

Complementarianism and Egalitarianism—Whose Side Are You Leaning On?

A Pentecostal Reading of Ephesians 5:21–33

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Abstract

With the growing acceptance of same-sex marriage among Christian communities and the increasing concern of the influence of the LGBTQIA communities upon politics, there has been a resurgent concern to reaffirm “male headship” for church, state and marriage. Emphasizing so-called biblical gendered roles has become a way to argue against feminism and same-sex marriage. Along with the resurgence of the traditional understanding of divine order as patriarchy comes an undermining of women in leadership roles, especially in ministry. Pentecostals generally have been more liberal (challenging the tradition of patriarchy as related to ministry) than conservative (maintaining that females should be silent in church and subject to male authority) regarding females in ministry. In this article we will state fairly and accurately the two contemporary positions—complementarian and egalitarian—by drawing primarily from their official websites and key theologians, and then present a pentecostal reading/hearing of Ephesians 5:21–33. We will exegetically engage the passage and then raise important questions concerning these understandings in light of a pentecostal hermeneutical perspective that privileges Luke-Acts, especially Acts 2. The goal will be to understand the passage and then move toward a pentecostal egalitarian understanding of humanity and society, thus affirming the beauty and dignity of female and male without affirming the hierarchical position of patriarchy or matriarchy.

Keywords

Pentecostalism – egalitarianism – complementarianism – patriarchy – hermeneutics

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From the beginning we have insisted at the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood that the complementarian position is firmly rooted in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture.

RANDY STINSON, Provost and President for Administration, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary¹

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Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) ... believe[s] that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scriptures.²

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1 Personal Anecdote

We open with a personal reflection upon a recurring theme that appeared on a discussion post in a private Facebook group associated with the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), the denomination in which both of us are credentialed. The discussion was on “male headship” and “gendered roles” as relating to ministry, vocations, and marriage. A female senior pastor of a local Church of God community posted the following question: “Would you list some practical examples of husband headship?” Many responded, but one really captured our attention. The response came from a male pastor. He wrote:

Nobody can give you “practical” examples of husband headship? Really? Here’s “practical”—the husband is the head of the wife (Eph 5). Great

1 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), endorsement.

2 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/about-cbe>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

analogy—easy to understand. The “head” of your body (where your brain is located) tells every part of your body what to do (by means of the central nervous system). Now that is practical—for sure! Therefore the head is the Boss! So very practically speaking that translates out to the husband being the Boss of the wife, just as Christ is the Boss of the Church. He certainly tells the Church what to do. He is the Head—the Boss. I trust this is helpful and the practical help you are looking for. Blessings!³

Another male posted the following: “Headship is not domination, bullying, bossiness, etc ... For lack of a better way of putting it, [male headship is like] a great boss who makes sure all do the right thing, while appreciating the workers ... or a wonderful father who has all well in hand.”⁴

We believe that the first response resonates with most male ministers in the Church of God, but certainly not all.⁵ Many, however, would not use such language in mixed company and would want to tone down the “bossing” part somewhat. Nevertheless, the husband is taught “male headship” and that he has the moral imperative to lead and love his family responsibly.⁶ This translates into his God-given right to make the final decision as well as to provide for and protect the family. In essence, the man is the “boss” because he is a male.⁷

Another concern of ours arises in the college classroom. We teach at Southeastern University, which officially is an Assembly of God school. I (Ken) will often ask the students in a theology course the following question: “Who is the

3 Names have been withheld; the time period was during the summer months of 2016.

4 Posted on *The Excellent Pastor*, August 17, 2016.

5 This is our intuitive sense; there is no statistical evidence to support it or disprove it. In addition, there are male and female members and ministers in the Church of God, the authors included, who affirm and model an egalitarian understanding of marriage.

6 See *Church of God: Our Statements of Faith: The Declaration of Faith, The Doctrinal Commitments, The Practical Commitments* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God International Offices). “In God’s order the husband is the head of the home” (12).

7 The Church of God, Cleveland, TN is a patriarchal church in the sense that the highest governing positions are reserved for ordained bishops who must be male. Also, their stated position on marriage is that the man is the head of the marriage. “Male headship in marriage” is located in the Practical Disciplines. See <http://www.churchofgod.org/practical-commitments/family-responsibility>. “When God created man, He created them male and female (Genesis 1:27). He gave them distinctly different characteristics (1 Corinthians 11:14, 15; 1 Peter 3:7) as well as different responsibilities (Genesis 3:16–19; 1 Peter 3:1–7). In God’s order, the husband is head of the home (Ephesians 5:22–31; Colossians 3:18, 19), parents are to nurture and admonish their children (Ephesians 6:4, Colossians 3:21), and children are to obey and honor their parents (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1–3; Colossians 3:20). In order for harmony to exist in the home, God’s order of responsibility must be observed.” Retrieved January 27, 2018.

head of the church?" They always answer, "Jesus." I then ask them if women can be pastors. Most, but not all, of the AG students affirm women in ministry, which is in keeping with the *egalitarian* ecclesiastical polity of the AG.⁸ Then I will ask the students, "Who is the head of the marriage?" An overwhelming majority, including those students who just affirmed women in pastoral ministry, respond that the husband is head of the marriage, and Ephesians 5:23 is often quoted. While AG polity is egalitarian and they have a position paper that clearly supports egalitarian ecclesiology and women in ministry, the AG does not have a clear position paper supporting egalitarian marriage.⁹ This has led to confusion for its members. On the one hand, in AG churches, a woman has the possibility of serving at the highest positions of authority just like a man, yet, on the other hand, a married woman is to submit to her husband, the head.

2 Introduction

With the ongoing concern of the sexual revolution, growing affirmation of same-sex marriage by Christians, and especially the influence of the LGBTQIA community on societal laws, there has been a resurgent interest in retrieving and reaffirming male headship for the Christian home and church and, by extension, the state.¹⁰ Renewed attention to proper gendered roles with attention focused upon a hierarchical distinction for authority and separate responsibilities associated with one's sex has become a way to argue against egalitarian

8 <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/The-Role-of-Women-in-Ministry> retrieved February 11, 2017.

9 They hint at it in the following: "The Assemblies of God believes in and supports rights for both males and females. The church also believes that men and women are partners in protecting and nurturing families. Godly parents must dedicate themselves to raising children with godly character. Together, mothers and fathers are responsible to make career, economic, and personal choices that strengthen the family. Single women who are not parents must also honor God in their relationship roles and vocational choices. The role choices husbands and wives, single mothers, or single women make may be varied, some may be dictated by economic need or may be untraditional—but the choices must reflect obedience to God's Word and will." http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/topics/contemporary_issues/feminism.cfm. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

10 The CBMW community steers away from explicitly calling for a patriarchal politically structured society, yet it is implicit in the teachings. They overtly support the family values rhetoric of the religious right and are involved in restricting the LGBTQI communities through legal actions and encouraging the passage of laws restricting gay marriage and unions.

marriage and same-sex marriage.¹¹ The argument for sexed and gendered roles usually affirms the necessity of God originally creating humanity, male first and then female, in a hierarchical divine order in which males rule and females follow.¹² Patriarchy affirms male headship, and Christian arguments for male headship in turn support patriarchal societal structure, church, and marriage.¹³ Furthermore, God is imaged as masculine because femininity represents the weaker sex.

