with instructions for marriage. The key ideas appear in the flow of the argument: submission to one another in the fear of the Lord (verse 21); submission by the wife to her husband as her head, as the church submits to Christ its head (verses 22-24); love by the husband for his wife, as Christ loves the church (verses 25-30); the appeal to Genesis 2:24 (verse 31); and the concluding summary (verse 33) with its emphasis on the husband's love and the wife's respect.

We will examine each of these in turn to ascertain its particular importance both in isolation and in its contribution to the whole passage. Limitations of space and the focus of our study demand that details about Christ and the church outside the comparison with marriage be omitted from consideration here.

Submit to One Another in the Fear of Christ

Verse 21 provides a transition from the verses that precede to those that follow. Even though the verb “submit to” is appropriately rendered as an imperative, as are others that precede it (“speak,” verse 19; “sing and make music,” verse 19), it (like them) is a participle that concludes the string of exhortations begun by Paul in verse 18 with the true imperative “be filled with the Spirit.” “Submit to one another” thus concludes the list of things that should characterize Spirit-filled living by the redeemed. Furthermore, in a couple of important manuscripts, no verb appears in verse 22, so that “submit to” from verse 21 has to be understood as functioning in verse 22 as well. In other important manuscripts, the verb appears in verse 22 as well.² Both readings tie the two verses together, since the same verb is either understood or repeated. Hence verse 21 needs to be considered in its transitional role.

Three ideas are so inherent to the thought of this verse that we must consider them in order properly understand this verse and its relevance for the passage as a whole. They are (1) the meaning of “submit to one another,” (2) the significance of the qualifier “out of reverence for Christ,” and (3) how this call for submission to one another relates to the specific instructions to wives and husbands.

What is Meant by “Submit to One Another”?

In the admonition “submit to one another,”³ the verb (*hypotassō*) has as its basic meaning “to subject or subordinate.” Here Paul’s use of the middle voice focuses on what one does to oneself: one submits oneself to others. The Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker *Greek-English Lexicon* rightly describes this as “submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love” (p. 848, section 1bb). This voluntary yielding to others is a characteristic of the Christian community and is urged elsewhere in the New Testament. Compare, e.g., “In humility consider others [*allēlous*], the same word as in Ephesians] better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).⁴ This admonition is based on the example of Jesus (Philippians 2:5), who insisted on a servant mentality in imitation of Him: “. . . whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:26-28; cf. Mark 10:43-45; cf. also Luke 22:26, 27).

Furthermore, the Apostle Peter, like the Apostle Paul, both urges particular people (younger men) to submit to particular people (elders) and all to submit to one another: “Young men . . . be submissive to (*hypotagēte*) those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another [*allēlon again*] . . .” (1 Peter 5:4-5). Similarly, Paul urges masters to “Treat your slaves [*in the same way*] (*ta auta*, Ephesians 6:9) as their slaves were to treat them, i.e., “with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart” (verse 5). This implies reciprocity between masters and slaves. The exhortation to Christians in Ephesians 5:21 is thus, like these other passages, a general exhortation to mutual submission to “one another.”

Submission in Reverence for Christ

The motivation for submission to one another is to be “reverence (*phobō*) for Christ” (5:21). Reverence, or fear (*phobos*), here is not dread, because Scripture elsewhere teaches that God’s love in us casts out such fear (1 John 4:18; cf. also Romans 8:15). Rather, it is respectful reverence for Christ that recognizes who has asked this of us and that He will hold us accountable for our actions (cf., for this sense in Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:11; 7:1). This statement reminds us that—because in our sinful rebellion we would not obey our Lord—we will only submit to others when Christ has made us subject to Himself, and then we *will* submit to one another because He insists that we do so. Paul makes this point elsewhere when, in writing about interpersonal relationships—including those of men and women—he says forcefully, “What I am writing to you is the Lord’s command” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Thus verse 21, explicitly insisting that believers submit to one another, sets the tone for the entire section.

How Verse 21 Is a Transition

But then the question naturally arises, how is the content of verse 21 related to verses 22-33? At least two answers have been given. First, one might answer that this verse is a general statement of the specifics spelled out for wives, children, and servants. That is, certain ways in which Christians are to submit to others are then specified.⁵ It is argued that the key word *submit* is picked up with reference to wives in verses 22 and 24 and for children and servants by the concept of obedience (6:1, 5). Furthermore, this would seem to parallel Peter’s approach when he urges Christians, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men . . .” (1 Peter 2:13) and spells this out in terms of the submission servants (2:18ff.) and wives are to give (3:1ff.). Even if the following answer is more adequate, this suggestion need not be rejected so long as it does not exclude the more comprehensive understanding.

Second, one might answer that the relationship of verse 21 to verses 22-23 is that verse 21 states a general and comprehensive principle before Paul moves to the specific roles of husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves, so that the specific is considered in the light of the general. On this view, Paul reminds all in the congregation of their need for mutual submission in the Body of Christ before writing of the specific duties each has in his particular situation. This seems to do more justice to the explicit reciprocal pronoun used, “one another” (*allēlon*). Furthermore, it is in line with the contextual understanding found elsewhere in Paul and Peter where a similar exhortation is given (Philippians 2:3, “let each of you regard one another . . .” [NASB]; 1 Peter 5:5, “all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another” [NASB]).⁶

First Peter 5:5 is particularly instructive, because there Peter urges “all of you” to be humble toward one another immediately after urging the younger ones to be subject to their elders. Thus Peter calls on the elders among “all of you” to be humble toward younger men at the same time as he calls on younger men to submit to those same elders. Just as Peter expresses both ideas in one verse (1 Peter 5:5), so also Paul expresses the general note of mutual submission in verse 21, followed by the specific submission of wives to husbands, for example, in verses 22ff. So Paul wants to remind all Christians, men and women, of their duty to be submissive to one another before reminding wives of their particular responsibility to their husbands in marriage. This puts particular, unidirectional submission in

the context of general, mutual submission and relates specific duties, roles, and responsibilities to the general Christian concept of mutual submission.

It is sometimes urged that mutual submission alone is in view in the section on wives and husbands, and that therefore wives are not being called to a unique or distinct submission to their husbands.⁷ Since, however, verse 21 is a transition verse to the entirety of the section on household responsibilities, consistency would demand that the sections on children and parents and on servants and masters also speak only of mutual submissiveness and not of different roles. Since this is self-evidently not so for the section on children and parents, on the one hand, and masters and servants, on the other, the implication is that distinguishable roles and specific submission are also taught in the section on husbands and wives. Of course, it could be argued that the command given husbands to love their wives is but another way of calling them to mutual submission. But even if that were so, Paul still calls the husband "the head" of the wife and therefore the one to whom she should submit in everything (verses 22-24). Thus this section cannot be teaching only mutual submission rather than the specific submission of wives to husbands in the overall context of mutual submission. The mutual submission to which all are called and that defines the larger context and sets the tone does not, therefore, rule out the specific and different roles and relationships to which husbands and wives are called in the verses addressed to them.

Submission and Headship

In the main portion of the section addressed to wives and husbands (verses 22-30) and the concluding summary (verse 33), Paul delineates his teaching along three lines: (1) the role each has (submission, headship), (2) the attitude with which each fulfills his or her role (love, respect), and (3) the analogy of marriage to the relationship of Christ and His church.

The Roles of Wives and Husbands

Paul commands wives to "be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (verse 22, NASB). The operative verb "be subject to" or "submit to" (*hypotassō*) reappears in verse 24, where Paul writes that wives should submit "to their husbands in everything" "as the church submits to Christ." This is the essence of the apostle's teaching to wives, since in Colossians 3:18 it is the entirety of his charge: "Wives, submit (*hypotassō*) to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."⁸ Furthermore, this particular exhortation to the wife to submit to her husband is the universal teaching of the New Testament. Every passage that deals with the relationship of the wife to her husband tells her to "submit to" him, using the same verb (*hypotassō*): Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1; Titus 2:4f.⁹ Sampley summarizes the matter when he says concerning the household instructions for wives that the form "reduced to its barest details would include: Wives, be submissive to (possibly 'your own') husbands."¹⁰

The meaning of *hypotassō*, used consistently in the charge to wives, is the same as its meaning in verse 21, that is, "submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love."¹¹ This is no abandonment of the great New Testament truth also taught by the Apostle Paul that "there is neither . . . male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Rather, it is an appeal to one who is equal by creation and redemption to submit to the authority God has ordained.

