

“Because of the Angels”

(a personal confession of male leadership in the Church)

By Paul Hartwig / April 2017

I am often asked for biblical reasons for my belief that only men should serve in the capacity of teachers and shepherds over the local church. The answers I normally give to that question will be given below in simple point form and are the conclusions to which I have come from reading Scripture. I believe the Scripture is clear and not ambiguous on this topic and that my beliefs are not idiosyncratic or optional. My main conviction is *that Jesus and the apostles affirmed God’s creational gender pattern and expected that pattern to be normative in the Christian Church*. I trust that as you read my ‘8 Propositions’ God’s gender pattern may be demonstrated and become influential in forming your convictions on these important matters.

1. The book of Genesis is foundational to the entire Bible

As we seek to have the mind of Christ in these matters, we must obviously ‘get back to the Bible’. This may seem simplistic yet I believe it a crucial method for us to pursue and is indeed the essential if we want to retrieve the way of Jesus and the apostles in this matter. God has not left us in the dark on these matters but has provided a light for us to follow. That light is the Word of God, and in following it, we follow Jesus and his apostles.

In getting back to the Bible on these issues, a particular ‘Genesis-foundation’ needs to be laid down. It would not be wrong to say that the New Testament is built upon the Old Testament and the Old Testament is built upon the book of Genesis. Take Genesis away, and we no longer have any foundations but only the shifting sands of culture.

2. In the beginning God created a man (Adam) and a woman (Eve)

Scripture clearly testifies that the human race originated from an original couple, Adam and Eve (Gen 2). All human beings on this planet, past, present and future, have the same two ancestors. We are one big family, and we all belong to one genealogy with the same patriarch and matriarch at the headwaters. This original couple were created as equal bearers of the divine image, and both were created to act on God’s behalf in his creation (Gen 1).

- “*God created man in his own image...male and female he created them*” (Gn 1:27).
- “*Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain*” (Gen 4:1)
- “*Jesus...the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God*” (Lk 3:38)
- “*God made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth*” (Acts 17:26)
- “*If because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ*” (Rm 5:17)

3. When God created the man and the woman, he made the man first and then the woman.

The order of the creation of Adam and Eve is significant (*Lt*, is a sign of something). Although Genesis 1 clearly affirms God created men and women as his image bearers, Genesis 2 shows that God brought Adam into existence first and then Eve. God created Adam first, placed him a garden in Eden, gave him employment and a divine command to obey. God then saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone and so made a helper suitable for him, Eve. The woman was created into an already existing context and to help in the particular purpose which God had given to the man. For this reason the Scriptures say that ‘the woman was created for the man and not man for the woman’ (1 Cor 11:9).

Moreover, Genesis reveals that our forefather Adam was formed directly out of God’s original ‘idea’ for a human being, whilst Eve was formed indirectly and derivatively out of Adam’s rib/side. It is probably this ‘direct-indirect’ formation of the man and woman that Paul is referring to when he says that ‘the man is the image and glory of God but woman the glory of man’ (1 Cor 11:7). She was the glory of the man, beautifully God-shaped and fittingly formed from a part of Adam and for Adam. It is for this reason that marriage is a ‘reunion’ of the two to being ‘one flesh’ again.

- “*Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’*” (Gen 2:18)
- “*Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female?*” (Mat 19:4)
- “*for man was not made from woman, but woman from man*” (1 Cor 11:8)
- “*for Adam was formed first, then Eve*” (1 Tim 2:13)

4. The order of creation of Adam and Eve means that the man is first within the order of the male–female relationship.

The significance of the unique creative order of our original parents results in a basic relational order between men and women. In the Bible the ‘generative primacy’ (*primogeniture*) of Adam translates into a relational difference between men and women whereby to the man is given the primacy between them. *The creation order means that since the man stands first in line, he has a God-given responsibility and accountability to head up and lead the male-female relationship.*