When it comes to females in ministry, Pentecostals, like certain Wesleyans, generally have been more liberal than other evangelical traditions; that is, Pentecostals have challenged the tradition of patriarchy as related to ministry while much of Reformation theology has maintained that females should be silent in church and subject to male authority.¹⁴ In this essay we will endeavor to state fairly and accurately the complementarian and egalitarian positions (drawing primarily from their official websites and a few key theologians), and then present a pentecostal reading of Ephesians 5:21–33. We will approach the text from our context and yet will respect the horizon of the text. We want to understand the passage in its literary, social, and cultural context and then raise important questions concerning these contexts in light of a pentecostal theological perspective that privileges Acts 2. The goal will be to understand the passage and then move toward an *egalitarian* pentecostal understanding of humanity and society, thus affirming the beauty and dignity of female and male without affirming the hierarchical perspectives maintained by patriarchy or matriarchy.

11 Also see CBMW academic journal, *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (JBMW), which contains many discussions addressing gender confusion, transgender, homosexuality, barrenness, motherhood, fatherhood, feminism, and so forth, at <http://cbmw.org/>. For CBE academic journal see *Priscilla Papers*, <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/priscilla-papers-academic-journal>, which also addresses various topics yet is more in the trajectory of Christian social justice.

12 See <http://cbmw.org/topics/womanhood-blog/male-and-female-created-in-gods-image/>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

13 Patriarchy is a sociocultural system in which males are privileged through holding predominant positions of power in society. In families, males hold authority over women and children.

14 Reformation traditions, especially Reformed traditions in the trajectory of Old School Presbyterianism associated with Old School Princeton theology, including the Southern Baptists, are currently the main evangelical spokespersons.

3 Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW)

Under John Piper's popular leadership and Wayne Grudem's academic scholarship, the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) came into existence. CBMW began in Dallas, Texas, in 1987 at a meeting to address the growing influence of egalitarianism, which they saw as being promoted by evangelical *feminism*.¹⁵ The complementarians, as they prefer to call themselves, claimed that evangelical egalitarians were spreading *unbiblical teaching* concerning male/masculinity and female/femininity gender roles in church and home (and society) and, in doing so, were creating, in tandem with secular humanism and feminism, gender confusion. CBMW holds to a patriarchal hierarchical view of created divine order—male and female have different yet complementary gendered roles. Males have the authority to rule and the ability to provide for the family financially and spiritually (leader, provider and protector),¹⁶ whereas females have the responsibility to submit to males and care for the home (homemaker, nurturer and supporter).¹⁷ They teach, "In the home

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- 15 Dorothy Patterson, a female, along with John Piper and Wayne Grudem, are the important founding and contributing figures in the CBMW. Under John Piper's leadership, a group drafted a statement outlining what would become the definitive theological articulation of complementarianism. On December 2–3, 1987, the group met at the Sheraton Ferncroft Resort in Danvers, Massachusetts, where the "drafted statement" was adopted and called the "Danvers Statement" on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. They then voted to incorporate as the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood; see <http://cbmw.org/about/history/>, Retrieved February 11, 2017. For more on the CBMW position on manhood and womanhood, see their statement of Faith, <http://cbmw.org/about/statement-of-faith/> and the Danvers Statement, <http://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement/>. For the seminal work on complementarianism, see John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), first published in 1991, reprinted with new preface in 2006 and in 2012 with a new cover.
- 16 CBMW rejects female participation in the military; see Greg Gibson and Owen Strachan, "We Will Never Let Our Daughters Die for Us," *JBW* (February 6, 2016). <http://cbmw.org/topics/manhood/we-will-never-let-our-daughters-die-for-us/>. Retrieved 2/11/17. "At CBMW, we are completely pro-woman. Unlike a secular, gender-blurring culture, we honor women and view them in the highest regard. As complementarians, we are committed to the biblical truths that men and women are completely equal in dignity, value, worth, and honor; however, men and women are different in role and function. This warfare is a key arena in which we see differences between the sexes, both in terms of calling and design ... Women shouldn't have to be in combat, because men should step up and lead the way."
- 17 Abigail Dodds, "5 Truths for Our Daughters," *JBW* (March 15, 2016). <http://cbmw.org/topics/wives-mothers/5-truths-for-our-daughters/>. Retrieved 2/11/17. "Womanhood is connected to mothering, however. And if you're single or childless, God has still made you to nurture and mother the people he's put around you."

husbands are lovingly to lead their wives and wives should intelligently and willingly submit to their husbands. In the church, some governing and teaching roles are restricted to men,”¹⁸ such as being a pastor or a teacher instructing males.¹⁹ As complementarians, they “affirm that men and women are completely equal in dignity, value, worth, and honor; however, men and women are different in role and function,”²⁰ which is a key argument of differentiation between males and females for CBMW. Their mantra is: difference in function, equality in value. Variations of this refrain run throughout complementarian publications.

Basic to CBMW is the understanding of God-ordained roles established by the order of the creation of humanity, first male (Adam), and then second, female (Eve). The female was fashioned to be a helper to the male, not an equal functional partner. In creation, then, the “gender functional” hierarchical order was an intentional part of the divine order.²¹ Females are equal to males in human essence (ontology), in personhood, in importance, and in status before God. However, in *function*, males were created and charged with leadership and females were created and charged to support the leadership of the males.²² Men and women perform different roles, which correspond to sex/gender, and when done so in harmony, they “complement” one another. Males are leaders who focus on providing and protecting, and women are nurturers who focus on motherhood, helping, and homemaking.²³ This divine design of hierarchical order existed before the fall.²⁴ The entrance of sin exasperated the

18 See <http://cbmw.org/about/statement-of-faith/>. For an overview of its origin and influence see <http://cbmw.org/about/history/>.

19 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *50 Crucial Questions: An Overview of Central Concerns about Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).

20 Greg Gibson and Owen Strachan, “We Will Never Let Our Daughters Die for Us.”

21 “In this original setting, Genesis reveals distinctive gender roles in numerous ways. For instance, the order of creation (Adam then Eve), God’s address of Adam not Eve in Genesis 3:9, Adam’s authority to name Eve (2:23), and the name of the human race as “man” not woman (5:2) are just some of the ways Genesis reveals gender differences in creation. Made equally in the image of God, men and women are designed to reflect his glory in different ways.”