Her equality is evident in the verb form always used in this admonition and in the fact that it is wives who are addressed, not husbands. (The New Testament never commands husbands to subordinate their wives, i.e., to force them to submit.) The voice of the verb is not active but middle/passive, with the meaning either of subjecting oneself (middle) or of allowing oneself to be in subjection (passive), with the middle voice most likely here. Thus the admonition is similar to the request in Hebrews that Christians (who are equal in creation and redemption to one another and therefore also equal to elders) are to "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" (Hebrews 13:17) and Peter's instruction that young men "be submissive (*hypotagete*) to those who are older" (1 Peter 5:5). Just as certain men can be given authority in the church, implying no superiority for them or inferiority for those subject to them, so also wives may be asked to subject themselves to their husbands without any suggestion of inferiority/superiority. The Apostle Peter makes this clear when he insists that husbands, to whom he has asked wives to submit (1 Peter 3:1ff.), "treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life" (1 Peter 3:7).

The Nature of Wives' Submission

The submission wives are to render is delineated by four key concepts: (1) "to your own husbands" (in the Greek text, left out of the NIV; see NASB), (2) "as to the Lord" (both of these first two concepts appear in verse 22; for the second cf. also Colossians 3:18, "as is fitting in the Lord"), (3) "for the husband is the head of the wife" (verse 23), and (4) "as the church submits to Christ" (verse 24).¹² Paul does not ask every woman to submit to every man, but rather asks wives to submit to their own (*idiois*) husbands. Paul is not insisting that every relationship between a woman and a man is one of submission and headship, but that where leadership is an ingredient of the situation, as in marriage, the woman should submit to that leadership (headship) of the man. Similarly, for example, in the family of God, the church, where leadership is involved, Paul insists that women not take on that role but submit to the leadership of men (cf. 1 Timothy 2:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 14:34ff. and the chapters in this volume dealing with these passages). Here specifically he commands each wife to submit to the headship of her own husband.

The Nature of Husbands' Headship

Paul gives the basis for his charge to wives in verse 23: "For ('because,' *hoti*) the husband is the head (*kephalē*) of the wife." It has been assumed already that this word *head* (*kephalē*) implies authority. Not all agree. Some say that it means "source." I refer the reader to the chapter by Wayne Grudem on this subject as well as the standard Greek lexicons for the data. Suffice it to say here that Paul indicates the significance of "head" (*kephalē*) by saying that "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church" (verse 23). It is evident that Christ is the head of the church as the authority over it because the following verse speaks of the church as submitting to Christ. The two concepts mutually explain one another: the church submits to Christ's authority because He is the head or authority over it.

This reference to Christ as head follows two previous references to Him as head where the note of authority is equally present. In the first, Ephesians 1:22, Paul writes that Christ is head over "everything" and that God has "placed all things under (*hypotassō*) his feet." In the second, Ephesians 4:15, Christ is des-

With the words *submit to* and *head*, the apostle states the basic roles of wives and husbands, respectively. God established those roles at creation, and they have as their analogue the roles of Christ and His church. Thus Paul can urge this special relationship of wife and husband because God in creation established it and Christ in His redeeming love to the church models and substantiates it for the redeemed community. W. J. Larkin puts this consideration adeptly when he says that “the instruction for conduct in marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33 becomes unquestionably binding when seen as a reflection of Christ’s relation to the church.”¹⁴

Instructions to husbands and wives in the New Testament always focus first on wives and their responsibility to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1ff.). Both Peter and Paul reaffirm the role relationship God established by creation before they deal with how men and women should conduct themselves in that relationship. *The divinely instituted form must come first, before one talks about how to live within it.* This is a permanently significant lesson.

Furthermore, Paul always addresses those under authority before those in authority: wives before husbands, children before parents, servants before masters (Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1). The rationale for the first two of these relationships¹⁵ would seem to be that the divinely instituted relationship is best preserved when the divine order inherent in it is made plain by urging compliance on those under authority first, before addressing those in authority. The apostle may then command those in authority to exercise their authority with loving concern that does not run roughshod over those under authority, tempting them to challenge the divinely established relationship. Having established the divinely given character of the institution and the divinely given roles, the apostle now spells out the attitudes with which those in that institution should fulfill their respective roles.

The Attitudes of Love and Respect

On this backdrop Paul addresses husbands: “Husbands, love your wives . . .” (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19). The key word, *love*, appears six times in Ephesians 5:25-33. It denotes the husband’s duty to his wife. Interestingly enough his role, headship, was stated in the section addressed to his wife (verse 23), not in the section addressed to him. Paul does not say to husbands, “Be head over your wife!” Instead he commands them, twice, to love their wives (verses 25 and 28): “Husbands, love your wives,” and, “husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.” The command is explicated by reference to the analogy of Christ’s love for the church (verses 25ff.) and by the way one loves one’s own body (verse 28): by nourishing and cherishing it (verse 29). In the comparison made with Christ’s love for the church, Paul emphasizes the self-giving character of that love (verse 25) and its concern to benefit the other so that life together will be wonderful (verses 26, 27).

Loving as Christ Loved

Paul’s direct command to husbands is to “love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .” (verse 25). This is clearly how the apostle demands that the husband exercise his leadership in everything as the head over his wife. He is to love her “just as” (*kathōs*) Christ loved the church. Just as

ignated the head of the church, His body, and it is His authority and power that cause the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. It is virtually certain that in comparing the headship of the husband over the wife to the headship of Christ over the church, the apostle is using the term *kephalē* for the husband as he does for Christ, namely, as one who has authority and is the leader.

When we ask how that headship was established, we are aided by Paul’s treatment of this question in 1 Corinthians 11:1ff., where he explicitly relates the headship of a man over a woman to that of Christ over every man and of God over Christ. In this context, Paul refers to Genesis 2:21-24 and states that the order of creation of man and woman and the fact that woman was created to help the man (and not vice versa) demonstrate that God had established man as the head over the woman by this divine action and its inherent intent (1 Corinthians 11:8-9). Paul thus affirms that male headship is a divine appointment. This understanding certainly informs his use of the same term *kephalē* in Ephesians and is therefore the basis on which he commands the wife to submit to the husband as her head. It is evident in Ephesians 5 itself that Paul has Genesis 2 and its principles in mind, because he quotes Genesis 2:24 at Ephesians 5:31. What he has explicitly said in 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9 informs his statement in Ephesians 5:23, and his quotation of Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31 demonstrates that the principles of Genesis 2 inform his statements in Ephesians.

The Extent of Wives’ Submission

Paul concludes this section to wives, verses 22-24, by indicating that wives should submit to their husbands “in everything” (*en panti*). The phrase is all-encompassing: submission must encompass all aspects of life. This removes the misunderstanding that some may have had, or others may still have, that Paul is speaking simply about submission in sex or some other narrow realm. Since by God’s decree marriage partners are “one flesh,” God wants them to function together under one head, not as two autonomous individuals living together. Since Paul is concerned about that unity, we should be concerned about it too.

Paul does not feel it necessary to add to the phrase *in everything* that all disobedience to God is excepted (cf. Acts 5:29, “We must obey God rather than men”; cf. also Acts 4:19, 20).¹⁶ This goes without saying. Nor does he mean by this to stifle the wife’s thinking and acting. Rather, he wants that thinking and acting to be shared with her husband (as his is to be shared with her) and for her to be willing to submit to his leadership “in everything.” The wife should not act unilaterally, just as the church should willingly submit to Christ in all things and, if it does so, will not find that stifling, demeaning, or stultifying of growth and freedom, so also wives should willingly submit to their husbands in all things and, if they do so, will not find that stifling, demeaning, or stultifying.

