

# Divine blessing and order in marriage and the church

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## Introduction

In every age and culture, the Word of God challenges how people think and the way they live. Though times change and the Word may seem more 'out of season' (1 Tim 4:2) in one era than another, it never ceases to confront our fleshly ways of thinking. God's Word continues to reveal his redemption in Christ and teach his good and life-giving will for his people (Rom 7:25; 1 Cor 2:16; Heb 4:12; Eph 4:12–13; Col 1:28; 4:12). This is also true when it comes to the bible's ordering of marriage and the church. Whether we are talking about 2020, the 1950s, or the first century A.D., God's Word in these matters has always been challenging. To be sure, biblical teaching about marriage may sound stranger to today's culture than a few generations ago, but texts like Eph 5:22–33, Col 3:18–19, and 1 Pet 3:1–7 addressed self-absorbed hearts and minds no less then than now. It cannot be otherwise given the sinfulness of our human condition.

Accordingly, we need to be wary of confusing traditional-cultural caricatures of marriage and church with the biblical teaching, which invariably leads to distortions, and look to the biblical teaching itself to form our hearts and minds. Indeed, the latter is vital if we are not to introduce new distortions of our own in our corrective efforts. It has become more commonplace, for example, to assume that the bible does not make any significant theological distinction between men and women in marriage or with respect to the ministry and worship of the church. Yet the bible has much to say about these things for the blessing of women and men alike. However strange these texts may sound to us today, then, we have an opportunity to listen anew to their strange, life-giving teaching and allow the Word of God to illuminate our way (Ps 119:105).

How so? As God's creation and ordinance, the institution of marriage proclaims the divine headship (κεφαλή) of Christ toward his bride the church and her rightly ordered relationship to him. Ephesians 5:22–33 announces Christ's cruciform, self-denying love (the gospel) in cleansing and sanctifying his bride, who receives all good things through her sub-ordination to Jesus (vb. = ὑποτάσσομαι; n. = ὑποταγή). Indeed, here better than just about anywhere else, Paul reveals the work of Christ as the summation of biblical testimony concerning God's gracious dealings with his people (cf. Eph 1:10, 20–23), and the particular way Christian married couples bear witness to it. Far from a recipe for oppression and vice, then, Paul's exhortation to Christian husbands and wives is inspiring and life-giving for those with ears to hear it, and a call to repentance for those who abuse and corrupt it for their own ends. A similar situation pertains to Paul's ordering of public worship in 1 Cor 14:32–34 (and 15:27–28) and in 1 Tim 2:11–14, which presupposes the equal dignity and independent value of all concerned.

Though several other NT texts address these same realities,<sup>1</sup> this paper confines itself largely to the above texts as it explores the biblical teaching on divine order within marriage and the church. My purpose here is quite straightforward: to show that headship and sub-ordering within the marital and ecclesial spheres are indeed *biblical*, and not an imposition upon the scriptures (so-called 'eisegesis'). These are good gifts of a good God through which he desires to bless his people.<sup>2</sup> From the outset it must be stated clearly that these texts do not advocate the unilateral subordination of women to men or any notions of inferiority. Nor do they give permission for abuse premised on false understandings of headship. On the contrary, these texts reveal God's ordering in specific relationships: within marriage and the ministry of the church as a worshipping community. They presuppose the inherent equality of women and men created in God's image. They do, however, recognise differences in how men and women fit into God's orders of marriage and the church.

As applied in the above texts, the terminology often translated 'subordinate oneself' or 'be subordinate' (ὑποτάσσομαι) and 'subordination' (ὑποταγή) are 'taxonomical' terms. That is, they have to do with how one fits into an order or arrangement. Several points of clarification are in order. First, these terms are not about abstract notions of orderliness but how concrete communities are ordered.<sup>3</sup> These texts therefore reveal important aspects of how God has ordered the church and family for the reception of his blessings. Second, everywhere the NT employs this terminology in its teaching about marriage and the church we find the middle verb-form ὑποτάσσομαι, not the active ὑποτάσσω that means 'to place [someone else] under' or 'to subordinate [someone else]'. When the bible does use ὑποτάσσω, *God* is the one who 'places under'.<sup>4</sup> When the NT addresses *people* in marriage or the church, however, it does not address its commands to the 'head,' as though it were his task to place others under himself. It instead directly addresses this verb to those who are to *fit themselves into* such ordering. In respect to marriage, for example, Paul applies the verb to wives in the middle voice (ὑποτάσσομαι), not to husbands in the active (ὑποτάσσω). The same applies to 1 Cor 14:32, 34 and 1 Tim 2:11, whose commands appeal to the consciences of those who must *fit themselves* into God's ordering in this way. Paul urges them to accommodate themselves to God's ordering of the worshipping community. Third, where marriage and the church are concerned, these commands have much more to do with the reception of God's blessing and accountability than with 'hierarchy' as typically understood (and

- 1 The NT applies the verb ὑποτάσσομαι to wives in every place where it exhorts and encourages married people in their vocations as husband and wife: Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1–7.
- 2 On the goodness and importance of subordination in community, see John W. Kleinig, 'Ordered Community: Order and Subordination in the New Testament,' *LITJ* 39, no.2+3 (2005): 196–209.
- 3 'Taxonomy' refers to an established ordering of something (from the Greek word τάξις, meaning 'order'). Accordingly, *BDAG*, s.v. ὑποτάσσω. 1.b.β., notes that this verb 'involv[es] recognition of an ordered structure.' Indeed, besides marriage and the church, this word-family occurs frequently in connection with military units or ranks (e.g., 1 Sam 4:10; 15:4; 2 Sam 23:13; Songs 6:4, 10; Luk 7:8; cf. TDNT, s.v. τάγμα) and priestly/Levitical orders (1 Chron 16:4; 2 Chron 31:2; 1 Esdras 1:15; cf. Ps 104:4); that is, ordered (τάσσω) groups whose members coordinate and cooperate from their particular place in the arrangement.
- 4 E.g., Pss 8:6; 18:47 (= LXX 17:48); 144:2 (= LXX 143:2); 47:3 (= LXX 46:4); 1 Cor 15:27–28 (see below).

nothing at all to do with superiority or inferiority of being). They are about a person finding their place in God's order within these divinely instituted orders, or 'estates' according to the classical terminology. Through such instituted orders God gives his good gifts (e.g., the gospel and sacraments in public worship). They are not static or stale antiquarian ideas, but dynamic and life-giving realities through which Christ's people are nourished and blessed in the life of discipleship.