22 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “Preface 1991,” xv, in Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), xv, xiv–xvi.

23 See “The Danvers Statement” in Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 2012, which does not spell out femininity beyond motherhood and homemaking, and for masculinity mentions only leadership, 469–472.

24 See John Piper “A Vision for Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood defined according to the Bible,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 31–59. Piper states, “The foundation of this differentiation is traced back to the way things were in Eden

relationship by distorting the gender roles through competition and confusion of gender identity and function. Schrock writes, “Christian redemption does not redefine creation; it restores creation, so that wives learn godly submission and husbands learn godly headship.”²⁵ He further states, “Godly masculinity and femininity are equally pleasing to God, and must be pursued by men and women, respectively because there are no androgynous disciples of Christ.”²⁶ Jason Allen highlights the real issue for the CBMW community: “Biblically, theologically, and logically, the indispensable ingredient to complementarianism is biblical manhood.” “As Christians,” he further states, “our primary concern is not the country or the culture—it is the home and the church. If the latter are healthy, the former will be healthier ... The church needs to recover biblical manhood, Christian masculinity—what we might think of as sanctified testosterone.” Christian masculinity, he claims, rejects the pop view that “glorifies machismo, celebrates gruffness, and honors the strong arm” and the *gender confusion* resulting from advocates who say “that to be a better man, men should be more like women: more thoughtful, more caring, more romantic; always mindful of expressions of romance and dutifully carrying them out.”²⁷ When a church community has “a lack of biblical manhood” teaching and mature masculine male models, then the result is “men engaged in effeminacy, fornication, perversion, passivity, and—to borrow a modern phrase—protracted adolescence. These besetting sins are perennial ones, showing up in every generation like a never-dying plague upon the church.”²⁸ A male, therefore, has the responsibility and authority through *divine calling* to function as a man in the roles of leader, protector, provider, and sustainer.²⁹

before sin warped our relationships. Differentiated roles were corrupted, not created, by the fall. They were created by God” (35).

25 David Schrock, “Gender Specific Blessings: Bolstering a Biblical Theology of Gender Roles,” *JBW* 21, no. 1, <https://cbmw.org/topics/complementarianism/jbmw-21-1-gender-specific-blessings-bolstering-a-biblical-theology-of-gender-roles/> (May 11, 2016). Retrieved 2/11/17. Schrock writes, “In this original setting, Genesis reveals distinctive gender roles in numerous ways. For instance, the order of creation (Adam then Eve), God’s address of Adam not Eve in Genesis 3:9, Adam’s authority to name Eve (2:23), and the name of the human race as “man” not woman (5:2) are just some of the ways Genesis reveals gender differences in creation. Made equally in the image of God, men and women are designed to reflect his glory in different ways.”

26 Schrock, “Gender Specific Blessings.”

27 Jason Allen, “5 Key Ways to Cultivating Biblical Manhood in Your Church,” *JBW* (April 21, 2016), <http://cbmw.org/topics/leadership-2/5-key-ways-to-cultivating-biblical-manhood-in-your-church/>. Retrieved 2/11/17.

28 Allen, “5 Key Ways to Cultivating Biblical Manhood in Your Church.”

29 Piper and Grudem, 50 *Crucial Questions*, 22, 28, 35, and 76.

If males manifest masculinity through ruling, what do females manifest through femininity? Females manifest submission and nurturing. The female submits and supports male headship in home, church, and society. She is to submit and not to dominate. "The domineering woman is the usurper. Her desire is to rule over her husband or the men around her."³⁰ The CBMW emphasizes that this is an *intelligent* and active (not passive) form of *submission* that supports and strengthens male headship.

What a godly wife aims for at such moments is an attitude that, while affirming his leadership, seeks to sharpen it. She is not seeking to take advantage of his weaknesses by usurping his leadership. Rather, she wishes to encourage, advise, correct, and rebuke to the end that his leadership might be enhanced, his effectiveness increased, his capacities enlarged. "She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:12). At the end of the day, such a woman can submit to her husband knowing that he ultimately bears the responsibility before God for their relationship.³¹

Motherhood is essential to being a woman; however, a female who is *single* and a *virgin* is capable of entering into a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ and the church than is a single male. A single female will produce and nurture "spiritual children" and help with the responsibility of nurturing the children of others in the church, thereby fulfilling her created responsibility as a woman by producing and nurturing children.³² Womanhood, according to John Piper, is "a freeing disposition to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from worthy men in ways appropriate to woman's differing relationships."³³ Femininity is the disposition "to yield" and is best manifested "in nurturing" through motherhood and homemaking.³⁴

Clearly, gender roles with an emphasis upon manliness is the key concern of CBMW. They fear androgyny, effeminates, homosexuals, and intersex persons. Their answer to gender confusion and sexual immorality is to reassert a so-

30 Alex Chediak, "Mature Femininity is Neither Obsequious or Domineering," *JBW* (April 2, 2009), <https://cbmw.org/uncategorized/mature-femininity-is-neither-obsequious-or-domineering/>. Retrieved 2/11/17.

31 Chediak, "Mature Femininity."

32 Piper and Grudem, 50 *Crucial Questions*, 53, and 76–77.

33 Piper and Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 46.

34 See Dorothy Patterson, "The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective," in Piper and Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 364–377. The following chapter is "Where's Dad? A Call for Fathers with the Spirit of Elijah," 378–387.

called “biblical” male headship—a Christianized form of patriarchy. Along with the serious question of whether patriarchy is God’s design for humanity is the question of how complementarians determine what the biblical gendered roles should be. CBMW is really restating gender roles associated with Victorian and post-World War II industrial Western society, as found in anglophone middle-class patriarchy.³⁵ Traditional Western gender roles present men as rational and strong. By nature, they are decisive leaders, protectors, and providers. Women are cast as irrational and emotional. By nature they are easily deceived, physically weak, and in need of protecting. “Thus being a ‘real’ man in patriarchal culture requires one to hold feminine qualities in contempt.”³⁶ This is true for CBMW, for manhood precedes womanhood, and to be a real man is to *not* exhibit feminine characteristics.

Until recently, wedding ceremonies dramatically reenacted and audibly reaffirmed the patriarchal gender roles. From the question of “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” to the stated duties of the soon-to-be husband and wife, gendered roles are unmistakably differentiated and hierarchical authority is clearly asserted. For example, W.W. Everts’s *Pastor’s Handbook* states:

It is the duty of the husband to be the friend, counsellor (sic), and guardian of his wife, shielding her from danger, providing for her support, and cherishing for her a manly and unalterable affection; it being required by the word of God that husbands love their wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.