But does this mean husbands can rule their wives insensitively? Of course not! Paul rules out elsewhere the idea that anyone in authority should “lord it over” those he leads (2 Corinthians 1:24), just as Peter insists that the elders to whom young men submit must not lord it over those under them (1 Peter 5:3). Paul takes this for granted here. He handles the question of the use (or misuse) of the husband’s authority shortly in his words to the husband. To that we will turn momentarily. The important thing for the wife to know is that she should submit to her husband “in everything,” that is, that her submission is coextensive with all aspects of their relationship.

His body (verse 30). At the same time, the word *body* provides a link to the one-flesh concept of Genesis 2:24, a verse Paul quotes in verse 31.

Paul does all this while applying the general commandment of Leviticus 19:18, “love your neighbor as yourself,” in a very direct way to the love the husband should have for his nearest and dearest neighbor, his wife. In so doing, Paul ties together the creation ordinance about marriage (Genesis 2:24), the great commandment about loving one’s neighbor (Leviticus 19:18), and the sublime pattern of Christ’s love for His bride, the church. No greater combination could be conceived of than the combination of God’s sanctions in creation, commandment, and redemption.

Having joined these concepts together, the apostle shows how this love is to be expressed by reminding the husband that he “feeds and cares” for his own flesh (verse 29). With these two verbs, *ektrephei* and *thalpei*, Paul uses the emotionally evocative language of nurturing care to communicate what it means to love one’s wife. The word *thalpō* literally means “to keep warm” and, figuratively, “to cherish” and “to comfort.” Paul’s only other use of this verb is in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, where, in powerful imagery, he speaks of his love for the Thessalonians: “we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares (*thalpō*) for her own children” (NASB). He develops his thought in the next verse by saying: “Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart¹⁸ to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear [beloved]¹⁹ to us” (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NASB). In Thessalonians we see again the same elements we find in Ephesians, although in a different but similar setting. The one “cherished” is the one to whom one gives not only the highest good, the gospel, but also one’s very own life because that one is “beloved.” Ephesians says that because a husband loves his wife, he will give his life for her good and will express his love by nourishing and cherishing her, the beloved. The terms *feed* and *care* communicate these truths with a delightful fragrance that must be worked out and applied in the numerous, variegated, nutty-gritty situations of life.

The Tenderness of Godly Headship

Paul also addresses the danger of husbands’ being overbearing toward their wives, or “harsh with them” (Colossians 3:19). Paul alludes to that attitude in Ephesians in his remark that “no one ever hated his own body” (Ephesians 5:29), and in the Colossians account (where he does not develop the concept of love as he does in Ephesians) he explicitly demands as a corollary to the command, “Husbands, love your wives,” the parallel command, “do not be harsh with them.”

In so doing Paul emphasizes that the headship of the husband over his wife must not be negative, oppressive, or reactionary. Instead, it must be a headship of love in which the husband gives of himself for his wife’s good, nourishing and cherishing the beloved one who, as his equal, voluntarily submits to his headship. Paul has thus given two great truths with respect to the husband: first, that he is the head of his wife, and second, that he must exercise his headship in love.

Submitting as the Church Submits

Similarly, Paul has given two great truths with respect to the wife’s role and how she should carry it out. The introductory verses of this section, with which we have already dealt in part, insisted that her role is to submit (as an equal) to her husband as her head (verses 22-24). We have left aside for the time being Paul’s

the church, in submitting to Christ, was the model for the wife in submitting to her husband as her head (verses 23, 24), so now Christ, in His love for the Church, is the model for the husband in loving his wife. The character and description of that love are stated in the words “and gave himself up for her” (verse 25). In these few key words are contained the description of what the love of a husband for his wife should be.

First, the loving husband gives of himself. In his leadership role as head, he seeks to lead by giving of himself to his wife in ways analogous to how Christ gave Himself to His bride. Christ’s giving of Himself was personal and sacrificial. This great principle of self-giving sets the tone and points toward the many ways in which this love can be manifested and realized.

Second, Christ’s giving of Himself was for the benefit of His bride—He gave Himself up “for her.” Just so, the husband’s self-giving should be for his wife’s benefit. In short, we may speak of this love as a giving of oneself for the benefit of the other.

Paul specifies the intended result of Christ’s giving up of Himself for the church in verses 26 and 27: “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” Here we see two forces at work. First, Paul writes of Christ’s redeeming work for us. Paul always delights in explicating this, and so he seizes on this opportunity to develop these ideas. Yet the uniqueness of the redemptive work of Christ means that these aspects cannot be imitated precisely by the husband. Nonetheless, second, Paul uses the imagery of marriage to tell of Christ and the church: Christ serves her “to present her to himself as a radiant church” (verse 27). Is it not likely, therefore, that he intended to teach that the husband’s love, like Christ’s, was to be beneficial to the wife, just as Christ’s love was to the church?¹⁶ Just as Christ works to present His church to Himself as a glorious bride in a glorious marriage, should not the husband work to make his wife glorious and their marriage glorious?

The Implications of Being One Flesh

The apostle continues with his insistence on the husband’s loving his wife by restating the charge in verse 28. This time he states it in terms of a husband’s loving his wife as he loves his own body and thus as he loves himself. Thus he not only introduces a new dimension to that love but also intertwines it again with the imagery of Christ’s love for the church, His beloved, His body.

The new element is that the husband “who loves his wife loves himself” (verse 28b). Many commentators have suggested that this reflects the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself (Leviticus 19:18; compare the reflexive “himself” in Ephesians 5:33).¹⁷ More importantly, Paul first states the command by speaking of husbands’ loving “their own bodies” (verse 28a). This use of “bodies” instead of “themselves” may have come about by the influence of Genesis 2:24, quoted in verse 31, which speaks of the couple as “one flesh.” The analogy of Christ and the church may also have influenced the choice of words, since it is *body* (*sōma*) rather than *flesh* that Paul has already used in Ephesians to denote the church (1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16, and, most importantly, in the beginning of this account in 5:23) and that he reiterates shortly (5:30). Thus the command to “love their wives as their own bodies” reflects the love of Christ for the church,

Showing Respect for the Husband's Headship

The last exhortation to wives about how they should submit to their husbands is found in Ephesians 5:33: "... the wife must respect her husband." The key word here is the verb *respect* (so rendered by a number of modern English translations, e.g., RSV, NASB, NIV, NEB).²⁷ This rendering of the Greek *phobēō* is proper. Paul uses *respect* here in the sense of treating the husband's leadership with dutiful regard and deference. The Greek verb is used similarly in an analogous situation where one human is urged to render respect (or reverence) to another (Leviticus 19:3, LXX: "Let every one of you reverence his father and his mother"). There, as here in Ephesians, the respect called for is primarily to the role the person occupies and not to the particular merits of the person.

Probably Paul chose *phobēō* in his final charge to wives to correlate his exhortation to them with his exhortation to all Christians, "Submit to one another out of reverence (*phobō*) for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). By using a concept he had previously used of the Lord Jesus Christ, he also correlates this concluding exhortation to wives with his initial one (verse 22), which said that they should be subject to their own husbands "as to the Lord."

The respect asked of a wife recognizes the God-given character of the headship of her husband and thus treats him with dutiful regard and deference. Just as husbands have been asked to display their headship through likeness to Christ's headship over His church, that is, through a love that cherishes and nourishes (verse 25, 28, 29), so now wives are asked to render their submission in a way that is most like that of the submission of the church to Christ, that is, a truly respectful submission because it is rendered voluntarily from the heart. A wife's respecting her husband and his headship therefore implies that her submission involves not only what she does but also her attitude in doing it. As with the husband, so with the wife, it is the heart's attitude of grateful acceptance of the role God assigns to each and the determination to fulfill the particular role with all the graciousness God gives that Paul is urging on both wives and husbands in this last verse of his instruction.

The Analogy of Christ and the Church

Before concluding this discussion, we need to call attention to one more remarkable aspect of this passage. After quoting Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31), Paul gives an interpretation that shows God's purpose in marriage: "This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church" (verse 32).