Today's cultural climate, however, is marked by suspicion toward these divine orders, fearful that accepting them or one's place in them means embracing oppression and surrendering one's dignity. Terms like 'headship,' and 'subordination' are easily heard as cyphers for 'inequality' and oppressive relationships, and many find it difficult even to hear these terms and not equate them with abusive 'power' and 'exploitation' or at least the potential for it. These associations make it difficult to hear God's word without importing distorted notions of them. For this reason, when translating the biblical texts I will largely leave ὑποτάσσομαι untranslated, instead transliterating it as *hypotassomai* (and *hypotasso* for the active verb-form where appropriate), and its noun cognate ὑποταγή as *hypotage*. Along the way this paper also seeks to untangle some confusions and hermeneutical pitfalls that obscure rather than clarify the issues at hand.

### **Divine order in marriage: Ephesians 5:22–33<sup>5</sup>**

'On account of this will a man forsake father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.' This mystery is great; but I speak of Christ and the church. (Eph 5:31-32)

Here Paul cites Genesis 2:24. At first this is unsurprising. In the previous verses he has been exhorting husbands to love their wives 'as their own bodies' and 'flesh' (Eph 5:28–29)—commands that proceed naturally from the 'one flesh' nature of marriage. But what follows is quite unexpected. Paul writes: 'this mystery is great; I am, however, speaking of *Christ and the church*' (Eph 5:32).<sup>6</sup> Rather than apply Genesis 2:24 immediately to 'husband and wife' as Genesis 2 does, Paul applies it to Christ's union with his bride the church. Then he adds—in an almost anticlimactic extension of the thought—'nevertheless also each of you, let each one love his own wife as himself, and the wife, that she revere the husband.' Whatever Paul says to husbands, then, he draws from the pattern of *Christ's* love of his own body, the church, with which *he* is one flesh. That is the definitive marriage after which Christian marriage is patterned.<sup>7</sup> What is more, that is the definitive fulfilment of Gen 2:24.

5 This section is adapted from my article, 'The "Metaphor" of Marriage in the Bible,' *LOGIA* 28, no. 2 (2019): 7–14 (with permission), which explores deeper issues inherent to postmodern and post-Enlightenment hermeneutics.

6 Gk: τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

7 Susan A. Cyre, *From Genesis to Revelation God Takes a Bride: The Divine Marriage of which Human Marriage is an Image* (New York: Page Publishing, 2019) likewise rejects the notion that the divine marriage in the bible is reducible to a metaphor. She writes, 'This marriage union between God and his people is not merely intellectual or idealistic. It is not metaphorical, as if it is something "like" a human marriage. The union between God and his people is a reality' (12). Space precludes further

This is true throughout Eph 5:22–33. The Apostle Paul delivers instructions to Christian husbands and wives according to the pattern of Christ as bridegroom to his bride the church (ἐκκλησία). Christian marriages are to reflect the divine marriage, not the other way around. Christ's relationship to the church is not 'like' marriage in human experience according to a simile; it *is* a marriage. It is *the* marriage of which Christian marriages provide a dim but real reflection as they bear witness to Christ's self-sacrificing love for his bride and her sub-ordination (ὑποτάσσομαι) to her bridegroom and his word. Notably, St Paul does not speak about these things as though Christ's marriage to the church were merely analogous to marriage understood a certain way. The direction of comparison runs the other way as he exhorts Christian husbands and wives to emulate the Lord and his holy bride. They do this through loving, self-denying, self-sacrificial headship and loving, self-denying, faithful cooperation with him.

Paul's exhortation to Christian husbands and wives is thus rooted in Christ's marriage to his bride the church. Wives relate to their husbands 'as (ὡς) to the Lord, because (ὅτι) a husband is head (κεφαλή) of the wife as (ὡς) Christ is head (κεφαλή) of the church' (Eph 5:22–23). Having patterned a husband's headship toward his wife on Christ's headship of the church, Paul then presents the flipside: 'as (ὡς) the church *hypotassomai-s* to Christ, so also (οὕτως και) the wives to their husbands in everything' (Eph 5:24). Though Paul uses the terminology of simile (ὡς, οὕτως), it is not a simile in the usual sense. The 'unknown' divine reality is not likened to some human reality known from experience. Rather, the direction of comparison runs from the divine reality to the human at every point. It runs from the pattern of Christ's headship and the church's willing sub-ordination to the Christian husband-wife relationship. This heavenly marriage provides the definitive pattern in the bible's instruction on marriage, however instructive other contrasts with Greco-Roman background may also be.<sup>8</sup>

demonstration of how central the divine marriage between YHWH and Israel and its culmination in Christ and his church is to biblical theology. Besides the above-mentioned texts see, e.g., Num 25:1–3; Hosea 1–3; Jer 3:1–14, 20; 31:31–34; Ezek 16:1–34; Rev 19:7–9; 21:1–3, and 'The "Metaphor" of Marriage,' 9–11, where I explore this more purposefully. See further Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. *Whoredom: God's Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), esp. 152–59.

- 8 Tanya Wittwer, 'Headship and Subordination: A Case Study in Lutheran hermeneutics,' *LTJ* 53, no. 1 (2019): 33–34, contends that this passage 'is configured to make it obvious that the life in the Spirit does not conform to the social constructions of the dominant culture.' Thereupon she explains Paul's call to husbands to 'sacrifice themselves' for their wives as an inversion of 'headship' known in the Greco-Roman world, surmising that Paul's vision of marriage consists of a 'mutual submission and servanthood.' Husbandly self-sacrificial headship and wifely self-denying *hypotage* as Paul spells it out, however, seems finally to be understood as a 'cultural construction' that Paul may share but nonetheless modifies (*ibid*, 33). I whole-heartedly agree that Paul's vision of marriage critiques distorted views of headship common in his day, just as it critiques abusive notions of headship today. Paul's 'as...so also' argument makes it clear, however, that he draws the headship-*hypotage* schema itself *not* from the Greco-Roman world but from the divinely ordered estate of marriage and its fulfilment in Christ and the church. No doubt these terms would call to mind aberrant Greco-Roman practices as well, just as they do in our day. But this does not make headship and subordination a social construction. The text plainly and directly patterns marital headship and *hypotage* on the *theological* reality of Christ and his church. *Cultural* analogues, on the other hand, must be inferred.

When Paul exhorts husbands to 'love (ἀγαπάτε) your wives' in v. 25f, the same direction of comparison undergirds it: 'just as (καθώς και) Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, so that he might sanctify,<sup>9</sup> having cleansed her by the washing of water in the word' (Eph 5:25–28). Husbands are to love self-sacrificially according to the pattern of Christ's love for the church, putting their wives before themselves. Such headship is not about 'getting one's way' but calls a husband to order his own will to the will of God, as the Son does the Father.<sup>10</sup> Loving his wife means 'giving himself up' (παρέδωκεν) to God for his wife, seeking not his own benefit but her wholeness and holiness, just as Christ gave himself up to the Father for the sake of her wholeness and sanctity (Eph 5:28).<sup>11</sup> Such headship calls a husband to take responsibility for his family's spiritual wellbeing, as Adam was called to do (Gen 2:15–17, 24)<sup>12</sup> and which Christ does perfectly as head of the church. After dwelling on the mysterious depths of Christ's love for the church, Paul continues: 'just so (οὕτως) ought husbands to love their own wives like their own bodies...for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as (καθώς και) Christ [does] the church, for we are members of his body' (Eph 5:28–30). Again, the comparison runs from the divine reality to the human.