It is the duty of the wife to be the friend, companion, and solace of her husband, reverencing and obeying him, and putting on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, it being commanded by Scripture, that, as the church is subject unto Christ so should wives be to their own husbands in everything.³⁷

Although now couched in savvy phrases such as “women *intelligently* submit,” traditional Western patriarchal gender roles like the ones above are perpetu-

35 See Kristina LaCelle-Peterson, *Liberating Tradition: Women’s Identity and the Vocation in Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 122–123.

36 See Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory: A User Friendly Guide*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 85–93, 88.

37 W.W. Everts, *Pastor’s Handbook*, rev. ed. (Chicago, IL: The Judson Press, 1947, 1st ed. 1887), 19–20.

ated throughout CBMW literature. Hierarchical relationships between men and women is God's divine plan for humanity; in fact, patriarchy remains even into glorified everlasting life!³⁸

CBMW anchors their teachings by appealing to particular Scripture texts. In their reading of Genesis, however, they rearrange the literary order of Genesis by inverting chapters 1 and 2. In doing so, they silence the clear egalitarian language of the first creation story in which males and females are created in the image of God and commissioned with the same task of caring for creation. Genesis 3, then, becomes prescriptive and normative rather than a description of the consequences of the fall. They also draw upon NT house codes such as 1 Peter 3:1–7 and Ephesians 5:22–33, as well as 1 Corinthians 11:3, 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11–15.

4 Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE)

Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) came into existence in response to evangelical Christian churches and theological traditions that excluded women, their gifting, and their abilities from ministry leadership. In 1987, a group of Evangelicals gathered to publish their biblical perspective in a new journal called *Priscilla Papers*.³⁹ These leaders also felt that it was time for a national organization that would challenge patriarchy and affirm mutuality and equality between the sexes. Like CBMW, Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) grounded and supported their egalitarian view with Scripture. CBE was officially established on January 2, 1988, in order to provide education, support, and leadership about biblical equality. “CBE hosted its first international conference in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in July of 1989. CBE’s first major project was the creation of a statement titled “Men, Women, and Biblical Equality,”⁴⁰ which laid

38 David Schrock, “Gender Specific Blessings.” Schrock writes, “In the new heavens and the new earth, therefore, we have no reason to believe gender distinctions will cease. While the nature and function of marriage will be different (Matt 22:30), gender will not be neutered. The same ‘sons and daughters’ who receive the Spirit of God (Acts 2:17–18) will exist forever as sons and daughters in his kingdom. Therefore, while in one sense all God’s children will be firstborn sons as it relates to inheritance (Gal 3:26; 1 Pet 3:7), every son or daughter of God will retain and express the gender God designed for them. Only, in glory there will be no gender dysphoria or egalitarian confusion. What the curse imposes today will be undone by the blessed work of Jesus Christ.”

39 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/priscilla-papers-academic-journal>.

40 “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” Christians for Biblical Equality, 1989, <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/statement-men-women-and-biblical-equality>. Retrieved

out the biblical rationale for equality as well as its application in the community of believers and the family.”⁴¹ CBE “affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home and world.”⁴²

As a typical evangelical group, CBE affirms the authority of Scripture throughout its documents.⁴³ On the webpage explaining CBE it reads: “We are Christians, committed to the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for Christian faith and practice. We believe that our mission is a result of faithful interpretation and application of the Bible.” CBE lists eight core values, and Scripture tops the list. CBE affirms that “Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice.” Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” is the key verse for equality. Core value 6 states that “God’s design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a man and a woman, celibate singleness and mutual submission in Christian community.”⁴⁴

Five of the eight core value statements specifically address patriarchy as problematic. CBE argues that patriarchy is a result of the fall. Genesis 3 is viewed as *predicting the results of sin* entering into relationships causing hierarchical subjugation of women rather than *prescribing it*. Salvation through Jesus redeems humanity and restores equality in relationships.⁴⁵ “Followers of Christ are to oppose injustice and patriarchal teachings and practices that marginalize and abuse females and males.”⁴⁶ Relationships prior to human sin were based on equality and mutual responsibility for carrying out God’s mission; thus, one’s sexed and gendered existence is not a prerequisite for leadership. Females are, in *essence* and in *function*, equal to males even though they do have biological

February 11, 2017. The statement is available for free in over thirty languages. There is no discussion about gender roles; both males and females are created coequal and encouraged to practice mutual submission and coleadership.

41 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/cbes-history>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

42 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/cbes-mission>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

43 This is also true of their manifesto, “Men, Women and Biblical Equality,” which has twelve statements, each of which begins with “The Bible.”

44 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/about-cbe>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

45 Gordon D. Fee, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” and William J. Webb, “A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic: The Slavery Analogy,” both in Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, gen. eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementary without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 364–338, 382–400.

46 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/cbes-mission>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

differences concerning reproductive ability. Gender does not exclude one from leadership. Females and males are *gifted* for possible leadership, not born for leadership.

Christian communities should nurture both women and men into mutuality and equality. Hierarchical male or female headship, like slavery, is a consequence of sin.⁴⁷ Mutual respect, honor, service, and submission are the characteristics of female and male relationships, including marriage. Jesus is the head of the church *and* head of the marriage. Accordingly, CBE tells a different story about human identity. CBE “emphasizes partnership and mutuality between women and men and relies on the apostle Paul’s teaching that ‘There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28 NRSV).”⁴⁸ They read Genesis in its canonical literary arrangement of chapters 1, 2, and 3. This refocuses the attention to equality of sexes, emphasizing that both are created in the image of God and commissioned with caring for creation. The consequences of the fall introduce patriarchy into the human relationship. In support of their narrative, they will point out all the places in Scripture where women served in various leadership roles.⁴⁹

CBE realizes that humans do have a gendered identity, and it is usually associated with their sex. Such an identity is the individual’s basic conviction of being female or male. CBE also affirms Christian marriage as a covenantal relationship of equality and mutuality between a “male and female.” The couple should model mutual empowerment and intimacy. The married “partners hold equal status; accommodation in the relationship is mutual; attention to the other in the relationship is mutual; and there is mutual well-being of the partners.”⁵⁰ The couple focuses on processes required for the ongoing flourishing of each person in the family rather than prescribed individual roles. Roles are not restricted to traditional patriarchal gender expectations (except for the biological specific functions associated with childbearing). Roles should be flexible and negotiable throughout the family life cycle.⁵¹ The so-called traditional gendered roles in marriage may exist but do so because of a couple’s choice, not

47 <http://www.cbeinternational.org/content/cbes-mission>. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

48 Jennifer McKinney, “Sects and Gender: Reaction and Resistance to Cultural Change,” *Priscilla Papers* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 2015), 15–23 at 15. http://www.cbeinternational.org/sites/default/files/pp294_4sects.pdf. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

49 McKinney, “Sects and Gender,” 15.

50 Jack and Judith Balwick, “Marriage as a Partnership of Equals,” in Pierce and Groothuis, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 454–455 at 454.