Unbeknownst to the people of Moses' day (it was a "mystery"), marriage was designed by God from the beginning to be a picture or parable of the relationship between Christ and the church. Back when God was planning what marriage would be like, He planned it for this great purpose: it would give a beautiful earthly picture of the relationship that would someday come about between Christ and His church. This was not known to people for many generations, and that is why Paul can call it a "mystery." But now in the New Testament age Paul reveals this mystery, and it is amazing.

This means that when Paul wanted to tell the Ephesians about marriage, he did not just hunt around for a helpful analogy and suddenly think that "Christ and the church" might be a good teaching illustration. No, it was much more fun-

instructions about how this should be done, except to note the helpful analogy of the church's submission to Christ. Now we need to return to this matter.

The key phrases in this portion of Paul's instructions to wives are "as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22), "as is fitting in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18), "in everything" (Ephesians 5:24, which we considered above under the role itself), and "the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

Because the headship of the husband is established by God, the husband who fulfills that role does so as a servant of God, and the leadership given to him in this role expresses God's authority in the marriage. Hence Paul finds it appropriate to appeal to the wife to submit to her husband "as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). "As" (*hōs*) indicates the manner of her submission. She should submit to her husband as she submits to the Lord. The comparative "as to the Lord" conjures up what should and does characterize the godly submission a Christian renders to the Lord Jesus. This one qualification says it all, even though Paul goes on to explicate it in the verses that follow. (In view of Paul's calling for submission of "as to the Lord," we gain a better appreciation of Peter's commendation of Sarah's calling Abraham "lord" and, particularly, of the fact that, as evidence of her submission to her husband, Sarah "obeyed Abraham" [1 Peter 3:6].)

The phrase "in everything" (Ephesians 5:24)²⁸ denotes the comprehensiveness of her submission. In view of the previous use of the word *Lord* with specific reference to Christ (verse 20), "the Lord" in view in Ephesians 5:22 is undoubtedly Jesus Christ, a fact reinforced by Paul's writing next of Christ's Lordship over the church and the church's submission to His headship as the model for how the woman is to submit to her husband.

The words in Colossians 3:18, "Wives, submit to your husbands," are qualified by the words "as is fitting in the Lord" (the Greek for "in the Lord" is *en kurioō*). Here again "as" (*hōs*) is used. Therefore to say that such submission "is fitting"²² "as . . . in the Lord" means that it is appropriate to being under the Lordship of Christ²³ or, to paraphrase, of being a Christian.²⁴ The apostle thus asserts that such submission is proper for Christian wives because it is what our Lord expects. The best illustration of this is another passage commanding this submission, Titus 2:4, 5. There also wives are urged to "be subject to their husbands"²⁵ (verse 5). Paul insists that this exhortation is "in accord with sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Thus the submission of wives to their husbands is not some concession to contemporary mores but is that which abides by scriptural teachings of Christianity (including the doctrine that in Christ there is neither male nor female, which Paul taught in Galatians 3:28).

To return to Colossians 3:18, to "submit to your husbands" is "fitting" or appropriate to the standing wives have "in the Lord." To put it theologically, redemption in Christ undergirds and commends the wife's submission to her husband according to God's design at creation rather than, as some feminists claim, overturning a submission rooted only in the fall. Since Paul warns husbands against sinful abuse of their headship through harshness (Colossians 3:10), perhaps this admonition to wives to submit "as is fitting in the Lord" is not only an encouragement to them to render voluntary submission but also a warning lest they presume that their standing in the Lord justifies their acting as if there were no distinguishable roles for wives and husbands "in the Lord."²⁶

The inherent differences are seen also by noticing that no permanent moral command or any other moral absolute with reference to slavery is used in Paul's instructions to slaves. He simply gives them instructions on how to carry out appropriate work duties and relationships with appropriate Christian attitudes as they find themselves in the then existing institution of slavery. This is analogous to the way Moses is represented by Jesus as having given instruction about what a man must do when he divorces his wife ("because of your hardness of heart") without thereby indicating (as some then and there implied to Jesus) that Moses approved of or encouraged divorce (see Matthew 19:7-8). Furthermore, Paul elsewhere indicates that a slave could properly become free (1 Corinthians 7:21) and therefore he does not treat slavery as a divinely ordained institution as he does that of parents and children—and as he does that of husbands and wives. For both the existence of the marriage relationship and the roles required of each one in it are in the Ephesians passage (and elsewhere) related by Paul to the creation account and God's decisive actions and instructions in that most basic and foundational event. Thus there is a great divide between husband and wives, and parents and children on one side of this list of household relationships, and masters and slaves on the other side.

So we see that the appeal to the fact that slavery is handled alongside the relationships of husbands and wives and parents and children and that therefore they must be regarded in the same way is an error which is popularly referred to "as comparing apples with oranges" and also as the error of "guilt by association." Each relationship must be evaluated in terms of the degree of absoluteness and permanence the apostle intended for it. It certainly is evident that he was both treating marriage as a permanent and absolute institution ordained by God and teaching respectively a specific role for the wife and a specific role for the husband as a divinely prescribed duty for each.

Conclusion

The instruction about wives and husbands found in Ephesians and Colossians, expressed in the key terms "be subject" for wives and "head" for husbands, teaches distinctive roles for wives and husbands. That instruction may be summarized both as a divinely mandated leadership role for husbands in the marriage relationship and a divinely mandated submission to that leadership for wives. The fact that Paul appeals to the creation activity of God with reference to husbands and wives in Ephesians and that in 1 Corinthians 11 he grounds the headship of men in that creation activity of God shows that the apostle regards these roles and the pattern of the role relationship itself as divinely given. His instruction also demands that the respective roles be expressed and fulfilled according to the analogue of the relationship between Christ the head and the church his body. Thus the roles should reflect the actions and attitudes appropriate to that wonderful relationship between Christ and His church. Husbands must therefore exercise their headship with a "love" that "nourishes and cherishes" and that puts aside all "bitterness." Wives must voluntarily submit themselves to their husbands "as to the Lord" with "all respect" because this is in accord with their standing "in the Lord."

The apostle has expressed in Ephesians (5:21-33) and Colossians (3:18-19) the same pattern as that which is found elsewhere in the New Testament (1

damental than that: Paul saw that *when God designed the original marriage He already had Christ and the church in mind*. This is one of God's great purposes in marriage: to picture the relationship between Christ and His redeemed people forever!

But if this is so, then the order Paul is speaking of here (submission and love) is not accidental or temporary or culturally determined: it is part of the *essence of marriage*, part of God's original plan for a perfect, sinless, harmonious marriage. This is a powerful argument for the fact that Christlike, loving headship and church-like, willing submission are rooted in creation and in God's eternal purposes, not just in the passing trends of culture.

Wives, Children, and Slaves?

It is argued sometimes that this list of duties and responsibilities simply reflects the cultural approach to these matters found in the New Testament period and that the apostle is simply asking for conformity to the practices of the day so that the gospel itself will not be hurt by Christians' violating contemporary mores. The argument is then pressed by saying that if we today do not maintain slavery on the basis of Ephesians 6:5-9, we should also not argue from this passage about the differentiating roles of wives and husbands, because we now know (better than the first-century Christians, and Paul) that they are on a par. That is, the existence of slavery and slaves' submission to their masters and the submission of wives to their husbands stand or fall together.²⁸

Space does not permit a full response to this argument here,²⁹ but certain remarks are necessary. It is true that these three relationships (husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves) are dealt with here as a kind of unit. They are treated one after another as different relationships within the larger household moving from the most central (husbands and wives) to the next most crucial (parents and children) to the extended relationship that might exist in some households (masters and slaves). But if the argument advanced above is true, then it cuts all the way across the board. Not only would the teaching about husbands and wives cease to be normative and fall away with slavery, but so would the teaching about parents and children, which is positioned between the other two relationships! The argument would have this effect by insisting that these three are on a complete par. But that aspect of the argument is flawed. It assumes that these relationships treated one after another in this section are thereby placed on the same level and are presumably handled by Paul with the same kind of considerations. Further reflection on these different relationships shows that this is not so.

