

## MAN AND WOMAN IN ADAM AND IN CHRIST

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One major argument for egalitarianism in marriage and the church pictures female deference as a fallen condition that has been reversed in Christ. “*Your husband will rule over you*” (Genesis 3:16) has changed to “*In Christ there is no male and female*” (Galatians 3:28). New Testament comments about male headship merely temporalize the Christian ideal in the interests of Christian mission. The following comments attempt to show that this scenario artificially combines unrelated ideas and overextends the cultural variable. Genesis 3:16 does not indicate a result of the curse, Galatians 3:28 is not an absolute principle, and statements elsewhere about headship are not necessarily pragmatic concessions to cultural norms that no longer apply.

### I. Genesis 3:16 does not represent a fallen condition that resulted from the curse.

A. The New Testament bases the female deference principle on pre-Fall considerations as well. The episode in Genesis 2:18-25 presents Adam as the primary figure. Paul cites various particulars in this paragraph in presenting the male-headship principle. He argues for it from the manner-sequence-purpose of creation. It is not simply that God created Eve *after* Adam (1 Timothy 2:13), but that he created her *after* him, *from* him (1 Corinthians 11:8, 12a), and *for* him (11:9). If sheer seniority were the point, mankind would be inferior to the rest of creation—the plants, the animals, *etc.* Within the personal arena Jewish thought did tend to correlate priority and superiority for ordering purposes (Jn. 1:30 and the inheritance laws). Similarly, deference does not come from the sheer fact that Eve was made *from* Adam. Every male is born *from* a woman (1 Corinthians 11:12), including the Son of Man (Galatians 4:4). Here Eve is called a “*helper*” (עֵזֶר) suitable to Adam (Genesis 2:18, 20). Although the word itself does not imply subordination, the circumstances—being created after, from, and for man—makes woman a helper in a different sense than God, for example, is a “*helper*” (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29; Psalm 20:2/3; 33:20; 70:5/6; 89:19/20; 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hosea 13:9; cp. Isaiah 30:5; Ezekiel 12:14; Daniel 11:34\*; the LXX has βοηθός). This issue rests not so much on the words as in the nature of the event, and not so much in discrete particulars as in the whole event in which they are notable features.

The episode in Genesis 3:1-8 presents Eve as the prominent figure. Paul argues the female deference principle from the manner-sequence of the Fall itself (1 Timothy 2:14). He says that she was deceived, and Adam was not, although he does not explain himself. Knowing this fact by revelation is conceivable but his readers could not evaluate that point independently. The idea may have been an inference from the wording “*when the woman saw that . . .*,” as if she felt convinced on the matter; the text says nothing similar when she offered the fruit to him.

Evidently on the basis of Genesis 1:26-27 + 2:18-23, Paul also teaches that Adam was created in the image of God in some way that Eve was not (1 Corinthians 11:7), either because Adam had, or exercised, the image in some degree or aspect that Eve did not, or because he had it directly while she had it indirectly by being created from Adam.

Other factors in the pre-Fall condition confirm the female deference principle even though New Testament writers do not cite them specifically. (1) God brings the woman to the man even as he brought the animals to him earlier (2:22 +19). (2) Adam calls her “woman” even as he named the animals previously (2:23 + 19-20; cp. 3:20). The comment about calling her “Eve” is recorded after the Fall (3:20) admittedly, but that does not imply that it was because of the Fall. Female deference as such (3:16) is not pictured as a fallen condition (see II below). “Eve” indicates who she was; “woman” indicates what she was (2:23). This earlier “naming” is what corresponds with naming the animals, not the later statement about giving her a personal name. The earlier comments surely do not mean that Adam was giving the animals proper names as in naming pets; he was giving common names—descriptive names, names for kinds of animals. Furthermore, placing the comment at this juncture in the text would not have to mean that it occurred at this juncture in time (cp. the sabbath comment in 2:1-3 and presumably Moses’ comments in 2:24 regarding marriage).

Comments about women naming children rather than men naming them are likewise irrelevant to the implications of the naming in Genesis 2 (note Alvera Mickelsen, *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, 185-86). The relevant comparison is not between who names the child and someone else naming it, but between the mother who names the child and the child that is named. Naming the child implies headship over the child. The husband’s being the head of the wife does not mean the wife cannot do anything by her own choice.