51 See Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, “Social Science Studies Cannot Define Gender Differences,” *Priscilla Papers* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2013), 12–19. <http://www.cbeinternational.org/>

because they are inherent in sex or gender. "Sexual dimorphism is indeed part of our creational framework, but gender is something to be responsibly structured and renegotiated ... not a mystical, rigid, archetypal given."⁵² CBE rejects gender essentialism, which restricts and differentiates *roles* between women and men, and between father and mother.

CBE understands God to be Spirit, thus formless. God is not a sexed or gendered being. However, the Bible does use male, female, and neuter images of God in metaphorical and analogical ways to help humans better understand God's character. "Therefore, egalitarians tend to emphasize God as being neither male nor female *or* both male and female."⁵³

In sum, when it comes to "egalitarian complementarianism" (CBE) and "hierarchical complementarianism" (CBMW), the issue centers on the understanding of original creation and redemption of humans as sexed and gendered beings. Hierarchalists assign patriarchal gender roles to creation and restoration. Male headship was established in original creation, restored in redemption, and *remains* into the future glorified community. Egalitarians, however, assign equality and mutuality to original creation and redemption respectively. The fall and the consequences of human rebellion are responsible for the emergence of a predominantly patriarchal structure of society, church, and marriage. Christ, in keeping with a redemptive trajectory in Scripture, reestablishes equality between sexes and ethnic groups. Egalitarianism is the organizational and relational way the redeemed community lives, and the glorified community will exist under the Lordship of the Trinity.

As for ontology, egalitarians, like most feminists, understand males and females as equal in essence and function but do not dismiss the importance of sexed difference as it pertains to reproductive activity; however, complementarians, like most patriarchalists, understand males and females as essentially and functionally different. Gendered identity is inherently connected to one's sex; therefore, they affirm gender essentialism, which privileges males.

As to relationships, CBMW casts a vision of male leadership and female subordination. Males are responsible for authoritative leadership best manifested through fatherhood, and females are responsible for submission best manifested through nurturing motherhood. Marriage, therefore, is essential in order

resources/article/priscilla-papers/social-science-studies-cannot-define-gender-differences. Retrieved February 11, 2017.

52 Van Leeuwen, "Social Science Studies Cannot Define Gender Differences," 16.

53 Aída Besançon Spencer, "Does God Have Gender?," *Priscilla Papers* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 5–12 at 5. <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/does-god-have-gender>.

for men and women to function in their God-ordained gendered roles. CBE's vision affirms relationships in community and personal giftedness as essential but also elevates the dignity of singleness. Both theological views are contemporary presentations of societal roles. Both believe that their narration of humanity is *the* correct and accurate interpretation of the Bible, and both support their view by appeals to Scripture.

Next we turn our attention to a pentecostal reading of Ephesians 5:21–33, which is a key text for complementarians and also important for egalitarians.

5 A Pentecostal Reading of Ephesians 5:21–33

So much has been written on this passage that it is virtually impossible to say anything new about it. Those who hold to a hierarchical view of marriage champion this passage as *the biblical view* of marriage, particularly verses 22–33. For them the first-century Christian community, like the Greco-Roman world and Jewish society, was hierarchal and patriarchal, yet in Christ patriarchy is redeemed into a loving headship. Those who argue for an egalitarian model attempt to read this passage in its first-century social context, trace trajectories of resistance to patriarchy throughout the Bible, and show that gendering has more to do with social-cultural environment than clear “Bible” teaching on the subject. Key for such a reading is the concept of mutual submission as found in 5:21 and its challenge to traditional patriarchy.

Before addressing this, two related concerns about English translations are important. First, modern translations do no service to those on the egalitarian side of the debate, as a section break or new paragraph is generally found between 5:21 and 5:22. The creation of a break or new paragraph leads to the second concern, which is that all modern translations insert the verb “submit” (in the imperative voice) into verse 22, even though it is lacking in the Greek text.⁵⁴ Manuscripts prior to AD 350 omit a verb in 5:22; manuscripts after AD 350 include some form of “submit.” Almost all critical Greek New Testaments follow P⁴⁶ and other manuscripts that do not have the verb. This is important because this papyrus manuscript dates to 200 AD.⁵⁵ Thus, the earliest manuscripts clearly linked 5:21 and 5:22, and the Greek NT in use today does this as well. Unfortunately, this is “hidden” in English translations that insert

54 The manuscript evidence in the UBS 4th edition Greek NT indicates that a form of ὑποτασσω was inserted at different places in the verse (verse 22 has a “B” rating).

55 See the insightful discussion by Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 278–279.

the imperative “submit” into verse 22. This, then, becomes the “plain meaning” of the text, the natural way that readers read and understand the text.

Grammatically, verse 21, with its opening passive participle *hupotassomenoi* (“be submitting”), belongs to the section that precedes it—specifically, the imperative to be filled with the Spirit found in 5:18. Verses 19–21, each of which begins with and/or contains a plural participle, flesh out what being filled with the Spirit looks like in community: *speaking to one another* in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, *singing and psalming* in your heart, *giving thanks* always for all things, and *being submissive to one another*.⁵⁶ In this way, being filled with the Spirit is to be manifested in the ongoing *practices* of the community. The familiar call to be “filled with the Spirit” is part of the letter’s significant pneumatological emphasis. Believers are to understand that they have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the pledge of their inheritance as well as the Giver of wisdom and revelation (1:13–14, 17; also 4:30). It is the Spirit who enables Jews and Gentiles to have access to God and together to be the household of God and the temple of the Lord (2:18, 22)—and this was made known to the prophets and apostles of Christ through the Spirit (3:5). The Spirit enables believers to be “mightily empowered” in their inner being (3:16). Further, the Spirit can be grieved—most notably through ungodly actions, such as lying one to another, stealing, and engaging in unwholesome talk (4:30). Ephesians 6:17–18 reminds the believer that part of the spiritual armor includes the sword of the Spirit and praying in the Spirit. In light of this emphasis on the very active role of the Spirit in the life of the believer, perhaps the *haustafel* can be viewed afresh as part of what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

The final participial phrase connected with being filled with the Spirit is the call to mutual submission: “Submit to one another in fear of Christ” (5:21). As with all the paraenetic material found in Ephesians 4–6, this injunction is issued to everyone in the community; thus, a Spirit-filled community practices submitting to one another in reverence or fear of Christ.⁵⁷ The idea of the “fear of Christ” is likely paralleled with the concept of the “fear of the LORD” found

56 Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 337–340, sees 5:15–6:9 as a unit exhorting the community to wise living. The participles in verses 19–21 are dependent on πληροῦσθε and verse 22 is dependent on verse 21 because verse 22 is verbless. In this way, Lincoln can argue that the entire household codes can be viewed under the heading of wise and Spirit-filled living. He divides his commentary, however, into 5:15–20 and then 5:21–33. Breaking his commentary here is unfortunate because it inadvertently supports the idea of wives submitting without the reinforcement of mutual submission.