Take, for example, parents and children. Paul appeals to the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and mother" (Exodus 20:12, cited in Ephesians 6:2) to substantiate his command, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). Thus Paul reaches back to a permanent moral command from God (given in a time and place much earlier than and quite different from that of Ephesians) as the linchpin for his instruction to children. Thus the demise of slavery does not sweep this permanent moral command for children away, for the two relationships are *not* inseparably connected as to their essence, but only exist side-by-side because slavery fit into the larger household setting of that day.

Corinthians 11:1-3, 8-9; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Peter 3:1-7). And he has also demanded, as was done similarly by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:1-7), that the respective roles be carried out with all the graciousness that the redeeming grace of Christ has brought to each and continues to accomplish in each in their respective roles as a wife and as a husband. In short, as analogues of Christ and His church, the husband is asked to exercise, with love, a headship over his wife and the wife is asked to submit, with respect, to her husband.

9

What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?

1 Timothy 2:11-15

Douglas Moo

The New Testament makes it plain that Christian women, like men, have been given spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Women, like men, are to use these gifts to minister to the body of Christ (1 Peter 4:10); their ministries are indispensable to the life and growth of the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-26). There are many examples in the New Testament of just such ministries on the part of gifted Christian women (see Chapter 5 in this volume). To be true to the New Testament, then, the contemporary church needs to honor those varied ministries of women and to encourage women to pursue them.

But does the New Testament place any restrictions on the ministry of women? From the earliest days of the apostolic church, most orthodox Christians have thought so. One important reason they have thought so is the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:8-15:

⁸I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. ⁹I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵But women will be kept safe through childbirth, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Has the church been right to think that this passage imposes certain permanent restrictions on the ministry of women? Certainly this is what the passage, as translated above, seems to say. Women are not to teach or to have authority over men. They are not to do so because of the order in which God created man and woman and because of how man and woman fell into sin. However, many in our

MALE AND FEMALE IN THE NEW CREATION

Galatians 3:26-29

Gordon D. Fee

Toward the end of his argument that Jew and Gentile form one people of God on the common ground of "faith in Christ Jesus,"¹ Paul applies what he has argued thus far to the present circumstances of the Galatian believers:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:26-29)

At issue in the debate about gender equality in this passage² is the scope of the unexpected elaboration in Galatians 3:28 of the "all of you" in Galatians 3:27. Is the equality, or oneness, of the three pairs—Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female—to be limited to the justifying work of Christ alone, or does it include other aspects of life in the believing community as well? Or is it possible that put-

¹My reasons for following the historic tradition regarding this phrase can be found in Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 325. In any case, the ultimate predicate is God's grace, not our faith (see Eph 2:8).

²Since I was raised in a home and church where gifting took precedence over roles, I find the present debate over equality, complementarity and hierarchy to be something of a retrogression. My father was a pastor and also gave general leadership to the home; yet it was clear that he and my gifted mother were always in it together. Moreover, gifted women preached and taught in our church, and no one objected. Thus it is difficult for me to engage a passage like this from the perspective of an ideological controversy. Nevertheless, what Paul is saying about the people of God has much broader implications that need to be explored. Getting at Paul's own purposes is the key exegetical issue.

ting the question this way already exhibits prejudice toward the text one way or the other, since this question does not seem to rise immediately out of the text of Galatians itself?

But a key exegetical question, seldom noted, does beg to be answered: Why does Paul add the second and third pair at all in an argument that otherwise has to do only with Jew and Gentile? And especially, why the addition of the third pair—with its formulation "male and female," not "man and woman" (which could mean "husband and wife")—since in similar moments elsewhere (1 Cor 12:13 [cf. 7:17-24]; Col 3:10) this pairing is not included?

The pursuit of this basic exegetical question should give us some insight into the nature and scope of the "newness" Paul sees as available in the new creation. But to get there, we must first examine the argument of Galatians as a whole and of Galatians 3:1-4:7 in particular.

At Issue in Galatians: Jew and Gentile as One People of God

Most agree on the nature of the crisis in Galatia: that Jewish Christian "agitators" (Gal 1:7; 5:10) had infiltrated these Gentile churches insisting that the men be circumcised (see Gal 6:12; cf. 2:3-5; 5:2-3)—the crucial item of a larger agenda of Torah observance that would have included the sabbath and food laws as well (Gal 4:10-11; 2:11-14). Galatians is Paul's response to this crisis.

But there is less agreement regarding a strategy for reading Paul's response. Traditionally it has been to read it through the eyes of Martin Luther.³ The starting point here is the so-called *propositio* of Galatians 2:15-16, where three times in one sentence Paul asserts negatively that justification is not "by works of law," and three times positively, "but by faith in Christ Jesus." So what drives Galatians is framed in terms of whether people are justified by faith or by works.

But this appears to be a slightly skewed reading strategy. Not only does it leave too much of Galatians unaccounted for—especially the central role the Spirit plays in the argument—but it also tends to focus on the individual believer's relationship with God rather than on Paul's primary concern: *the people of God* as such. This is not to negate the central role of "justification by faith"; rather this phrase simply does not provide an adequate strategy for reading Galatians as a whole. After all, this terminology is missing altogether from Paul's "defense" with which the letter be-

³Advocated, for example, by R. Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988); cf. S. L. Johnson Jr., "Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28," in *RBMT*, pp. 154-64.

gins (Gal 1:10-2:14) and from Galatians 4, where the first biblical-theological argument is brought to conclusion (Gal 4:1-7) and the second one is given *in toto* (Gal 4:21-31).

At issue, rather, for Paul is the passion of his life and calling: Jew and Gentile as one people of God in Christ Jesus. For him the crisis has to do with whether Gentiles get in on the promise to Abraham (Gen 12:2-3; cf. Gal 3:14) without also taking on Jewish identity, especially those marks of identity that specifically distinguished Jews from Gentiles in the Diaspora (circumcision, sabbath and food laws⁴). To put that in a more theological way, the driving issue in Galatians is not first of all soteriology but ecclesiology:⁵ who constitute the people of God in the new creation brought about by the "scandal of the cross" (Gal 6:11-16)?

Here is where the crucial issue of "justification by faith" comes into the picture: It is through the work of Christ and the gift of the Spirit that the ground has been leveled, so that Jews have no advantage over Gentiles or vice versa. Thus the argument of the letter finally concludes on this very important note based on the "scandal of the cross": that "neither circumcision [= being Jewish] nor uncircumcision [= being Gentile] means anything; what counts is a new creation" (Gal 6:15).⁶

That Jew and Gentile as one people of God is the driving issue in Galatians is made clear by the way the several arguments are worked out, especially Paul's "defense" (Gal 1:10-2:14) and the two central arguments from Scripture in Galatians 3:1-4:7 and 4:21-31.

What emerge in Paul's defense regarding the "truth of the gospel" (Gal 2:5, 14) are not terms like *justification*, *faith* or *works of law*. Rather the overriding concern is for Gentile inclusion in the people of God. Thus in part one of Paul's defense (Gal 1:13-24), where he asserts his nondependence on Jerusalem for his gospel and apostleship, he refers to his calling in terms of God's revealing "his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles" (Gal 1:16). In part two (Gal 2:1-10), where he relates his first visit to Jerusalem for the purpose of discussing his understanding of the gospel, the narrative focuses on his role in the Gentile mission (Gal 2:2-9).

⁴Circumcision was the chief distinguishing mark and the chief reason for Gentile men remaining "God-farers" without becoming full proselytes. See Galatians 2:3-5; 5:3-5, 11; 6:12-15; for the "observance of days" see Galatians 4:8-11; for food laws see Galatians 2:11-14.

⁵In its proper sense, referring to our understanding of the people of God as such, not church order and function.

⁶Cf. the earlier expression of this dictum in Galatians 5:6, where the concern was ethical ("faith expressing itself through love"), and the still earlier 1 Corinthians 7:19, where Paul negates change of status as a value for those who live in the new creation.

not on the content of the gospel as such. And so also in part three (Gal 2:11-14), where he recounts the disagreement in Antioch over table fellowship, which has altogether to do with the inclusion of Gentiles as full and equal members of the people of God (see especially Gal 2:14).