It is worth pausing here to recognise that no other biblical passage decries domestic violence more specifically or strongly than this passage. Nourish and cherish,<sup>13</sup> says St Paul, not abuse, starve, beat, or neglect. Far from approving of any husband who should appeal to 'headship' to justify selfish demands or abusive behaviour, Eph 5:28–30 enjoins them to the very opposite. Moreover, this passage addresses other temptations common to men like idleness, avoidance, or even neglect of wife and/or children (itself a kind of abuse). It calls men to 'step up' and embrace their vocational responsibilities, giving themselves up to God for their families.

Uncomfortable with such notions of order within marriage, however, interpreters often look to Eph 5:21's '*hypotassomai*-ing to one another out of reverence of Christ' as though it nullified these distinct husbandly and wifely stations within marriage.<sup>14</sup> As noted earlier,

9 Gk: καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς... ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσῃ...etc. Note the emphatic placement of 'himself,' underscoring the *self*-sacrificial nature of Christ's love for the church of which he is head, and the corresponding emphatic placement of *her* (αὐτήν). Christ's self-sacrifice is entirely for the church's benefit, i.e., her sanctification, hence its self-denying character.

10 See discussion of 1 Cor 15:27–28 below.

11 Adam G. Cooper, 'A new direction for paradidomi in Ephesians 5:25' (unpublished paper, 2019) observes the consistent vertical and horizontal dimensions to the NT's application of παραδίωμι + reflexive pronoun to Christ's self-sacrifice: Christ 'gives himself up' to the Father *for the sake of* the church (e.g., Eph 5:2, 25; Gal 2:20; cf. Heb 9:14). He observes, 'if Christian husbands are to love their wives in a Christ-like manner, the primary direction of their self-gift will be vertical. They are to love their wives, just as Christ loved the church, by giving themselves up to God the Father, on behalf of and for the sake of their wives.'

12 See discussion of Genesis 2–3 below.

13 ἐκτρέφω = provide food, nourish (BDAG, s.v. ἐκτρέφω); θάλπω = cherish, comfort (BDAG, s.v. θάλπω)

14 Gk: ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ. See Thomas M. Winger, *Ephesians*, Concordia Commentary Series (St Louis, MO: CPH, 2015), 598–653, who provides an excellent summary and critique of issues surrounding 5:21. Winger observes this participial clause's connection to what

however, ὑποτάσσομαι is an inherently taxonomical term that presupposes an order or arrangement. To be sure, there is a mutuality of self-denial involved. But whereas vv. 22 and 24 apply this verb to wives, v. 25 applies *another* verb, 'love' (ἀγαπᾶτε), to husbands.<sup>15</sup> Husband and wife are not interchangeable in the biblical teaching on marriage. Moreover, the relationship between Christ and the church that provides the pattern for Christian marriage is itself clearly taxonomical and asymmetrical. The church subordinates herself to *Christ* and his teaching, not the other way around. Both Christ and the church deny themselves for the sake of the other but in different ways.

We return once more, then, to Paul's 'downward' direction of comparison from the divine marriage to the human. This is the key to understanding headship as he teaches Christian husbands,<sup>16</sup> for it allows us to hear Paul's exhortation to them clearly for what it is: Christ-like self-sacrifice and self-denial. It therefore precludes a distorted view of headship detached from the pattern of Christ and any attempt to justify abusive behaviour thereby. What is more, this downward patterning keeps us from projecting dysfunctional and abusive human experiences 'upward' and distorting Christ's headship. It therefore frees us from suspicions of oppressive agendas in this teaching, and enables us by faith to perceive the goodness of God's commands.

### Divine order in the church: 1 Corinthians 11–14

St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians treats a broad array of issues. These include factious behaviour (ch. 3), sexual immorality (ch. 5; 6:12–20), marriage, celibacy, and widowhood (ch. 7), settling disputes (ch. 6), eating meat sacrificed to idols (ch. 8), and the bodily resurrection (ch. 15). In chs. 11–14, however, St Paul turns his attention to matters directly related to public worship, addressing abuses of the Lord's Supper (11:17–34) and disorder in the public exercise of prophecy and prayer.<sup>17</sup> Like bookends, these chapters begin and end with Paul qualifying how women participate in public worship (11:2–16; 14:33b–38). Both ch. 11 and ch. 14 warn about shame (αἰσχρόν in 11:6 and 14:35) and appeal to *Torah/law*<sup>18</sup> and wider church practice (11:16; 14:33b).

precedes, highlighting subordination as a gift of the Spirit (v. 18), and recognises v. 21's function as a heading 'to the whole unit (5:21–6:9)' (600).

15 Winger, *Ephesians*, 600–601, remarks that '*the meaning and usage of the verb ὑποτάσσω simply does not allow for the idea of mutual submission within a single relationship*' (italics original).

16 There is, of course, also an 'upward' dimension to this as Christian marriage bears witness to the divine marriage between Christ and his church as nothing short of the gospel itself: Christ's cleansing his Bride and his union with her as one body of which he is head. That 'upward' dimension does not constitute the divine marriage, however, but it reflects it to others as a witness.

17 Some of the issues Paul addresses earlier in his letter undoubtedly manifested themselves especially in the Corinthians' public worship. Accordingly, Margaret Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), 258, writes, 'Paul turns to the specific manifestations of Corinthian factionalism when the church comes together.' Similarly, man-woman issues of a broader nature arise earlier in ch. 7's exhortation to faithful monogamy where St Paul says, 'let each [man] have his own wife and let each [woman] have *her own husband* (καὶ ἕκαστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐχέτω).' This latter expression is repeated in 14:35 when Paul commands the women (also via a jussive) 'at home *their own husbands* (τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας) let them interrogate (ἐπερωτήσωσιν).'

18 11:8–9 alludes to Genesis 2, and 14:34 includes, 'as the law (ὁ νόμος) also says;' cf. 'the word of God'

Most significantly for our purposes, St Paul employs the taxonomical language of κεφαλή and ὑποτάσσομαι in these places. In 11:3 at the beginning of the section, Paul spells out the *theological* taxonomy of headship. In 14:34 at its end, he calls on the women to adopt the posture of faithful prophets by deferring to the prophets who weigh/evaluate/judge in the public assembly (cf. διακρινέτωσαν in 1 Cor 14:29). While each context is quite distinct in its argumentation and the problems addressed, these similarities are nonetheless unmistakable, and reinforce the foundational importance of the male-female distinction for Paul's ordering of the church.