57 Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365. See also Mark Keown, “Paul’s Vision of a New Masculinity (Eph 5:21–6:9),” *Colloquium* 48 (2016): 50.

throughout the Old Testament; that is, a proper response of “reverence” that leads one to be obedient to the will of God.⁵⁸

Grudem argues against mutuality by asserting that the reciprocal pronoun (*allēlois*) is not *always* reciprocal in biblical usage and that it means “some to others” in this passage.⁵⁹ If this is so, whom is the community being told to submit to in this verse? Who would be the “others”? Grudem offers this paraphrase to reinforce his view: “[T]hose who are under authority should be subject to others among you who have authority over them.”⁶⁰ Grudem’s view forces an unnatural and complicated meaning on the relatively simple text and puts a hierarchy into Ephesians’ description of the church that is just not there. It seems far more likely that the text is calling for *mutual submission to one another* as a distinguishing mark of the Spirit-filled Christian community.

In verses 22–33, the writer of Ephesians links mutual submission to the household through the use of the household codes. Long before their use by biblical writers, the household codes were developed to reflect Greco-Roman and Jewish ideas of the family unit.⁶¹ A full treatment is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is important to note that the family unit was discussed under the larger topic of the state by Plato,⁶² Aristotle, and even Jewish writers. To upset the order of the household would be to undermine the foundation of society. The accepted and expected practices of patriarchy, hierarchy, and submission of women, children, and slaves to the paterfamilias was something not to question.⁶³ As Lisa Belz notes, a “disordered household, that is, a household without proper vertically-ranked family relationships, was regarded as the seedbed of

58 Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366.

59 It should be noted that he gives the same type of meaning to Galatians 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens.” Thus, reciprocity is not what Paul had in mind *despite the plain meaning of the text*. Paul meant that only *some* within the community can bear burdens.

60 Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 494. One should read his full discussion of this, beginning on page 493.

61 The idea of household rules can be traced back to Aristotle. See James B. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 78.

62 In Plato’s discussion of the ideal state, he asserts that women, children, and slaves constitute “the mob of motley appetites and pleasures and pains” who are to be ruled. Cited in Shi-Min Lu, “Woman’s Role in New Testament Household Codes: Transforming First-Century Roman Culture,” *Priscilla Papers* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2016), 9, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/woman%E2%80%99s-role-new-testament-household-codes>.

63 See Lincoln’s helpful discussion, *Ephesians*, 355–360.

disorder and chaos in society at large.”⁶⁴ Greco-Roman household codes thus were apologetic; that is, they were written to

assure Roman authorities that the persons writing them, as well as those either to whom they are addressed or whom they describe, are upstanding and loyal members of the empire, in full support of its system of order imposed through structured, hierarchical relationships where all know their place in subordination to higher-ups.⁶⁵

The first-century Christian communities would have been familiar with these household codes, of course. Neither the role of the *paterfamilias* nor the submissive role of all other members of the household would have been new to the hearers of the letter.⁶⁶ Notably, however, the writer of Ephesians has presented his hearers with the reality of an alternative *household*, so that as believers in Christ, they are “members of the household of God” (*oikeioi tou theou*) (2:19). This *household* is to be understood as originating in God, the true *paterfamilias*,⁶⁷ governed by Christ, its head, and animated by the Spirit. It is thereby in light of the author’s understanding of the Spirit’s transformational work in the *church* that subtle yet significant shifts in the understanding of the family emerge in the household codes. The members of the *Christian* family are to be under submission to the Spirit as well as to one another. In this way, the household codes “bear witness” to the “power of the gospel in cultural forms.”⁶⁸

The use of the masculine participle *hupotassomenoi* in 5:21, in light of the discussion of wives and husbands that follows, “demands the subordination of husbands, not just wives”;⁶⁹ the use of the reciprocal pronoun *allēlois* (“to one another”) clearly indicates that Paul is “not endorsing hierarchical social structures.”⁷⁰ So, while wives will also be enjoined to submit (nothing new here),

64 Lisa Marie Belz, “Proper Household Relations in Whose *Basileia*? Examining Ephesians’ Subtle Revisions to the Household Code of Colossians,” *Conversations with the Biblical World* 34 (2014): 228.

65 Belz, “Proper Household Relations in Whose *Basileia*?,” 229.

66 Lu, “Woman’s Role in New Testament Household Codes,” 11: “Since the church members came from some kind of household, they would have known the written and unwritten laws pertaining to their roles in their households.”

67 Lu, “Woman’s Role in New Testament Household Codes,” 13.

68 Lu, “Women’s Role in New Testament Household Codes,” 11. See also p. 13 where she states: “The codes not only affirmed women’s new identity in the household of God, but also defined a new love relationship for church members as a way to testify to the gospel message.”

69 Belz, “Proper Household Relations in Whose *Basileia*?,” 235.

70 Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of*

husbands are also to submit—a revolutionary new concept for the first-century Greco-Roman or Jewish male. Russ Dudrey writes:

What is *old* are the injunctions to wives, children, and slaves to obey their husbands, fathers, and masters: these norms were probably universal and self-evidently desirable throughout the ancient world ... If the primary focus of Paul's injunctions is his charge for wives, children, and slaves to "submit [them]selves," then his ancient readers would see Paul as having nothing more than a firm grasp upon the obvious. That Paul upholds the existing social order is not primary, but secondary: it is his opening gambit, his communication bridge to his audience, which he crosses over with the new and transforming perspective of Christ ... What is *new* is the perspective of Christ, which charges husbands, fathers, and slave owners also to "submit [them]selves to one another out of reverence for Christ."⁷¹

It is for this reason that verse 21 cannot be divorced from verse 22. The modern reader of this passage must understand the cultural climate of the first-century world so as to recognize the impact of the call to *mutual* submission.⁷² As I. Howard Marshall notes, "Paul has here enunciated a principle that calls into question the structures of the ancient world, although he himself probably did not perceive its full implications."⁷³

Typical household codes would never have addressed the wife, child, and slave before the *paterfamilias* (in his role as husband, father, and slave owner).⁷⁴

Paul's Letters (Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 2009), 275. Payne lifts up the places in Ephesians where Paul calls the hearers to mutuality and love (4:2, 25, 32; 5:1, 21).