In the same way, the argument that justification is "by faith" and therefore "law-free" (Gal 3:1-4:7) focuses on the place of the Gentiles in God's new economy. Paul begins with the Galatians' (as uncircumcised Gentiles) own past and present experience of the Spirit (Gal 3:1-6), since the Spirit is the new identity marker over against circumcision or any other form of Torah observance. Here is where "by faith" comes into the argument: their new constitution as the people of the Spirit came as a gift, by "faith" and not by "observing the law." Paul concludes (Gal 3:6) by appealing to Abraham as both the paradigm and the "father" of all who live by faith.⁷

The rest of this argument (Gal 3:7-4:7) then takes up the question, who are Abraham's true "seed" and thus "heirs" of the promise? Paul's answer begins with the assertion that "Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith" (Gal 3:8), which is immediately picked up in terms of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:3) that "all nations [Gentiles] will be blessed through you." He then contrasts life based on faith, like Abraham's (Gal 3:7-9), with life based on works of law (Gal 3:10-12), pointing out on the basis of two Old Testament texts (Hab 2:4; Lev 18:5) that these are incompatible options (that is, one cannot just *add* circumcision to faith). Those who would "live" must do so by faith alone; those who would keep the law must "live" by "observing the law," which thus excludes living by faith. This part of the argument is then brought to a momentary conclusion in Galatians 3:14: "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus [Abraham's true 'seed'], so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit."⁸

After arguing in two different ways for the temporary, thus secondary, nature of the law (Gal 3:15-18, 19-22), Paul wraps up this first biblical-theological argu-

⁷Because Paul never starts an independent clause with the comparative *kat'hoōs*, the TNIV rightly has included Galatians 3:6 as the conclusion of Galatians 3:1-5. Thus the argument from the Galatians' *apartness* of the Spirit, expressed in a series of rhetorical questions (Galatians 3:2-5), concludes with this intertextual appeal to Genesis 15:6, setting the next part of the argument in motion.

⁸The "we" in this concluding sentence refers to Jew and Gentile alike, since Christ died to remove the curse of having to live by law (an especially Jewish reality) when in fact life comes only through faith (Gal 3:10-14).

ment with two concluding paragraphs (Gal 3:23-29; 4:1-7), which together focus on the primary question, who are Abraham's true heirs? His answer: those who are God's "sons" through God's Son, both Jew and Gentile alike. Our text is the main point of the first of these two conclusions. Appealing to the believers' common baptism (reflecting the new creation theology of Romans 6:1-11), in which they have "clothed themselves with Christ," Abraham's true "seed" (Gal 3:15-18), Paul points out the logical result: since *all* are now "children of God through faith" and *all* who have been baptized are thus clothed with Christ, there is therefore "neither Jew nor Greek. . . . For you are *all* one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). This, at least, is where the argument has been heading and where it will go from here.⁹

But in fact Paul says more than this, and it is the "more than" that should catch our attention; for what is at stake is not simply the soteriological question of *how* people are saved, whether it is by faith or by works of law. The final clause in Galatians 3:28 makes this clear. Paul's explanatory "for" does not elaborate that *all* are *equally* justified in God's sight through faith in Christ Jesus but rather that *all constitute one people* (form one body) by their equal standing in Christ. After all, those involved in the struggle in Galatia are already "saved." What is at stake is ecclesiology: who constitute the *people of God* under the new covenant of Christ and the Spirit, and *on what grounds* are they constituted? Paul's answer: (1) Jew and Gentile together form the one people of God, (2) on the grounds of their common trust in Christ and reception of the Spirit.¹⁰

This is precisely why here alone in Galatians Paul adds the otherwise extraneous "neither slave nor free, neither male nor female." These pairs are *not* inherent in an argument about "justification by faith," but they are crucial to Paul's understanding of the people of God as being newly constituted by Christ and the Spirit. For these three pairs represent the primary ways people were divided/separated from each other in the structures of the present age that was now passing away (1 Cor 7:31; cf. 1 Cor 2:6): on the basis of race, social standing and gender. But "in Christ Jesus," Paul asserts, these categories have lost their structural significance and relevance.

⁹It is instructive that the final conclusion (Gal 4:1-7) does not mention faith at all, rather it concludes on the matter of "sonship" and "heirs" (= Abraham's true seed as God's children).

¹⁰The second biblical-theological argument (Gal 4:21-31) further supports this reading strategy where again there is no mention of "justification by faith." At issue now is the identity of the true children of Sarah, that is, "children of promise" (Gal 4:23, 28). The answer: those who are "born by the power of the Spirit" (Gal 4:29) which again has to do with Gentile inclusion, as the whole argument makes clear.

vance;¹¹ that is, these very things that keep people distanced from or at odds with each other in a fallen world have been relativized in the body of Christ, where not only Jew and Greek but also masters and slaves, men and women, all form that one body together.

Therefore the ultimate exegetical question that arises in Galatians 3:26-29 is, where did Paul come by this radically new understanding of equality "in Christ"?

Galatians 3:28 and New Creation Theology

Another surprising moment in this passage is Paul's use of baptismal language in Galatians 3:27, language belonging to a much larger theological framework. For at the heart of Paul's own calling and mission is a conviction that Christ and the Spirit have ushered in God's promised "new creation," which is now awaiting its final eschatological consummation (Gal 6:15). Deeply embedded in this perspective is the inclusion of Gentiles, which goes back to the Abrahamic covenant, and in the prophetic tradition came to be associated with the eschatological "new order" that God would someday establish.¹² Paul understood his role as apostle to the Gentiles to be in keeping with this eschatological hope that was in process of fulfillment.¹³ Gentile inclusion in the one people of God was now made possible through the death of Christ and the gift of the eschatological Spirit. Thus Jew and Gentile are mutually related to God on the same grounds with a mutual identity in God's new creation.

New creation theology is articulated in two ways by Paul. First, in the key passage (2 Cor 5:14-17) Paul is arguing again (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-4:21) for both his gos-

¹¹There are some inherent tensions regarding the three pairs, in that over against ethnicity and social standing, gender belongs to the created order as something ordained by God and therefore good. To be human is to be either male or female. So while it is true that value and identity based on gender, especially with regard to societal structures and roles, are now a thing of the past for the people of God, that is not true of ontological essence. In ways that one will not always be "Jew or Gentile, slave or free," one will always be male or female. The new humanity, after all, is grounded in the humanity of Jesus Christ, so that the distinctions between male and female remain just that—distinctions, diverse yet essential ways of being human. Our present unity in diversity as human beings is not lost, precisely because this diversity is essential to our being human; thus at one and the same time it equally matters and does not matter in terms of final reality. What Paul is therefore leveling here are the values and structural norms imposed on these distinctions.

¹²E.g., see Isaiah 2:1-5; 25:6-8; 51:4; 66:19-21; Micah 4:2-5; Zechariah 14:16.

¹³E.g., see how the argument of Romans ends with the eschatological inclusion of the Gentiles with Jews as one people of God as its main point (Rom 15:1-13), which is immediately followed by an explanation of Paul's role in this reality (Rom 15:14-21).

pel of a crucified Messiah and his own cruciform apostleship. He asserts that the new creation brought about by Christ's death and resurrection nullifies viewing anyone/anything from the "old age" perspective (Greek *kata sarika*, "according to the flesh"). Why? Because Christ's death has brought the whole human race under the sentence of death (2 Cor 5:14), so that those who live in God's new order do so for the One who died for them and was raised again (2 Cor 5:15). Thus being "in Christ" means belonging to the new creation: the old has gone, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17). This radical, new-order point of view—resurrection life marked by the cross—lies at the heart of everything Paul thinks and does (cf. Phil 3:4-14).