Another feature of the account is that Adam and Eve’s eyes were opened after both had eaten the forbidden fruit. Her eyes were not opened when she ate. It was not an eye-opening experience until he did it. Romans 5:12-19 may be playing on this factor when it says that sin entered the world through one man—Adam. The most crucial failure was his failure seemingly because of his primary responsibility in the human situation. He was the head of the race; he is therefore the one who parallels Christ in Paul’s didactic parallel between lostness and salvation.

A final matter possibly related to deference before the Fall is not clearly addressed by the New Testament. Interpreters often speculate that Satan had a reason for approaching Eve rather than Adam or both of them separately or together. While (a) there may have been no particular reason for his approach, (b) Paul’s comment that she was deceived but he was not may come from Satan’s choice to approach her (1 Timothy 2:14), with the further inference that she was more persuadable/deceivable on matters Satan’s temptation posed. He could more easily get at him through her than by going at him directly. The psychology would be something like commercials that have women advertising “men things.” Does it bear out that women are especially susceptible to promises about deliverance from repression, and men additionally susceptible to lust? In perhaps a related way (c) Peter calls a woman the weaker vessel. Presumably he means physically weaker; but, combined with deference, that sets her up to be psychologically more vulnerable to suggestions of exploitation and deprivation. Exploitation coupled with deference makes Satan’s ruse more plausible. Those more vulnerable and those in dependent positions can believe more easily that they are being used, deprived, or victimized by others, who are then regarded as selfish and domineering. The “real” reason God did not want Eve and her husband to eat the fruit (3:5) was that she would be wise like God, and he wanted to keep that privilege for himself. The rhetoric of the modern secular feminist movement itself may be interpreted as one more case of this very thing—a re-enactment of the Genesis 3 scenario. If this cluster of observations rings true, there lies within it the subordinate position of woman before the Fall.

To offset observations from Genesis 2, interpreters sometimes pit them against even earlier information from the previous chapter. Genesis 1:26-28 makes no distinction whatever between man and woman except in their being male and female. God's commandments are directed toward both without differentiation (1:28 + 26), their constitution in God's own image is noted without distinction, and his provisions are granted equally to both (1:29)

Pitting Genesis 1 against Genesis 2 often assumes the documentary hypothesis, which becomes a basis for variously evaluating the theological caliber of "the two creation accounts" and then preferring the first. With or without that hypothesis, however, pitting the two chapters against each other may simply illustrate the hermeneutical error of opposing compatibles: statements about compatible ideas should not be taken in a way that makes them oppose one another. Genesis 1 is a more generalized account of human origins whereas Genesis 2 moves through some parts of that occasion at a more specific level. There is nothing contradictory between general statements about mankind's common constitution and role (ch. 1) and practical distinctions that exist at more particular levels of nature and operation. Being equally created in the image of God no more contradicts wives being subject to their husbands than it contradicts children being subject to their parents. Complementarity at specific levels does not contradict shared characteristics any more than being in the image of God contradicts being male and female.

Note: we do not understand the image of God as a combination of male and female traits. The image is more general: it is the interpersonal capacity and as such has nothing to do with sexuality. Male and female are modes of the image, not aspects of it. See materials herein about "the nature of man."

Just because Genesis 1 says nothing about role differences does not mean there were none. Silence does not disprove. At best, lack of expressed differentiation in Genesis 1 leaves open that possibility until further information settles the question—information in fact that comes in the next chapter. The error interpreters bring to the text here is the very assumption that egalitarianism makes in the first place: equality requires sameness, sameness in roles, particularly sameness in role opportunities. Since male and female are equally in God's image, there is supposedly no differentiation. Lack of complete interchangeability implies inequality. Oneness disallows diversity, unity disallows distinction, equality disallows subordination. Hermeneutics and conceptual assumptions inform a not circular pattern of thought: they read statements as incompatible because they assume the concepts they express are contradictory. (See "D" below)

This confusion of levels prompts remarks like the following: "[Male and female] were given identical responsibilities and 'dominion' for the creation" (Alvera Mickelsen, *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, 186-87). "Identical" implies saying the same things to each one separately whereas God speaks to them together as a class. They receive joint responsibilities, not identical responsibilities. A joint responsibility can involve variant roles within it.