Before examining chapters 11–14 more closely, a second significant cluster of this taxonomical language in 1 Cor 15:27–28 bears noting.<sup>19</sup> There Paul speaks about the ordering of all things under Christ's feet, who in turn sub-ordinates himself to the Father:

For he [God] has *hypotasso-ed* all things under his feet. But when it says that 'all things are *hypotasso-ed*,' it is plain that the One *hypotasso-ing* to him all things is excepted. But when all things are *hypotasso-ed* to him, then also the Son will be *hypotasso-ed* to the One who *hypotasso-s* to him all things, so that God may be all in all.<sup>20</sup>

Paul unambiguously applies ὑποτάσσω-language to the Son with respect to the Father, just as he had applied headship language to the Father with respect to the Son in 11:3. Clearly, these descriptions apply to the Son futuristically and eschatologically and not merely to his earthly humiliation (cf. Eph 1:10, 20–23). Moreover, that God the Son 'sub-ordinates himself' to God the Father fits the broader NT witness. The NT is replete with examples bearing witness to the non-interchangeable roles of the Father and the Son within the life of Trinity that enact the taxonomy spelled out in 1 Cor 11:3 and 15:27–28. According to the NT the Son does not do his own will but the will of the Father who sent him (e.g., Matt 12:39, 42; Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; Phil 2:8). Even the Son's teaching is not 'mine' but the Father's and by the Father's authority (Jn 7:16–17). Yet the Son is one with the Father as 'true God of true God' (Nicene Creed; cf. Jn 1:1–14; 12:45; 14:10–11). When in chs. 11–14 Paul applies such taxonomical language to man and woman in the estates of marriage and of the church, then, there is no insinuation of woman's inferiority as though she were a lesser being. Such notions are only possible if we import them at the outset from the tragic distortions around us or from our own distorted notions of hierarchy. But male and female are created in *God's* image, not the other way around. Such human distortions therefore do not set the pattern. Rather, the

(ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ) in 14:36.

19 Eight of the nine occurrences of ὑποτάσσω/ομαι in 1 Corinthians occur in just four verses from chs. 14–15. Paul first uses it in 14:32, 34 and then six times in 15:27–28. It occurs once more in 16:16 as Paul urges the Corinthians to 'be subject to such as these' (ὁμοίως ὑποτάσσησθε τοῖς τοιοῦτοις); namely, Stephanus' household. 14:40 is only instance of the cognate noun, 'order' (κατὰ τάξιν).

20 Gk: πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. ὅταν δὲ εἶπη ὅτι πάντα ὑποτέτακται, δῆλον ὅτι ἐκτός τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα. ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, τότε καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγήσεται τῷ ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα. ἴνα ἧ ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν.

perfect union, love, and order between *the Father and the Son within the Trinity* give headship and subordination their proper character in marriage and the church.

## 1 Corinthians 11

The taxonomy is first laid out in 1 Cor 11:3: God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of every man, a man is the head of his wife. This last relationship resonates clearly with Ephesians 5:22–33, where God's creative ordinance provided the theological foundation for Paul's instruction (Eph 5:31, citing Gen 2:24). 1 Corinthians 11 does the same thing. After 11:3 adduces the same taxonomical relationship between man and wife, vv. 8–9 ground it in creation through allusion to Gen 2:18 and 22: 'For man is not from woman but woman from man. Neither was man created for (διὰ + acc.) woman, but woman for man.' This creational, theological reality undergirds the whole of Paul's instruction for women and men in 11:2–16 and is no cultural construction.

Of course not all interpretive questions raised by 11:2–16 are easily settled, a classic example being how to understand the verb 'to cover' (κατακλύπτω; 11:6–7). But whatever uncertainties remain—whether Paul instructs the women to wear their marriage veils when praying or prophesying or whether hairstyles are in view—these do not render the theological taxonomy at the head of Paul's argument peripheral.<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, it is foundational for all that follows. Nor does the abuse of this and other texts to 'support claims regarding the inferiority of women' mean that they are any less foundational for ecclesial life in the church today.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, in spite of the limits of our fallen imaginations, scripture inspires and urges a notion of headship and order in marriage and the church that is nourishing and good, and that affirms the equal dignity and value of all.<sup>23</sup>

21 Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 127, argues that this verb's combination with 'woman/wife' (γυνή) indicates that the marriage veil is in view. A married woman's wearing the veil showed to all and sundry that she was no longer 'available,' much as a wedding ring functions for us today. The women who were prophesying or praying publically without them did not just 'shame' their husbands but were shamefully out of order in the way they related to other men. Other suggestions include whether the hair is worn up or down, or even short versus long hair. While Winter's argument is in my view the more compelling (recall Paul's earlier warnings in ch. 7), these uncertainties pertain to *how* the taxonomy of 11:3 is observed and celebrated culturally, not the abiding validity of the taxonomy itself as theologically foundational. Cf. the discussion in Greg Lockwood, *1 Corinthians* (St Louis, MO: CPH, 2000), 361–65 (esp. 362), who observes a distinction between 'specific practices' (such as head coverings) and 'universal and permanent principle[s].'

22 Wittwer, 'Headship,' 35. Regarding the meaning of κατακλύπτω, Wittwer favours Sarah Ruden's vaguer assessment 'that the veil was "the flag of female virtue, status, and security,"' concluding that 'Paul's exhortation for all women to veil when praying or prophesying in the church can therefore be seen, *not* as a sign of subordination, but as a step "towards an outrageous equality"' (*ibid*, 36; emphasis added; quoting Sarah Ruden, *Paul Among the People: the Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* [New York: Random House, 2011], 85). The clear taxonomical foundations of the argument from its beginning in 11:3 (cf. 11:10) must entail some sort of ordering, however. Still more problematic, though, is the deeply ingrained notion running through the article that 'subordination' and 'equality' are mutually exclusive in the marital and ecclesial estates. Cf. the discussion regarding 1 Cor 15:27–28 above.