71 Russ Dudrey, "Submit Yourselves to One Another: A Socio-Historical Look at the Household Code of Ephesians 5:15–6:9," *Restoration Quarterly* (January 1999): 40 (emphasis mine).

72 While such scholars as Peter O'Brien, *Letter to the Ephesians*, 398–405, argues that ὑποτασσομαι is only used in the NT in the context of hierarchical pairs and therefore cannot be used in mutual relationships, other scholars, such as Philip Payne, *One Man, One Woman*, 281–283, demonstrate that the verb is used in places where hierarchy might be expected but is not there (such as Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, John 13).

73 I. Howard Marshall, "Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18–19 and Ephesians 5:21–33," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 197–198.

74 Aristotle speaks of the same relational pairs but always with the male role first: "Now that it is clear what are the components of the state, we have first of all to discuss household management; for every state is composed of households ... The investigation of everything should begin with the smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are *master* and a slave, *husband* and wife, *father* and children; we ought therefore

Thus, simply by addressing them firstly in each instance, the writer offers an indirect challenge to traditional patriarchy. While Keown wishes to argue that Paul's focus is squarely on the male head of the family,⁷⁵ one cannot ignore that wives are addressed before the husband—something that would not go unnoticed amongst the letter's recipients. Thus, although wives are to demonstrate mutual submission by submitting to their own husbands—again, not an unfamiliar posture—this is to be done “as to the Lord” (5:22). The writer's theological rationale is documented in the *hoti* clause that follows: “For a husband is head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church, himself the Savior of the body; rather, as the church is submissive to Christ, so also the wives to their husbands in all things” (5:23–24, my translation). Strikingly, the wife is never *directly* told to submit; that is, the wife's posture of submission is ascertained in the call to mutual submission and in the church's submission to Christ. On the submission of the wife, F.F. Bruce notes, “This is found to be the more appropriate when their submission to their husbands is seen to have a counterpart in the church's submission to Christ.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, the wife is to view her submission as spiritual service in accordance with the church. While not wanting to disagree with Bruce, it seems that the analogy of the church submitting to Christ is not only for the wife but also for the husband; after all, the church is not just comprised of women. Ephesians is filled with descriptions of the church, the body for which Christ is the head. Indeed, the writer cannot talk about Christian marriage without repeatedly talking about the church (vv. 23, 25, 27, 29, 32). Why is this? The analogy of the church is a “pattern, not a ground for the wife's submission.”⁷⁷

The debates over the meaning of *kephālē*—either “head” implying ruler (the choice of complementarians) or “source” implying origin (favored by egalitarians)—continue to stymie scholars on both sides of the issue since there is no consensus on a definitive definition, either in this passage or in 1 Corinthians 11:3. Is Paul saying that the husband is ruler of the wife as Christ is the ruler

to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these relationships, I mean that of mastership, that of marriage ..., and thirdly the progenitive relationship.” Cited in Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, 78 (emphasis mine). I find it significant, however, that although Brownson sees mutual submission as “framing the discussion” of the family, he misses that the writer of Ephesians addresses the inferior member of the relational pair first—a direct reversal of Aristotle. See also I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 186.

75 Keown, “Paul's Vision of a New Masculinity,” 52.

76 F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1984.

77 Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 199.

of the church or that the husband is the origin of the wife (appealing to the creation story of Genesis 2) as Christ is the origin of the church? Despite the popularity of and insistence on “male *headship*,” *kephālē* appears only once in this entire passage (v. 24). We suggest that *head* in this verse is used with the understanding of source or origin; that is, just as Christ is the source of the church (a consistent theme within Ephesians), so is the husband (as a man) the source of the wife (as a woman). Because the author will later appeal to Genesis in Ephesians 5:31, the creation story of Genesis 2 is a likely background for his statement in verse 24. However, even if the meaning “ruler” is insisted upon, the concept is radically deconstructed. Paul states that “Christ is the head of the church, himself the savior of the body.” The phrase “himself the savior of the body” is in apposition to “Christ is the head of the church.” As Philip Payne writes, “If Paul had intended to convey ‘head’ in the sense of authority, he should have used an appositional phrase such as ‘he the authority of the body,’ but instead, he explained it with ‘savior.’”⁷⁸ Equating “head” with “savior” is unique to this passage. Indeed, none of the phrases that follow in which “savior” is delineated (washing, nourishing, cherishing, and so forth) convey authority.⁷⁹ If anything, *headship* is equated with self-giving and sacrificial service.

Christ’s self-giving and extraordinary love for the church is to be a model for Christian husbands as the writer repeats his injunction for husbands to love their wives in verses 25, 28, and 33. Greco-Roman men were not required to love their wives: “the most required of them was to provide food and shelter and to refrain from beating them.”⁸⁰ Thus, the writer’s repeated call for husbands to love their wives must have been shocking for husbands and wives! Yet, even in these instructions, the writer returns to his discussion of the church. The church is made holy and blameless (v. 26), and is presented as a radiant church (v. 27), because of what Christ has done for her. Husbands are to love their wives, yet the husbands are not “Christ” to their wives.⁸¹ Husbands are not

78 Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 284. He goes on to say, “Even if ‘leader’ had been a common metaphorical meaning of ‘head’ in Paul’s day [which he argues it was not], his use of ‘savior’ in apposition to ‘head’ shows that he did not intend ‘leader’ here, since ‘savior’ is semantically unrelated to ‘leader’” (285).

79 Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 287.

80 Kristina LaCelle-Peterson, *Liberating Tradition: Women’s Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 110.

81 Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 200. “Here in Ephesians the problem is the apparent theological rooting of one-sided submission by the wife, with the husband as her head and holding a position analogous to Christ’s.” See Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, “‘Equal in Being, Unequal in Role’: Exploring the Logic of Woman’s Subordina-

the savior of their wives; for they, too, are to understand themselves as the holy, washed, and radiant *bride* of Christ, which reinforces the idea that husbands and wives are to submit to one another under *their* head, Christ the Savior. Thus the emphasis is on Christ and the sanctification of the Bride, which is made up of men and women, not on the elevation of the husband over the wife.