We set aside one pre-Fall argument used by traditional writers on women's roles. They picture Eve as taking leadership when she got Adam to eat the forbidden fruit (note Werner Neuer, *Man & Woman in Christian Perspective*, 75-78). That is not evident from the account itself. The deference principle does not cut women off from shedding influence, which is all she did; it only requires that they shed that influence in a manner appropriate to recognizing their husbands' final responsibility for the family. She should not have been deceived and should not have mis-influenced him, but neither should he have given in to her. Eve exerted bad influence and Adam sinned, but that does not mean her sin included trying to take over the leadership from

him. Otherwise, to avoid her error, the implication would be that women should not try to influence their husbands.

The key concept is that the two main pre-Fall episodes taken as total events present Adam as prioritized above Eve. The episode about the origination of mankind clearly presents Adam as the main figure, while the episode about the Fall presents Eve as the main figure. The force of Paul's arguments comes from the nature of the episodes as total events; it is his form of presentation that draws attention to the after, from, and for factors. We take it that he is not basing an argument on sequence *per se*, on the word "helper" *per se* ("for"), or on the creation "from" Adam *per se*. Even if Genesis 2 is parable genre, a reader can hardly miss the point that the "story" unfolds in a way that identifies the man as the primary figure.

B. Not everything mentioned in Genesis 3:7-24 necessarily differs from what it was before the Fall. It may be conceivable that (1) what God says to the woman in Genesis 3:16 does represent a difference from his ideal intent for her. But it is also conceivable that (2) what God says represents a reaffirmation of previous conditions. Becoming experientially wise unto good and evil (3:5, 7, 22) need not change the creation order. *Bearing children* is not a curse—it is the pain in doing bearing them (1:28). *Having desire toward a husband* need not be different, much less bad (3:16). It may indicate that her sense of identity lay in him or that her orientation would be toward him.

Or are we to suppose with Augustine's speculation that sexual desire as such—if that is the meaning of *תְּשׁוּקָה*—comes from the "fallen nature" and that procreation would otherwise have been purely volitional (cp. Song of Solomon 7:10 = MT/LXX 7:11 "*his desire is toward me*"; Psalm 45:11 = LXX 44:12/MT 45:12 "*the king will desire your beauty*"; note 1 Corinthians 7:32-34)? Does that in turn imply that sex is for procreation always? *Did snakes originally have legs*? How would a snake represent "subtlety" (Genesis 3:1) if it did not already have some low-to-the-ground form and manner of locomotion that are seemingly the reason for that representation?

Perhaps (3) what God says predicts a perversion of previous conditions. Whereas childbirth is generic, painful childbirth is fallen. Gathering food is work, but having to produce one's own food is "sweaty" work. Being caretaker of the Garden is a responsibility, but laboring just to have something to eat is a "job." Likewise ruling is generic, but despotic ruling is fallen. (cp. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church*, 81-82)

One ambiguity that affects the choice between reaffirmation and perversion of subordination lies in assessing the meaning of "rule" in this context. The LXX translators used *κυριεύω* to render *משל*, which may indicate that they supposed the Hebrew term carried an authoritarian connotation here. In Luke 22:25 *κυριεύω* connotes harsh ruling (Matthew's and Mark's accounts reinforce the intensity of the verbs by adding a prefix—*κατακυριεύω* and *κατεξουσιάζω*: "*the rulers of the Gentiles 'lord it over' them.*"). Harsh ruling also applies in 1 Corinthians 1:24 ("*lording it over your faith*"). There is no negative connotation, however, in 1 Timothy 6:15, where Jesus is called "*Lord of lords,*" or in Romans 14:9, where he is lord of the living and the dead. The remaining usages of *κυριεύω* in the New Testament have to do with sin (Rom. 6:14) or the Law (Romans 6:9; 7:1) having dominion over someone. Some efforts have been made to relate *κυριεύω* (*kyrieuō*) and *αὐθεντέω* (*authentēō*), a point related to the meaning of 1 Timothy 2:12. Without the intensifying prefix *κατα-*, harshness is not clear in *κυριεύω* (note Acts 19:16; 1 Peter 5:3). The cognate word *κύριος* may serve simply as a title of respect—"sir": Matthew 25:11; John 12:21; 20:15; Acts 16:30; Revelation 7:14, and the like.