23 The Lutheran Church of Australia's *Theses of Agreement* 6.11 preserves this balance between the



## 1 Corinthians 14

Within 1 Corinthians 11–14, chs. 12–14 constitute a discrete rhetorical section introduced by, ‘Now concerning...’ (Περί δε...), according to standard epistolary conventions.<sup>24</sup> As noted earlier, Paul’s application of the verb ὑποτάσσομαι to women prophets concludes this section of the letter and chs. 11–14 on public worship just as the language of headship had begun it. For this reason, and because it is the first context in 1 Corinthians where St Paul uses the taxonomical word-family ὑποτάσσομαι/τάξις, it is a fitting place to start. 1 Corinthians 14:33b–37 reads:

As in all the churches of the saints, let the women in the churches remain silent. For it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them *hypotassomai*, as the law also says. If they desire to learn something, at home—their own husbands—let them question (ἐπερωτήτωσαν). For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

Or from you did the word of God go out? Or you only has it reached? *If anyone thinks he is a prophet* or spiritual, let him recognise the things I write to you—that they are the Lord’s command.<sup>25</sup>

The verb ὑποτασσεσθωσαν raises the question: to *what or whom* does Paul expect the women to align themselves in 1 Cor 14:34? Context provides the answer. Going back to v. 29, Paul says, ‘Let two or three *prophets* speak, and let *the others* judge/weigh.’<sup>26</sup> Paul would have the first prophet stop speaking (ὁ πρῶτος σιγάτω) when ‘another’ who is sitting down is ready to evaluate (v. 30; cf. ‘the others’ in v. 29). He or she must yield the floor to him. Functionally, then, Paul’s commands to speakers of prophecy assume a taxonomy between prophets who make general contributions and those who judge/ weigh what is said. This taxonomy is spelled out shortly after in v. 32, where we find ‘prophets’ as *both* the subject *and* indirect object of the verb: ‘the spirits of *prophets*—to *prophets*—*hypotassomai*.’<sup>27</sup>

independently valuable ministry of women as members of the household of God, on the one hand, and God’s specific calling of qualified men to the preaching office, on the other: ‘Though women prophets were used by the Spirit of God in the Old as well as in the New Testament, 1 Cor. 14:34,35 and 1 Tim. 2:11-14 prohibit a woman from being called into the office of the public ministry for the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This apostolic rule is binding on all Christendom; hereby her rights as a member of the spiritual priesthood are in no wise impaired.’

24 Cf. Περί δε in 7:1, 25; 8:1; 16:1, 12. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 191–92, explains this formula’s function as a ‘topic marker’ in Greek epistolary style. Mitchell, *ibid*, 266, similarly recognises both the narrower context spanning chs. 12–14 introduced by this formula, which deals with ‘the importance and proper employment of spiritual gifts,’ and a broader context spans 11:2–14:40 that constitutes a ‘Third Section of Proof’ in Paul’s letter (*ibid*, 258–83).

25 My translation, preserving Greek word-order where possible.

26 Gk: προφηται δε δυο η τρεις λαλειτωσαν και οι αλλοι διακρινετωσαν.

27 My translation, again preserving Greek word order with transliteration. Such sub-ordering is clearly to *prophets*, which is positioned first in the axiom where it receives emphasis; that is, to a real, flesh and blood person and not some general principle of orderliness as is sometimes suggested for the instance of this verb in v. 34 (cf. Christian Wolff, *Der Erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, THKNT (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1996), 345).

Just two verses later in v. 34, he says of 'the women' (αἱ γυναῖκες), 'it is not permitted for them to speak, *but let them hypotassomai*.'<sup>28</sup> Alongside other contributors they are to defer to the prophets who publicly evaluate what is said in the congregation, just as 'the spirits of prophets' characteristically do (14:32). This also means refraining from publicly evaluating others' contributions (σιγάτωσαν). In v. 34, then, Paul is concerned with how the women prophets relate to other prophets. He does not *disqualify* them from 'being prophets;' rather he *qualifies how* they should function in the public worship sphere. In the private sphere, on the other hand, they can interrogate their *own husbands/men* as much as they like (v. 35). Paul, then, redirects their questioning or interrogating<sup>29</sup> from *other men* 'in church' where it was problematic, to *their own men* 'at home' where it was not: 'If they desire to learn something, at home—their own husbands/men—let them question...'<sup>30</sup>

Several things emerge from this. First, since Paul addresses the women in their capacity as prophets, there are no contradictions or tensions with ch. 11. There, too, he qualified *how* they should prophesy, only in a different way. Second, Paul does not silence women from every kind of speaking, but speaking that publicly evaluates the prophetic contributions of others. Indeed, this is the third time Paul has commanded 'speaking' (λαλεῖτω) and 'silence' (σιγάτω) with demonstrably *different* kinds of speaking in view. The first time he limited the number of *tongue*-speakers to two or three and required an interpreter (v. 27).<sup>31</sup> In keeping with the edificatory purposes of public prophecy vis-à-vis uninterpreted tongues (14:19, 22–25), he/she must 'be silent in church' (σιγάτω ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ) and 'speak to himself and to God' (λαλεῖτω) if there is no one to interpret. Next in 14:29–31 Paul allows two or three *prophets* to speak, and likewise commands the weighing/judging/evaluating of such contributions. Clearly 'speaking' (λαλεῖτω) and 'silence' (σιγάτω) pertain to specific kinds of speech in these contexts and not every kind of speaking. The intended silence is 'absolute' to the extent determined by these contexts; i.e., no 'tongue-speaking' without an interpreter, or no more general 'prophetic contributions' after two or three have already spoken. Similarly, Paul's call for silence to the women is 'total' in respect to *evaluating prophetic utterances*, but not a 'total' ban on every kind of talking.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, 'not speaking' and 'ordering oneself under' are two sides of the same coin in v. 34.<sup>33</sup> By their *silence* (σιγάτωσαν) the women embody Paul's call to sub-ordinate themselves to judging/evaluating prophets, and in this way find their ordered place alongside other non-evaluating male prophets (vv. 32–33).

We have observed that v. 34 addresses the women in their capacity as prophets in the church. This is already clear from Paul's 'scene-setting' remarks in 14:26, where 'prophecy' covers a multitude of different kinds and functions of speech. Paul writes, 'What then, brothers/sisters? Whenever you congregate (συνέρχησθε), each one

28 Gk: οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν.

29 'Ask' is too weak for the compound Greek term here (ἐπερωτάωσαν).