Second, this leads to a series of texts in which Paul picks up "second exodus" imagery from Isaiah 40-66: God is about to do a "new thing" (Is 43:18-19) and in the end will establish a "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17; 66:22-23). In Paul's writings this theme is applied to believers, who through association with Christ's death and resurrection have themselves experienced death and being raised to newness of life (Rom 6:1-14; 7:4-6; Eph 4:20-24; Col 3:1-11). Common to these texts, either explicitly (Rom 6:1-14) or implicitly (e.g., cf. Col 3:1-11 with 2:9-12), is an association with Christian baptism. Colossians 3:1-11 is especially noteworthy, since it concludes: "Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." That is, in the new order already set in motion through Christ's death and resurrection the value-based distinctions between people—ethnicity and status—no longer maintain.

The thematic resonance of Galatians 3:26-29 with these texts—especially the baptismal presuppositions of Romans 6:1-14—seems unmistakable. Thus Paul concludes Galatians by deliberately negating both circumcision (= being Jewish) and uncircumcision (= being Gentile) as having value because "the new creation" is now in place (Rom 6:15). This does not refer to a "new creature" at the individual level, true as that might be, but to a world made new as promised in Isaiah 65:66. After all, it is the corporate nature of the new creation that is emphasized in our text ("for you are all one in Christ Jesus").

Thus what is in view here is not the individual believer's being "justified by faith in Christ Jesus" but that those who have had such faith, and have expressed it in Christian baptism, have been joined to one another as a new body that is to live the life of the future in their present circumstances, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. It is this all-encompassing eschatological reality of "the new order,"

in which all these diverse expressions of being human are made one, that lies behind the remarkable addition of "slave nor free, . . . male nor female" to "Jew nor Greek."

The Implications of New Creation Theology

Our difficulty with this text in relation to the "gender question" is how we are to understand some inherent ambiguities in the way Paul addresses issues in his churches where God's diverse, but one, people live out their "already/not yet" eschatological existence in a social context. The key lies in two places.

1. One must begin by taking Paul seriously with regard to ethnicity, status and gender no longer being relevant for constituting value and social identity in the new creation—especially in light of his thrice-repeated "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value" (Gal 5:6; 6:15; cf. 1 Cor 7:19). That is, even though the categories themselves still function in the present, their significance in terms of old-age values has been abolished by Christ and the Spirit. Each of Paul's readers would have been some combination of the three (e.g., a Jewish free woman or a Gentile male slave). But in the new creation none of this counts in terms of significance or value; so even though they continue to live in old age sociological contexts, they do so under a new set of rules. The Jewish free woman is now "Christ's slave," the Gentile male slave is "Christ's freedman" (1 Cor 7:19-24). The sociological categories count for nothing: how one lives within the categories counts for everything.

The difficulty for most contemporary Christians is in understanding the truly radical nature of Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:28, a difficulty that has two dimensions. First, Paul's eschatological, new creation framework (the future as "already but not yet"), which was the *primary* way the earliest believers understood their existence, is quite foreign to us. Second, the culture of the Westernized world is equally foreign to that of these early believers at fundamental points. For them position and status prevailed in every way,¹⁴ identifying and circumscribing their existence, giving advantage to some over others with little chance that the disadvantaged might change their status.

Thus Gentiles had all the advantages over Jews, so Jews took refuge in their relationship with God, which they believed advantaged them before God over the Gentiles. Hated was deep and mutual. Likewise, masters and slaves were consigned

¹⁴Regrettably, this is still true for some in the West, especially for many nonwhite males and many women.

to roles where power and authority went to masters.¹⁵ The same was true for men and women, especially in the household, where women were subordinated in every way to their husbands as "master of the household." A typical marriage was established by contract, not based on love, and was usually between a man of about thirty and a teenage girl who went straight from her father's household to his and therefore came under his protection and instruction. A household's wife existed primarily for two purposes: providing a legitimate heir and managing certain aspects of the household. So unenviable was her station (and therefore her person) that according to Diogenes Laertius, Socrates used to say every day that "there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: first, that I was born a human being, and not one of the brutes; next that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian."¹⁶ This obviously influenced the famous rabbinical prayer "Blessed are you, O God . . . that I'm not a brute creature, nor a Gentile, nor a woman."¹⁷

It is difficult for us to imagine the effect of Paul's words in Galatians 3:28 in a culture where position and status preserved order through basically uncrossable boundaries, and where attempting to cross those boundaries brought shame instead of honor (the one core value of the culture).¹⁸ Paul asserts that in the fellowship of Christ Jesus significance and status no longer lie with being Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female. The all-embracing nature of this affirmation, its countercultural significance, the fact that it equally *disadvantages* all by equally *advantaging* all—these stab at the very heart of a culture sustained by people's maintaining the right position and status. But in Christ Jesus, the One whose death and resurrection inaugurated the new creation, all things have become new; the new era has dawned.¹⁹

2. But precisely because Paul still lived eschatologically in a world in which

¹⁵This is one place, it should be pointed out, where change could take place in that culture, because slavery was not based on race as in the tragic history of the United States. Because it was based primarily on war or economics, people could change status: people could sell themselves into slavery, and masters often manumitted slaves. Paul himself addresses this matter in I Corinthians 7:20-24 and Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* I.33 (LCL). It should not surprise us therefore that female babies were often "exposed," thrown away on trash heaps.

¹⁷*Menahot* 43b (Epstein translation).

¹⁸See David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000) pp. 23-42.

¹⁹It should also be pointed out, however, that the consummation of the new era inaugurated by Christ, which will bring an end to "Jew and Gentile, slave and free," will not do the same for male and female. See note II above.

honor and shame were the primary values, he also reflects a degree of ambivalence toward cultural structures and norms. On the one hand, the fact that early believers followed a "crucified Messiah" (the ultimate oxymoron for both Jew and Greek) meant they aligned themselves with a religious sect whose founder had experienced ultimate shame (hence Paul's saying to the basically Gentile congregations at the heart of the empire that the gospel is not a matter of shame for him [Rom 1:16]). To follow Christ and thus experience cultural shame and isolation were not negotiables for Paul; this is the way God had chosen (through the foolish things of the world) to bring the present order to an end (the point of the argument in I Cor 1:18-2:5).

On the other hand, precisely because the present age is in the process of passing away, and because cultural shame was at the very heart of the Christian gospel, Paul was quite ready to yield on certain cultural matters so as not to predicate the shame on lesser things.²⁰ Thus one should hardly expect him to tinker with roles and structures in a world that is on its way out. Though he recognizes their existence, he does not argue (except in the case of government in general, Rom 13:1-7) that they are divinely ordained. Rather, since Christ and the Spirit have already pronounced death on the old order, one can live as Christ's servant regardless of ethnicity or status (I Cor 7:17-24). But Paul will not give *significance* to these fundamental irrelevancies, in either direction.

This relativizing of old age structures is why Paul can say in another setting, "Slay as you are" (I Cor 7). Where the Corinthians were making change itself a matter of religious value, Paul insists that status neither advantages nor disadvantages one in the body of Christ.²¹ At the same time, he runs roughshod over cultural norms by insisting that the sexual union between husband and wife was no longer a matter of the husband's having it his way. To the contrary, in Christian marriage the wife has "mastery/authority" over her husband's body in a way that is equal to his (I Cor 7:3-4). Indeed, the mutuality argued for in I Corinthians 7:1-16 stands all by itself in the literature of the ancient world. For Paul the structures as such are irrelevant because "this world in its present form is passing away" (I Cor 7:31).

Thus regarding the societal implications of his new creation theology, it looks as if Paul were full of ambiguity; but I think not. Rather, he is altogether consistent

²⁰ Cf. Paul's argument on the basis of cultural shame over the matter of head coverings in the assembly in I Corinthians 11:2-16, esp. I Corinthians 11:4-6 and 13. See chapter eight in this book.

²¹ On this whole question see Gordon D. Fee, *Commentary on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 307-9.

with his dictum that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for a thing but the new creation." Always for him the issue itself (circumcision or food, for example) is irrelevant; Jews and Gentiles may do as they wish. But when someone makes a religious issue of it one way or the other, then he comes out fighting.