As a vocabulary item, מַשֵּׁל need not carry a negative implication (Psalm **103:19**; Isaiah **63:19**; *etc.*). When words can bear more than one nuance, the speaker expects the hearer to select the right one by context and the nature of the case. Difficulty arises if the context and the nature of the case are unclear. The meaning of מַשֵּׁל is part of the question rather than part of the answer. Note: If we read **3:16c** as perversion of rule, we must read the Hebrew imperfect as predictive rather than imperatival, or we make God the author of perverted ruling. But if we take it as predictive, we weaken the force of Paul's appeal to this verse in 1 Corinthians **14:34**. It seems better, then, to see **3:16c** as reaffirmation (or difference) and take the imperfect as imperatival but take it as imperatival or predictive elsewhere in the list of curses as appropriate. (See the second paragraph below.)

A second ambiguity that impacts the choice between reaffirmation and perversion of subordination is the force of ו in **3:16**. The prefix serves as a co-ordinate conjunction, linking items as equal grammatical entries (parataxis). It does not indicate how the actions relate. Again, a hearer must supply that information from personal knowledge. Paratactic grammar does not specify the mode of connection between bearing children in pain and having desire toward one's husband. They could contrast rather than complement: *"You will bear children in pain but/yet your desire will [still] be toward your husband and he will rule over you."* The second clause would then mark limits on the effects of the curse, and the third clause would enjoin a deference posture toward the husband. So, **3:16b** and **c** do not obviously state a perversion of previous conditions as **16a** does; they may be reaffirmations. For reasons stated earlier, perversion or reaffirmation seems preferable to making **3:16c** indicate a difference in relationship between men and women after the Fall.

A third ambiguity in Genesis **3:16** comes from the use of Hebrew imperfects for both prediction and commandment. If *"he will rule over you"* is predictive rather than imperatival, it states as future fact whatever מַשֵּׁל means. Male harsh rule would then be at least a future generality that does not indicate God's intention but man's perversion. If "rule" is taken more generically, female subordination could be a command God initiated either at this point or previously, hence, difference or reaffirmation but not perversion. Paul's apparent reference to this verse in 1 Corinthians **14:34** would carry more force if Genesis **3:16c** was imperatival (unless it only confirms his point), but we must evaluate other considerations at the same time.

A question of consistency arises with the third ambiguity: if **3:16c** is imperatival, is **3:16a** also imperatival, *"In pain you will bring forth children"*? Would it be wrong to use pain relievers at childbirth? Pain relievers in childbirth would no more be a problem than using something to ameliorate any difficulty people experience in nature. God's inserting these features into his world only means that they are present in a way that makes human existence more difficult. That does not preclude efforts to overcome these difficulties. As a linguistic observation, when a language uses the same form to indicate more than one meaning, speakers often mix the two usages even in listings of that same form. A hearer has to sort them by the nature of the case. It would no more be a disobedience of divine ordinance to have a saddle block in childbirth than to work in a steel factory rather than be a farmer. If we read the ו between **16b** and **c** as adversative ("but/yet"), we further relieve this difficulty.

In summary, we best regard the first imperfect in **3:16** as predictive and the third one as imperatival, to take the ו between **16a** and **b** as adversative, to regard "rule" as generic, and to take **b** and **c** as reaffirmation instead of perversion.

C. Christ has not reversed the aspects of the “curse” in Genesis 3. Even if everything in the “curse” is different from what it was before the Fall, we do not infer that it no longer applies. Christ does not free us to practice *nudity* (3:7-8, 10-11, 21). There are still *weeds and thorns* (3:18), and people earn their living by the *sweat of their brow* (3:17, 23). We are not just food gatherers, but food producers; and if we won’t work, we shouldn’t eat (2 Thessalonians 3:10). *Childbirth is still painful* (3:16a), an observation that immediately precedes the hierarchical principle (3:16b). Snakes still slither on their bellies and most people still don’t like them.