In 5:31, in an extraordinary theological move that climaxes the entire argument, the writer takes Genesis 2:24, which is a traditional statement about marriage, and identifies it as a *mega mustērion* (“a great mystery”), which, he reveals, is about Christ and the church. This intimate connection between Christ and the church, between the *Bridegroom* and his *bride*, is the paradigm for Christian marriage. It is because of this profound revelation that the writer can finish his exhortations to husbands and wives in verse 33: “Because of this, each one *must love* his own wife as *himself* and the wife *must respect* the husband.” Again, where the writer could have commanded “submission” here of the wives, he does not; instead, the wife is to *respect* the husband. This is not semantics—as the writer has no problem with pointed writing elsewhere—but rather a reimagining of the Spirit-filled marriage, based not on traditional submission and hierarchy but on mutual submission and sacrificial love. Stanley Grenz and Denise Kjesbo write:

Christ’s church ... is to be a foretaste of the egalitarian structure of God’s reign. As an outworking of this new reality, Paul commands believers to live according to mutual submission, which is to be the overarching principle governing social relations within Christ’s community: “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.”⁸²

In the same way, the Christian marriage on earth is to be a glimpse of the eschatological reality of being seated in the heavenlies as the bride of Christ, far above all perceived social norms of patriarchy, hierarchy, or subordination.

tion,” in Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, eds., *Discovering Biblical Equality* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 312–313, “If God has given responsibility and dominion to both male and female (Gen 1:26–28), if we all stand on equal ground before God (Gal 3:26–28), if women are equal heirs of the grace of God (1 Pet 3:7) and if all believers together—both men and women—form God’s new priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10), then there is no reason for anyone to take this sort of spiritual responsibility for anyone else. If Jesus Christ is a female believer’s Lord and Savior in the same way that he is a male believer’s, then surely no Christian woman has need of a man to stand in the place of Christ for her.”

- 82 Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 178.

6 Moving Past the Household Codes via the Spirit

What is the way forward for Pentecostals? We cannot make Paul a full-blown egalitarian as much as we might like to do so. We can say that Paul seems to have some rudimentary ideas along those lines in statements such as Galatians 3:28.⁸³ Patriarchy and hierarchy were assumed social constructs in the first century. The role of the emperor was unquestioned; the role of the paterfamilias was unquestioned; the role of the Jewish father was unquestioned. Submission was viewed as the appropriate response by citizens, by wives, by children, and by slaves. But does this notion of authority extend until “kingdom come”? Marshall states,

these structures are not sacrosanct and few would doubt that the changes to them have on the whole been for the better. More important, absolutism and slavery are not recognized to be forms of power/authority that sit uncomfortably with biblical teaching; and total authority of parents over older children would not be acceptable to Christians today. In all three cases we live within different structures and recognize a need for change from the first-century structures as a result of our continuing evaluation of society in the light of the gospel. With changes in structures and relationships, there naturally come changes in the kinds of behavior required of Christians in them. It would be very strange if similar considerations did not apply in the case of marriage.⁸⁴

The kingdom *has* come and is coming. What we have now is the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus said would remind us of his teachings and lead us into all truth. We believe that the Spirit is leading not to the christianizing of patriarchy but to the emancipation of humanity into a redeemed egalitarian community. This does not deny difference; rather, it recognizes the functional equality of the sexes.

We believe that Ephesians 5:21–33 introduces an egalitarian view of marriage but in a limited way. The trajectory of Scripture is toward “a recognition of the equality of men and women in salvation.”⁸⁵ Pentecostals should read Ephesians 5:22–33 through the lens of the event of Pentecost, in tune with the Spirit’s

83 For a discussion of women in the New Testament, see Melissa L. Archer, “Women in Ministry: A Pentecostal Reading of New Testament Texts,” in Margaret English de Alminana and Lois E. Olena, eds., *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry: Informing a Dialogue on Gender, Church, and Ministry* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2017), 35–56.

84 Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 190.

85 Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 202.

work of bringing about full restoration to humanity rather than as an eternal divine authorization of patriarchy. The Pentecost event, in which God's Spirit is poured out on all flesh, including women and servants, eliminates hierarchy. Lisa Stephenson, a pentecostal feminist, writes, "The outpouring of the Spirit removed the dualisms of old/young, male/female, master/servant, Jews/Samaritans, and Jews/Gentiles. The outpouring of the Spirit necessitated a new way of living that transformed the anthropological assumptions that had been operating."⁸⁶ Stephenson is absolutely right when she states that those who want to affirm women as leaders must dismantle the Western dualism of male/female, for if they do not, then they cannot affirm the full equality between females and males.⁸⁷ This can only be done when we recognize the real issue, which is not what women can or cannot do, but is more accurately about "who *women* are." This is not a *functional* question but instead an *ontological* concern "because functional limitation is predicated upon women's ontology."⁸⁸ Females *and males* have been created in the very image of God, redeemed through Christ, and gifted by the Spirit.

7 Conclusion

In Christ, humanity is redeemed and egalitarianism is encouraged. Through the Spirit, "hierarchical dualism" is erased and yet distinction and difference

86 Lisa P. Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist-Pneumatological Approach* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 113.

87 Western *hierarchical* binary thought patterns are defined completely in relation to their opposite. The first part of the dualism is positive and the second part is negative. The first term is *preferred*, such as "thinking" and "feeling." The second is subordinate to the first and as such is devalued and discouraged. Dualisms such as white race/black race, rational/irrational, objective/subjective, thought/experience, and male/female function in Western thought in such ways that the first is preferred and charged positively and the second is charged negatively.

88 Lisa P. Stephenson, "Made in the Image of God," in Lee Roy Martin, ed., *Toward A Pentecostal Theology of Preaching* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015), 141–153, 144. Drawing upon complementarian gender arguments is the Quiverfull movement; see Kathryn Joyce, *The Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2009). Much more problematic, yet in keeping with the arguments concerning male headship, is the Christian Domestic Discipline (CDD) movement, which encourages the husband to physically spank his wife as a form of discipline (the CDD are loosely connected groups and not officially endorsed by more mainstream patriarchal groups). For one example see www.christiandomesticdiscipline.com, and for another example of a husband teaching how to disciplining one's wife without spanking, see <https://biblicalgenderroles.com/2015/10/03/7-ways-to-discipline-your-wife/>.

are affirmed in a nonhierarchical manner. Employing a pentecostal redemptive hermeneutic grounded in the liberationist impulse of Jesus and the Spirit can help Pentecostals move beyond patriarchy—including “soft patriarchy”—to embrace God’s egalitarian intention for humanity. Therefore, a pentecostal view of humans as sexed beings should not diminish or demote femaleness or maleness, nor should it privilege, promote or absolutize any sexed identity. Instead, a pentecostal view should elevate all humans to mutual dignity, respect, and honor through mutual submission and service as holy followers of Jesus surrendered to the Spirit’s Lordship in their lives. As a result, pentecostal communities are able relationally, lovingly, and collectively to image the social Trinity in an egalitarian manner. For those in the community who choose to marry, the husband and wife can lovingly exist as coleaders of their home under the headship of Jesus. Roles are assigned not by gender but by giftedness and interest. Mutual submission of husband to wife and wife to husband flows from love, reflecting the loving intrarelationality of the social Trinity. Indeed, it is hoped that this reading has shown that patriarchy is dismantled; there is no room for patriarchy in the church, the home, or society. Rather, “Mutual love transcends submission.”⁸⁹

89 Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage,” 194.