This conclusion is derived from the words of Scripture: ‘the head of every man is Christ, and he head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God’ (1Cor 11:3). The word ‘head’ (Grk *kephale*) means that someone is in a position of ‘primacy’ or ‘prominence’ between two parties or entities. Many scholars today who have written respected commentaries on 1 Corinthians (*i.e.*, Thiselton, NIGNT series, Garlington, BECNT series, Ciampa & Rosner, Pillar Series) understand *kephale* or ‘headship’ as someone being in a position of ‘pre-eminence’ or ‘prominence’. This meaning fits well with what we see in the rest of biblical revelation, and is put into practice and applied in terms of the man’s responsibility of loving leadership in the marriage, and of the woman’s submission to that lead.

Important to note is that there is an analogy of this man-female order in the Godhead itself. God is ‘first’ in his relationship with Christ since, ‘God is the head of Christ’. We know this does not mean that Christ is inferior to God or somehow less important. But as is shown in the life of Christ on earth, we know that Christ lived his life under the Father’s headship in glad submission and love. The Father was ‘first’ in Christ’s life.

This ‘headship’ or leadership primacy given to the man also means that the woman finds her role within that order. She is created to be man’s helper and companion in the direction that God has given to him. Scripture frequently instructs woman to recognize this role of the man and to align themselves under it in submission.

We can surely now understand why the apostle Paul did not allow a woman to teach or hold authority over a man: the Spirit-given reason in Scripture is that ‘Adam was made first, and then Eve’. Creation order grounded Paul’s restriction on woman in taking up positions of leadership over men. It also makes most sense then that this creation order of headship was witnessed to by God’s angels, and is probably the reason for their mention by Paul in 1 Cor 11:10. The angels were the watchers and guardians of the original creation harmony and pattern. Since the church is to bear witness of God’s glory and wisdom to the angelic realm (Eph 3:10), this should include her observation God’s original creation pattern. This means then that such matters are very important both in the church and the home, and our practices here have consequences not only in the human realm, but also before God and his holy angels.

- ‘*But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’*” (Gen 3:9)
- ‘*He said: ‘for this reason a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife’*” (Mthw 19:5)
- ‘*neither was man created for woman, but woman for man*’ (1 Cor 11:9)
- ‘*the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man*’ (1 Cor 11:3).
- ‘*the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church*’ (Eph 5:23)
- ‘*wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord*’ (Eph 5:21)
- ‘*woman must be in submission as the law says*’ (1 Cor 14:34)

5. Creation order between the genders means that we need to take our bearings from the past, ‘as it was in the beginning’, and not from the distortions of history.

Since Scripture affirms that gender difference was not accidental or evolutional but creative, the perpetuation of the initial creative design is necessary to follow as God’s creatures. Jesus responded to questions about divorce and marriage by pointing people back to how it was in the beginning before the fall. Jesus directed us to God’s original intention with marriage, and cut through all the overgrowth of legal technicalities. As his followers we do well to perpetuate this wisdom of *original retrieval*. Amidst so many ideas and views on gender issues, we should look at what it was like in the beginning and follow suite.

We should observe that in the Genesis story gender differences and headship came

about prior to the fall (*pre-lapsarian*, for all the clever theologians!). When sin did come into the world this creation pattern was exploited by Satan and corrupted by sin, and history has testified to this on-going exploitation and abuse. Yet, we should remember that the remedy in Christ is not to eliminate the pattern of creation in a modern form of distinction-less equality, but rather follow Jesus and the apostles in going back to ‘how it was in the beginning’. So when Paul in particular addresses certain ‘gender problems’ in Corinth and Ephesus, what he does is to bring this abnormality back in line with the norm of Genesis 2, the ‘norming norm’ of gender issues.

6. When the Genesis gender pattern is ignored or reversed, much harm results.

When we step outside of the biblical arrangement of the sexes, we can anticipate things going wrong in marriage and church. When husbands do not love their wives as Christ loves, or when women do not submit to their husbands as Christ submits to God, harm results. Adam followed Eve and did not lead according to God’s word, for he wanted to please his beautiful wife. Eve did not defer the mortal question (‘surely God has given us all the trees to eat from?’) to her husband’s leadership, but took and ate, and then offered it to him.