30 Gk: ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίου ἀνδρας ἐπερωτάωσαν.

31 Gk: εἴτε γλώσση τις λαλεῖ, κατὰ δύο ἢ τὸ πλεῖστον τρεῖς καὶ ἀνά μέρος, καὶ εἷς διερμηνεύτω.

32 Contra Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts* (London: Inter-Varsity, 2019), 170.

33 This is evident from Paul's 'not...but' expression: οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν.

has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation...’ (the verb ‘has’ is repeated each time). Significantly, ‘prophecy’ (προφητεία) does not appear in v. 26’s list even though tongues and their interpretation do. This is remarkable considering the subsequent verses’ particular focus on prophetic speech in the church. The reason can only be that, for Paul’s rhetorical purposes—and likely in the thinking of the Corinthians themselves, all or most of the speech-types listed in v. 26 amount to speaking ‘prophecy’ in the broad sense of sharing God’s word, or at least the intent to do so. But Paul must reorder their thinking about how various kinds of speech *function* in public worship. Here the key distinction lies between prophets who publically judge/evaluate and those that claim to share God’s word more generally (e.g., a psalm, an interpretation, etc.). Part of the problem is the unedifying, disordered cacophony that can result from too many speakers. Indeed, Paul’s repetition of ‘has’ (ἔχει) with each type of speech listed in v. 26 (noted above) indicates that everyone lays claim to *every* kind of speaking. This, however, includes women whose prophetic contributions extend to publicly judging/evaluating other publicly spoken words—apparently in the form of interrogative questioning that Paul redirects to the private sphere (v. 35). Clearly, then, there is more to Paul’s commands throughout 14:26–40 than a general idea of ‘orderliness.’ Order includes proper weighing/evaluating taking place and women joining those who defer to prophets who do this (v. 32).

As has been well demonstrated, the plethora of authorities to which Paul subsequently appeals underscores their enduring validity and theological importance, and need not be repeated here.<sup>34</sup> All the same, his warnings in vv. 37–38 merit brief comment because there Paul expects the Corinthians to accept his *own* prophetic *judgment/evaluation* in these matters. He writes, ‘If anyone thinks that he/she is a *prophet* or *spiritual*, let him/her recognise *the things I write* as the command of the Lord.’<sup>35</sup> But if anyone does not recognise (ἀγνοεῖ), he/she is not recognised (ἀγνοεῖται).’ Thus Paul alludes to his earlier axiom in 14:32 when exercising his own judgment/evaluation regarding the Corinthians’ disordered public worship. ‘Spiritual’ and ‘prophetic’ Christians must acknowledge his teaching as true. They are to order themselves according to sound apostolic teaching as the ‘spirits of prophets’ characteristically do if they are true prophets (v. 32), or prove false.

### Worship today

At first the picture of worship at Corinth emerging from 1 Corinthians 11–14 might seem strange to modern eyes, especially to Christians in churches with a strong liturgical heritage. But such impressions are no justification for dismissing Paul’s instructions as though they were irrelevant today. For one, we must remember that Paul’s commands

34 See e.g., Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 507–15; John W. Kleinig, ‘Disciples not teachers: 1 Corinthians 14:33b–38 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15,’ in *Ordination of Women: Interdenominational Perspectives*, ed. Cathy Thompson and V. C. Pfitzner (Adelaide: ATF, 2005), 48–61.

35 Gk: Εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός ἐπιγινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή. The plural relative pronoun and the clause it comprises ‘the things I write’ (ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν) shows that all of the immediately preceding instruction is ‘the command of the Lord.’

are occasioned by abuses and practices that did not conform to apostolic teaching. Accordingly, chapters 11–14 do not provide a full picture beyond what is necessary for his corrective purposes. That said, the twin issues that Paul addresses—the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34) and the proclamation of the word and theological judging/evaluating that Paul commands (14:26–40)—do reflect the same two high points of Sacrament and Word in the historic liturgy.<sup>36</sup> Most relevant for our purposes, the (prophetic) evaluation of public utterances in Corinth is *functionally* equivalent to what the Lutheran Confessions describe as the ‘judging of doctrine’ and public exercise of the Keys through the preaching office.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, Paul’s commands in confessional churches like the LCA/NZ apply directly to the question of who may be ordained into this pastoral *office*.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile all people in the congregation—both men and women whose mouths and ears are baptismally opened to ‘hear and speak the word of God’ (cf. baptismal rite; Joel 2:28–29)—receive those whom God has called and ordained to oversee the church in this way (e.g., 1 Thess 5:12–13; 1 Tim 3:1).

### 1 Corinthians 12-13

Chapters 12–13 lead up to these commands in ch. 14. Working backwards, in ch. 13 Paul urges *love*, which ‘does not seek its own, does not provoke...does not rejoice in wrong, but rejoices in the truth, etc.’ Indeed, the commands he will give in chapter 14 require godly love characterised by self-denial and truth. Go back to chapter 12 and St Paul writes,

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. (vv. 12–13; ESV)

Paul recognises certain other distinctions besides the male-female distinction here, only to say that they do not affect how the Spirit orders the body of Christ. The *ethnic* distinction between ‘Jews and Greeks’ and the societal/political differentiation between ‘slave or free’ have no bearing in the Spirit’s apportioning of gifts (12:7–11). Missing

<sup>36</sup> Paul does not *command* the inclusion of tongues in public worship—which today we associate with charismatic rather than mainline churches—though permits them if interpreted (14:27–28). Even then, however, the earlier part of ch. 14 praises the edifying benefit of prophecy over tongues (e.g., 14:19).

<sup>37</sup> CA XXVIII, 21 states, ‘According to divine right, therefore, it is the office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, *judge doctrine and condemn doctrine that is contrary to the Gospel*, and exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose wicked conduct is manifest’ (Tappert, 84). Likewise Luther describes one of the functions of the office of the ministry ‘to judge and pass on doctrines’ (*Luther’s Works*, vol 40, p. 27). Cf. *Theses of Agreement* VI, 1–11.

<sup>38</sup> CA V states, ‘To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry [German: *Predigtamt*; i.e., “preaching office”], that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments.’ (Tappert edition [Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1959], 31). Paul’s commands remain just as relevant to churches that follow a so-called ‘functionalist’ view of ministry, however; i.e., churches that parcel out the public functions of teaching, preaching, presiding, etc. to laypeople without ordaining them into the pastoral office. This is because Paul’s commands in 1 Cor 14:34–35 address precisely the *function* of public discourse in the worship assembly. That is, they preclude women from *exercising* public doctrinal oversight.

here and the other places Paul highlights such distinctions (Col 3:11; Rom 10:12)<sup>39</sup> is that third pair of terms found only in Galatians 3:28: 'male and female.' The reasons Paul includes the male-female distinction in *Galatians 3* are not difficult to find. As the preceding verse makes clear, Gal 3:28 is about Christian identity grounded in baptism. Galatians 3:27 reads, 'For you who were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.'<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the big issue that Paul faced in Galatia was the Judaisers' expectation that gentile men be circumcised before counting them among the believers. But, says Paul, *baptism* is completely sufficient for making you a Christian and heir to God's promises without requiring the specifically male practice of circumcision,<sup>41</sup> which counts for nothing under the new covenant. It is therefore little wonder that 'male and female' makes Paul's list there.