The easiest place to see this at work is at table, a matter addressed first in I Corinthians²² and deeply embedded in the argument of Galatians. Indeed, besides circumcision this is the only specific issue related to "justification by faith for Jew and Gentile alike" that is discussed in Galatians (Gal 2:11-14)—a sure indication that the focus of this letter is primarily ecclesiological. It seems clear on the basis of Galatians 2:14 that in the (house) churches in Antioch, Jews and Gentiles shared community meals where Jewish dietary laws were not observed. But after "certain people came from James," Peter and Barnabas "began to draw back and separate" themselves from such Gentile tables, incurring condemnation and public disgrace from Paul for their actions.

But might they not have argued that they were following Paul's own example? After all, in I Corinthians 9:19-23 he affirms that when eating with Jews, he is as a Jew, and when with Gentiles, as a Gentile—all of this in order that he "might win some." So what makes Peter's action in Antioch bring forth fighting words? The answer lies with Paul's deeply embedded new creation worldview. Kosher means nothing in the new creation; therefore Jews may continue to live as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles in the privacy of their own homes. But when Jewish believers insist on kosher meals in the setting of the community of faith, they are giving significance to kosher, which is precisely what has been abrogated through Christ and the Spirit. This is also how Paul views the wealthy Corinthian householders who abuse others at the Lord's Table (I Cor 11:17-34). "Don't you have homes to eat and drink in?" he asks, assuming that old practices may remain in private meals (from which slaves and [usually] wives and daughters were excluded). "Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing?" he goes on, making it clear that in the gathered community only "new creation" practices are welcome: thus husbands and wives, masters and slaves, Jew and Gentile all feast together in anticipation of the great final eschatological banquet.

²²See I Corinthians 5:6-13, where the incestuous man is excluded from the table; I Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:1-22, where believers are excluded from eating meals in the pagan temples; I Corinthians 9:19-23 and 10:23-31, where he establishes his own attitude toward eating meals in various settings; and I Corinthians 11:17-34, where he condemns the maintaining of distinctions based on status at the Lord's Table.

The reason for what may appear as duplicity in Paul is that in the ongoing expedition of life in the old age such matters count for nothing—because Christ has changed the rules so drastically. But that is also why in the community of faith the old rules cannot be maintained; to do so would be to give them significance that in fact they no longer have.

This relaxed attitude toward roles and structures comes out equally clearly in Paul's use of family and household images for the church. Thus Paul urges that all are "brothers and sisters" because the Spirit of the Son has been sent into our hearts so that we now call God "Abba" in the language of the Son (Gal 4:6-7). So when Onesimus is returned to his owner Philemon, Paul delicately urges Philemon to take him back into the household to reassume his role as a slave. But with consummate spiritual wisdom he says far more, by adding: "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" (Philem 16). This does not abolish the system, but carried through by Philemon, it dismantles the significance given to it (and in this indirect way, of course, heads toward the dismantling of the system itself).²³ But one should also note Onesimus's vulnerability in this matter. He could not secure a change of status or relationship; this depended on the grace of the gospel's having penetrated Philemon so that the slave could in practice become Christ's freedman and Philemon's "brother."

So where does that leave us with regard to "male and female"? In much the same place. The household codes in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 assume the structural norm (of the privileged few who had large households), where the husband, father and master are the same person—the patron (hopefully benevolent) of his wife, children and slaves.²⁴ But Paul radicalizes this norm in a countercultural way, by insisting that the believing husband love his wife—which had very little to do with marriage in that culture. Not only so, he further insists that he love her "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25), putting the significance attached to the structures into jeopardy. In the new order husband and wife are first

²³This Onesimus is very likely the same who became bishop of Ephesus; and even if this is not the case, we are not wrong as to the possibility of it. See Ignatius *Epistolas* 1.1-3: "In God's name, therefore, I received your large congregation in the person of Onesimus, your bishop in this world, a man whose love is beyond words. My prayer is that you should love him in the Spirit of Jesus Christ and all be like him. Blessed is he who gave you such a bishop. You deserved it."

²⁴Benevolence was the more common reality, in part because it was in the household's self-interest, in that the Greco-Roman household was not a haven of retreat but primarily a place of production (see Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997], p. 54).

of all brother and sister in Christ, thus radically altering the perspective, so that she is not simply a member of his household but is in *relationship* to him; they are members together of "one body."²⁵ As such, either may prophesy or teach (1 Cor 14:26)—which are matters of Spirit gifting, not gender—as long as some cultural norms that distinguish male and female were maintained (1 Cor 11:2-16).

At the same time the church itself is God's household; and in the practical outworking of the community of faith their corporate life was expressed in the context of individual households. It is reasonable to assume that the patron of a household gave leadership to the church that functioned in the context of that household; indeed, it is impossible to imagine that it could have been otherwise in Greco-Roman culture. So when the household was a woman (e.g., Lydia, Nympha), we may rightly assume that, as in all other matters in her own household, she gave some measure of leadership to her house church. To think otherwise is to impose modern ideas on the Greco-Roman household, on the basis of a prior commitment to her (unprovable) subservient "role" in the church.

All of this to say that Paul was not overly concerned about roles and structures as such. The new creation had abolished eschatological significance for them, so that one could live cruciform in whatever structural role one was found. Paul did not sanctify the structures and roles, as though they had meaning in themselves; for the death and resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Spirit had brought an end to that possibility in terms of what it means to be in *God's family/household*.

Conclusions

So where does this bring us in conclusion to a discussion of Galatians 3:28—with its eye-catching addition of slave and free, male and female to the primary issue of Jew and Gentile? The answer lies first with the fact that both the argument of Galatians as a whole and the specifics of this passage itself indicate that this text has to do with Paul's ecclesiology: what it means to be the people of God under the new covenant brought about through Christ's death and the gift of the Spirit. Second, it lies with Paul's new creation theology embedded in this text, which sounds the death knell to the old order, even though its structures remained in the surrounding culture. Paul's concerns regarding structures may appear ambiguous, but that is precisely

because of their ultimate irrelevance. Cultural structures simply exist—as the ways sociological groups maintain their identity and live within their comfort zones. In Paul's view, one can serve Christ well within such limits. What he disallows is giving *significance* to structures and roles as such. Because when one does this, the Jew will demand that the Gentile be circumcised, the husband will want his wife to be his servant, and Philemon can take Onesimus back only as a slave, not as a brother.

It seems arguable, therefore, that even though our text does not explicitly mention roles and structures, its new creation theological setting calls these into question in a most profound way. There is no biblical culture (in the sociological sense) that belongs to all human societies. And to give continuing *significance* to a male-authority viewpoint for men and women, whether at home or in the church, is to reject the new creation in favor of the norms of a fallen world.²⁶ It is to give a significance to being male that in the end usurps the work of the Spirit not only in the wife and her relationship to God but also in the church—the expression of the new order and new humanity that is already present, even while it is yet to be.

Indeed, on the basis of this text and its place in the argument of Galatians—where socialized distinctions between people in their relationship to God have been overcome by Christ and the Spirit—one must argue that the new creation has brought in the time when the Spirit's gifting (the Spirit who is responsible for ushering in the new order) should precede roles and structures, which are only a carryover from the old order that is passing away.²⁷

And in the end, if it appears that too much is being made of ecclesiology beyond the obvious soteriological dimension of our text, one must remember that for Paul these cannot be easily separated. To be saved meant to become a member of Christ's body/family/household. It is therefore not without significance that the one specific illustration in Galatians of the distinction between Jew and Gentile besides circumcision had to do with eating together at a common meal (Gal 2:11-14). If the gospel does not take root here (with cultural forces against it on both sides, as they were with the place of slaves and women at table) then individualistic salvation would seem to count for little, if it counts for anything at all.

²⁵This is especially true of the hierarchical position that the wife is dependent on her husband for her spiritual well-being, including a hierarchy of spiritual communication: Christ → husband → wife. In sharp contrast, Paul insists here that to be "one in Christ" (because in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female) means that each is individually baptized into the one body of Christ, so that all are mutually interdependent for life in the new order.

²⁷See chapter fourteen in this volume.

²⁶To conclude otherwise forces one logically into the position of justifying slavery as a God-ordained structure for the present age, since the two household codes (Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1) assume both realities in the same structure: the Greco-Roman household of the privileged. Those who advocate the continuation of male authority today have failed to address this problem adequately.