When Paul brought creation norms to bear at Ephesus, he did so by pointing the church to (1) creation order (*primogeniture*) and (2) creation vulnerabilities. With regard to the latter, we note that he said: “it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman because she was deceived fell into transgression” (1 Tim 2:14). What does Paul mean here? In Genesis 2 we see that the Serpent targeted the woman first and not the man. After he had beguiled her, she led her husband into the trespass. This was all a violation and reversal of the creation order. Eve stepped out from under this order and was thus vulnerable to deception. It is not that women are the cause of sin coming into the world (Adam as head was accountable), but that when a woman steps out and leads the relationship she is out of gear and thus vulnerable to temptation of deception. A woman is more vulnerable to deception when she is leading the relationship. It is for this reason that Paul did not allow woman to exercise teaching leadership over men in the church.

The same can be said for the men. Should we capitulate or abuse our headship position, we also perpetuate the conditions of the fall and do not glorify our head (Christ) in those times. Abusive authoritarianism is as corrupt as capitulating in leadership, and both extremes need redemption in the light of the pattern in creation and Christ.

- “*The Serpent deceived Eve by his cunning*” (2 Cor 11:3).
- “*It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman who was deceived and fell into transgression*” (1 Tim 2:14)

7. In the new creation order in Christ Jesus, there is both equality and diversity of ministry with regard to gender.

It is clear from the New Testament that all the blessings of the New Covenant are equally for men and woman. In Christ Jesus, both men and women receive the gift of the Spirit and enjoy the same status before God in Christ (see Gal...). This was clearly seen on the day of Pentecost. There was not gender discrimination, and it is particularly emphasised that: "*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy*" (Acts 2:17-18)

The New Testament shows us that the gift of the Spirit has brought about a more gender inclusive ministry. For this reason Paul in Colossae says *to all the Christians* in that church: "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom". They were all to teach. Similarly, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews expected his audience 'to be teachers by this time'. Surely that includes men and women. When Paul wrote to the Ephesian church, he spoke to all without distinction, slaves, masters, children, parents, husband, wives etc. He taught all of them and expected them all to learn good theology and to participate in the filling of the Spirit for the upbuilding of the community. Yet in that letter in the so-called 'household codes', he also showed them that they were to keep within a social order of 'headship' and 'submission'.

Even on those occasions where Paul is 'norming' some deviant gender practices (e.g., 1 Cor 11, 1 Tim 2), it is clear that women have received a substantial 'upgrade' in their participation in the covenant community. Paul assumes that in Corinth women will be 'praying and prophesying' (1 Cor 11:5), and that in Ephesus women are to be theologically educated ('let women learn...' 1 Tim 2:11). There is clear evidence that in the new community of Christ Spirit-gifted ministry, in word and deed, is for all Christians, men and women. In Romans 16 Phoebe is described as a wealthy and influential deacon of the church of Corinth (16:1), and Junia and her husband Adronicus are described as a leading apostolic couple (:7).

Yet we have to say that this new gender inclusivity in New Testament ministry does not compromise creational gender differences. Paul does insist in 1 Cor 11 that the new found participation in ministry *should be conducted in ways appropriate to gender relations*. For this reason women in the New Testament churches placed a veil over their heads when leading the church in prayer (speaking to God on behalf of people) or prophecy (speaking to people on behalf of God). The reason for this veiling practice, says Paul, is grounded in the creation distinction of woman being created from man, for the man and as the glory of man. So when she is leading in ministry in that way, she may be seen as compromising this creation pattern. A veil over her head however would authorize her praying or prophesying before the men (and angels) and also ensure that she would not be drawing attention to her glory as a woman whilst being in the very presence of God. It would be dishonourable and a shame to speak to or for God while both disrespecting the men and displaying their own

glory (symbolized by her hair).