By contrast, 1 Corinthians 12–14 addresses *how God orders his church*, the one body with its different members. Furthermore, these chapters culminate with Paul qualifying how female prophets contribute in public worship—a matter to which the male-female distinction has obvious relevance. As was the case with Paul's inclusion of the male-female distinction in Galatians, then, *context* explains why Paul does not include it alongside 'Jews or Greeks, slaves or free' here in 1 Cor 12:13. Moreover, the male-female distinction differs fundamentally from the ethnic distinction between Jew and Gentile and a societal distinction between slave and free. God *made* humanity male and female from the beginning in creation; it is a distinction foundational to God's human creatures in a way the others are not. Much more could be said about chapter 12, but suffice it to say that Paul emphasises that all members are equally and independently valuable ('there are many parts, yet one body' [v. 20]).<sup>42</sup>

## Divine Order in the Church: 1 Timothy 2

1 Timothy 2:11–14 opens with the same taxonomical language seen in 1 Cor 14:34, and in like manner applies it to teaching and learning in public worship. Paul says:

Let a woman learn in quietness<sup>43</sup> with all *hypotage*. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (ESV, transliterating ὑποταγή)

39 When calling on the Colossian Christians to put off the old self and in Col 3:11, St Paul says 'Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all' (ESV). Similarly, St Paul writes in Rom 10:12, 'For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all' (ESV).

40 Gk: ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε

41 The OT knows only male circumcision (cf. Genesis 17); nowhere does the OT advocate female circumcision.

42 See further Adam Hensley, 'σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὑποτάσσω in 1 Corinthians 14:34 in their literary and rhetorical context,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 55, no. 2 (2012): 343–64, 353–55.

43 The qualifying phrase ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ denotes a state of quietness rather than an absolute silence, calling her to the disposition of a disciple alongside other congregants in contrast to that of the teacher in public worship.

The context is once again public worship (vv. 1, 8). Paul calls women to embrace their vocation as *learners/disciples* alongside other congregants who are male, not become the *teacher* who publicly exercises authority in worship. Indeed, Paul's word order places particular emphasis on *teaching*: 'But *to teach*—a woman—I do not permit;<sup>44</sup> a verb he applies to Pastor Timothy (e.g., 1 Tim 6:2) and overseers of the worshiping congregation soon after in 1 Tim 3:2: 'Therefore the overseer (τὸν ἐπίσκοπον) *must be above reproach, husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach* (διδασκικόν)...' By contrast, 'able to teach,' is *not* among the requirements for deacons (διάκονοι) (vv. 8–14). And while both deacons and overseers must manage their own households well, only about *overseers* does Paul say, 'for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, *how will he care for God's church?*' (3:5).<sup>45</sup> The taxonomical language here (ἐν πάσῃ ὑποταγῇ) therefore follows the same pattern as in 1 Cor 14:34–35. Women are not to be among those who publically teach or exercise authority over men, hence the whole congregation at worship. They ought instead to fit themselves into God's ordering of the church at worship as disciples alongside other (male) congregants.

Like in 1 Corinthians 14:34, Paul then connects these taxonomical commands with the OT. He does this by recalling the prior creation of Adam and the deception of Eve in 1 Tim 2:13–14: 'For Adam first was formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and entered into transgression' (my translation; see below). A quite common assumption that Paul is blaming Eve in order to exonerate Adam misses the point and overlooks Paul's recognition of Adam's accountability as the head of the human community elsewhere (e.g., Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:21–22).<sup>46</sup> Paul alludes to select events in Genesis 2–3 that, (a) affirm Adam's prior creation, and (b) Eve's being deceived, by which she 'entered into transgression.' Significantly, the participial subordinate clause, 'being deceived' (ἐξαπατηθεῖσα), picks up the terminology of Eve's confession in LXX Gen 3:13 (Ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν με). But the last and *main* clause, 'entered into transgression' (ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν),<sup>47</sup> finds no echo in Genesis 3; it is Paul's own interpretive remark. Paul explains that Eve's 'being deceived' amounted to her entering a state of *transgression*, as she usurped a responsibility given to Adam who was 'formed

44 I do not permit = I prohibit (οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω); cf. 1 Cor 14:34's οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν ('for it is not permitted for them to speak'), adding to the shared language between these texts.

45 Cf. 1 Tim 3:13 about deacons, which reads, 'those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.' This distinction between these offices in 1 Timothy 3 indicates that Phoebe's being a deacon (Rom 16:1), e.g., is different from the ministry of oversight.

46 So Julie F. Parker, 'Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of πνε in Fen 3:6b,' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 4 (2013), 729–747, who challenges those throughout history who have understood Genesis 3 in such ways. Unfortunately, in fleeing the Scylla of blaming Eve entirely for the Fall Parker succumbs to the Charybdis, describing 1 Tim 2:13–14 itself as a 'misogynistic interpretation' of Genesis 3 (without supporting analysis) as though disparagement of Eve/womanhood sometimes observable in the interpretive tradition accurately reflected Paul's intent in this text (*ibid.*, 732).

47 γέγονεν is pf., denoting a change of state (lit. 'having become'; see *BDAG*, s.v., γίνομαι, 4: 'to experience a change in nature and so indicate entry into a new condition, become someth.'). The prepositional phrase, 'in transgression' (ἐν παραβάσει) precedes the verb and receives greater emphasis. 'In [a state of] transgression she became' is literal but awkward, hence my translation above that renders the same sense.

first' and charged with direct responsibility for the command (Gen 2:15–17).<sup>48</sup> The allusion serves at least two purposes. First, it provides the biblical foundation for Paul's expectation that women be content with being disciples (alongside most men) rather than teachers/preachers in public worship. Second, it sharpens his pastoral intent. His taxonomical command that a woman should learn 'in all *hypotage*' is, quite practically, so that she may avoid conducting herself 'in transgression' (ἐν παραβάσει) as Eve had.

### Some remarks on Genesis 1–3 and divine order in marriage and the church

We have repeatedly observed Paul appealing to Genesis 2 in the above passages, underscoring these chapters' foundational theological importance for his exhortations regarding marriage and the church. Both 1 Cor 11:8–9 and 1 Tim 2:13 recognise—by drawing on Adam's creation prior to Eve—a taxonomy between man and woman in marriage and the church that is dignified and even glorious (cf. δόξα in 1 Cor 11:7). Accordingly, Genesis 2 is foundational for these estates (cf. 2:24; Eph 5:31–32).

Genesis 1–3 affirms the equality and dignity of womanhood and manhood (Gen 1:27–31; 2:18, 22–25). In doing so the narrative differentiates between the sexes in the same way that Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 apply the male-female distinction. According to the biblical witness, before humanity fell into sin—even before Eve's creation—Adam was made responsible for the command to guard and keep the garden sanctuary (Gen 2:15), which is at once a domestic and a liturgical setting.<sup>49</sup> Adam is responsible for the command in a way Eve is not, and throughout the tumultuous events of Genesis 3 God holds him alone accountable for the divine command (Gen 2:17) despite Eve's more active participation in those events.<sup>50</sup> This is clear from the moment God confronts Adam with those searching words, 'Have *you* (masc. sg.) eaten of the tree of which I commanded *you* (masc. sg.) not to eat?' until his words of judgment upon the man, 'Because *you* (masc. sg.) have listened to the voice of your wife and *you* (masc. sg.) have eaten of the tree of which I commanded *you* (masc. sg.).' "You (masc. sg.) shall not eat of it," etc. In short, Eve usurped a role not meant for her, and Adam abdicated it, even as he stood right there 'with her' (Gen 3:6). Far from innocent, Adam's

48 See below.

49 Lifsa Schachter, 'The Garden of Eden as God's First Sanctuary,' *Jewish Biblical Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2013): 73–77. For a more detailed treatment of Gen 1–3 see Adam D. Hensley, 'Redressing the Serpent's Cunning: A Closer Look at Genesis 3:1,' *LOGIA* 37, no. 3 (2018): 41–44.

50 Both were expected to keep the command and both transgressed it, but God had made Adam responsible for it. The serpent's approaching her was thus integral to his temptation (3:1, 13). Moreover, the temptation before Eve to assume responsibility is embedded in the serpent's twisting of God's words. In addition to the serpent's obvious expansion of the command in 3:1, by which he insinuates that God had forbidden eating 'from any tree in the garden,' the serpent also pluralises God's originally masc. sg. command to Adam, '*you shall not eat from it*' (לֹא תֹאכְלֵ מִמֶּנּוּ). Indeed, this change was necessary to entice the woman to deliberate on the matter herself, lest the (original) masc. sg. betray the truth that God had charged Adam with responsibility for the command. He says in 3:1, 'Did God say, "you (pl.) shall not eat from any tree of the garden?"' (לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן). Eve's correction of the serpent in the one respect but not the other in 3:3: (לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ). For a fuller discussion of Gen 3:1f, see Hensley, 'Redressing the Serpent's Cunning,' 41–42.

failure to 'step up' contributed to the growing temptation before Eve to weigh matters for herself (and for the human community). Accordingly, the NT recognises Adam's particular accountability for the Fall (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:21–22).

It is therefore too simplistic to say that 'your (i.e., the woman's) husband will rule over you' in Gen 3:16 falls into the 'damaging effects of sin' category without careful qualification.<sup>51</sup> God's ordering the human community in Genesis 2 is good, even though after the Fall such ordering would be marked by tension and strain between man and woman as 3:16 forebodes. A similar situation pertains to God's other words of judgment to the original couple. Childbearing, too, would be marked by pain (כאב), but is not itself *sin*. On the contrary, it belongs to God's blessing and 'first commission' to male and female in Gen 1:28. Likewise, cultivating the land and eating bread would be marked by pain (כאב) and sweat and thorns and thistles (Gen 3:18–9). But these are not in themselves *sinful* things to do. Rather, Adam was placed in the garden to do precisely these things (Gen 2:15). Nor is Adam's proper responsibility within the married estate—his headship as Paul later describes it (Eph 5:23; 1 Cor 11:3)—a *result of sin*. Rather, from the beginning he was to set aside his own will and attend the command of the Lord (Gen 2:15–17), thereby loving his wife. This he failed to do as he guiltily stood by in silence (Gen 3:6, 12).

## Conclusion

The Apostle Paul wrote, 'For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God' to the elders and overseers of the church at Ephesus (Acts 10:27; cf. vv. 17, 28). Among the things he wrote to the Ephesians were Eph 5:21–33 regarding marriage and 1 Tim 2:8–15 concerning public worship. Moreover, he applied the same taxonomical language to the Corinthians when exhorting them to proper order in their public worship gatherings (1 Cor 11:3; 14:34). Paul did not 'shrink' from these matters as though they were peripheral to the gospel. They are part of 'the whole counsel of God,' who orders his people for the reception of his blessings.

In many places the modern church is inclined to shrink from these verses, however—whether through embarrassment before an increasingly secular culture, concern they will be misunderstood or misapplied, or a deeply felt discomfort with them.<sup>52</sup> Among the hermeneutical temptations we face today is an impulse to reduce biblical teaching to the gospel in its narrow sense of justification and 'God's grace' at the expense of God's wider instruction, the gospel in its broad sense (FC V, 5–6).<sup>53</sup> That impulse takes a particular

51 Wittwer, 'Headship,' 24.

52 The *Revised Common Lectionary*, for example, avoids Eph 5:21–33, reading only as far as v. 20 (Prp 15 in Yr B). Meanwhile the *RCL* skips 1 Corinthians 14 entirely, setting down 1 Cor 13:1–13 for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany (Yr C) and various verse selections from 1 Corinthians 15 on six separate Sundays (Easter Sunday in Yrs B and C; 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Sundays after Epiphany in Yr C). Likewise the *RCL* twice sets down 1 Tim 2:1–7 (Harvest Thanksgiving in Yr B and Proper 20 in Yr C), but omits v. 8f entirely.

53 *Theses of Agreement I*, 5 similarly warns about such reductionistic tendencies: 'We believe that it is a solemn obligation of the Church to teach the whole counsel of God, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, feeding milk or meat as the case may demand, but never compromising the truth of scripture, never permitting reason or feeling to undermine the authority of the Word, or substituting for it any form of subjectivism.'



shape when the gospel and Christians' equality within God's kingdom is thought to trump or rule out notions of divine ordering within marriage and the church. There are several pitfalls here. One is that the gospel in its narrow sense may become confused with expected social outcomes defined by modern egalitarian notions of equality. The gospel ceases to be clearly seen for what it is: God's gracious forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. Another arises when this impulse leads to the rejection of God's ordering of the church and family for the reception of his life-giving blessing (esp. the means of grace instituted to create and nurture faith; cf. CA V).

Much confusion in these matters arises from an assumption that sub-ordination means 'lesser' or unequal. That assumption is a natural one if we take our cue from worldly understandings of relationships in terms of power rather than service. But as seen in 1 Corinthians 11 and 15, God's Word teaches a headship and order that dances to a different tune. The Holy Trinity shows us perfect paternal headship and filial sub-ordination between perfectly equal Persons of the One Godhead. Meanwhile, Christ's self-sacrificial love for the church and her faithful reception of his blessings sets the pattern for Christian marriage. It is from *these divine realities*—not worldly analogues—that the headship and sub-ordering to which the NT calls people in marriage and the church acquire their true character. Scripture, then, calls his church to the highest of standards as God provides all that is life-giving and good for his people. She is not to shrink away from them but honour her self-giving divine husband, Jesus, by ordering her life and teaching according to his word 'in everything' (cf. Eph 5:24) and observing all that he has commanded (Matt 28:20).

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