Paul also does not permit women to be in a teaching capacity over men (1 Tim 2:11-12). Given the expectation for all Christians to be educated and involved in teaching (mentioned above), Paul's restriction in 1 Tim 2:12 cannot be absolute but is rather qualified by the next phrase 'or assume authority over a man'. Since the context of these verses is 'how one ought to conduct oneself in the church which is the pillar and foundation of the truth' (3:15), Paul is surely speaking of a kind of teaching that one exercises over the congregation. Given male-headship, it would be inappropriate for the women to be teaching authoritatively over men in the church.

We must remember that the age we are living in is a period of overlap between the 'old creation' and the 'new creation', of the 'now' and the 'not yet'. This means that we should not try and free ourselves from this tension but should rather affirm and practice the gender differences by looking both ways as it were: keeping in line with the 'as it was in the beginning' order, and also keeping in line with the future 'as it will be in the end' where the form of this world will pass away. Paul affirmed both that 'the man is the head of the woman', and 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28). We need to do the same today.

8. The sanctification of gender is part of our Christian calling.

What do I mean by 'the sanctification of gender'? I mean that our calling as Christians includes learning to follow Jesus Christ in all aspects of life, and here particularly in terms of masculinity and femininity. Since we have to 'be holy in all our behaviour', this includes how we behave in the important matters of gender. To me this means that we understand the meaning of our genders from a Genesis perspective and then seek as far as possible to live that out in our lives and contemporary contexts. To see this gender-holiness as part of our calling, means that we seek to apply Genesis 1 and 2 in terms of the larger call to 'do all for the glory of God' (1 Cor 10:31). For the issues of this article, I believe it must include at least the following:

- (1) We see the wisdom of God in the original pattern of Adam and Eve (our gender prototypes), and seek to be taught by that wisdom personally, in the home and in the life of the church.
- (2) We see how Christ himself spells out the nature of headship (as head of the church) and submission (being under God's headship) and glorify him by imitating him. It is because of how Christ both models the husband's leadership-love and the wife's godly submission to that leadership that provides an 'in Christ' shape to these matters. Therefore as Christians, we seek to conduct ourselves in a 'Christ-like' manner, so that 'whatever we do...we do all in the name of the Lord' (Col 3:17), and 'please the Lord' (3:20) in these matters.

- (3) We realize that sin is a corruption of God's original pattern and that salvation in Christ includes its regeneration.
- (4) That from within the creation pattern of Genesis, we demonstrate and practice that radical equality which is in Christ, particularly in terms of enjoying a shared status before God as co-priests and co-heirs of the grace of life.

Conclusion

Given my articulation above about what I believe God's word says about the sanctification of gender, it is my conviction that women should not be in positions of leadership over the church, namely, pastoral eldership, or positions of corporate teaching and preaching. Although there is a radical spiritual equality in the kingdom of Christ and women have equal privilege in access to God and the things of his Word, God's norm is that the church be transparent to the creation pattern of Genesis 2. There may be exceptions to this rule due to the disobedience of the men or unusual circumstance, yet these exceptions should not become the norm. To many my beliefs may seem only to contribute to the suppression and demeaning of women in the church. I would only counter this accusation by again appealing to a fresh analysis of what the Bible actually does say about these matters ("to the law and the testimony!" Isaiah 8:20), and to the importance of perpetuating the original gender creation pattern in the church today.

Brief Postscript: Are woman saved by childbearing?

What does Paul mean in 1 Timothy 2:15 when he says that "*the woman will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith and love and holiness with propriety*". Some have understood this as a reference to the birth of Jesus ('the childbearing'), which most commentators rightly recognize as incorrect. Paul is rather talking about the unique role of woman as bearing and nurturing children. I think his point is a generalization, and that he is affirming that the sanctification process (= 'salvation'; see 4:16) happens by serving God faithfully within the scope of our gender created pattern ('childbearing' can be a synecdoche, a part-for-the-whole, for 'womanly things') and not outside of it (women wanting to take on men's roles). This is a good example of 'the sanctification of gender'.