We still live in less-than-ideal natural conditions. Floods and earthquakes, hurricanes and lightning, famine and plagues continue to occur. *Disease, suffering, and death* still reign (3:3, 4, 19) and “*the tree of life*” remains inaccessible. Even if we were to agree that healing is in the atonement, we would say that it is not activated till the resurrection as a consistent principle. Meanwhile we take medicine and refrain from accusing sick people of secret faults. We do not preach a moralizing view of history as if there were a one-to-one correlation between a suffering and a sin (the Book of Job; John 9:1-3ff.; Acts 28:1-6; cp. Psalm 73; Jeremiah 12:1-2; Malachi 3:15; Luke 13:1-5; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9). There is *nothing akin to “unisex”* existence now; it is in the afterlife that we do not marry (Matthew 22:30). Only in exceptional cases do people *walk and talk with God* and then only in manifestation; not until the next life will we be like him and see him as he is (1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 13:12). Mankind still has a *fear of God* and a sense of nakedness (3:9-11). There is *enmity between Satan’s seed and humankind* (3:15). Even the “curses” that are reversed in Christ are not necessarily reversed or transcended till the eschaton. Even if people in an ideal world could operate by purely interpersonal principles, order would be needed in the real world of ignorant, fallible, sinful people. In all honesty, though, even in an ideal world people could not operate by purely interpersonal principles without order; even the trinity has order in the ideal realm of deity. We do well to let interpersonal principles carry domestic and ecclesiastical processes as far as possible, but division of labor, assigned responsibility, and reinforcing authority do come into play for purposes of orderliness, efficiency, and peace. We do not make the egalitarian inference in marriage and the church any more than we proclaim a full-faith gospel or join the Christian Science movement, because we do not in fact live in an ideal world—yet.

Romans 5:14-19 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-46 have suggested to some interpreters that what was lost by Adam was regained by Christ (note *Christian Standard*, October 31, 1993, p. 5). But Paul’s comments pertain to salvation and resurrection respectively. They do not apply to all things in every sense since we still die, wear clothes, *etc.* The curse of alienation is one exception to not reversing any of the curses of Genesis 3. All the other features of the curse on the snake, the man, and the woman were things God set up the way they now stand. In that sense the statements about these curses are not sheer predictions of what man, woman, and Satan will do. Since none of the other “curses” have been removed, it does not seem likely that this “curse” of hierarchy in marriage and the home has changed either.

D. Deference is not a cursed condition. Not only have none of the curses been removed, but subordination is not a curse. Interpersonal operation does not eliminate structure. The second dimension comes in for practical reasons—it adds in such a way that does not vitiate the more basic dimension. Equality and hierarchy do not contradict.

(1) As oneness, equality, and subordination are compatible within the Godhead, so they are compatible within marriage and the church. Paul uses ideal marriage and the ideal church to illustrate the trinity and *vice versa* (Ephesians 5:23-32). Man and wife are one flesh

(Genesis 2:24) even as Christ and the Father are one (John 10:30, *etc.*). The wife defers to the husband in all things (Ephesians 5:24) as Christ defers to the Father in all things (Luke 2:42; John 8:29). Men are subject to the Son, and the Son is subject to the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3), facts that Paul puts parallel to wives' being subject to their husbands (11:3; Ephesians 5:22ff.).

(2) During his childhood Jesus, the Son of God, was subject to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51) even though he was by nature superior to them.

(3) Children defer to their parents that it may be well with them (Ephesians 6:1-2 < Deuteronomy 5:16; cp. Exodus 20:12), which is the first commandment in the Bible that attaches a promise to it. Deference has good purposes.

(4) In the same context where Peter makes wives and husbands joint-heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7) he admonishes wives to defer to their husbands (3:1). In his comments about veil-wearing (1 Corinthians 11:11-12), Paul speaks of the interdependency between man and woman immediately after emphasizing the deference principle (11:2-10).

(5) Philippians 2:1-11 disavows the proposition that subordination implies secondary quality. In the *kenosis*, Christ agreed to forgo positional rights, but that did not change his natural character (deity). In the end, it brought him additional respect and honor. Hierarchical responsibility fits inside interpersonal interdependency, and relative rank does not indicate unequal worth.

Nevertheless, the repeated claim is that (1) inferiority is the only reason for subordination (see, *e.g.*, Virginia Mollenkott in the introduction to Paul Jewett's *Man as Male and Female*, 8). But, having final responsibility could be because (2) not everyone in a group can have final responsibility; so someone is appointed to it, an idea sometimes called "the will-of-God" reason for female deference. Admittedly this second observation, though relevant and important, does not satisfactorily counter the claim that deference implies inferiority, because women do not have opportunity for appointment to final responsibility in the home and church. If there is more to appointment than "flipping a coin," it must be based on preference, hence, on superiority in some fashion or at some level. The reason for deference seems to lie in (3) "relative gifting," where differences represent statistical observations (*vs.* absolute uniformities) largely on matters of degree (*vs.* kind).

Being less suited to a task is different from being inferior or from being unsuited to a task. Worth is relative to the whole rather than to one "role" within the whole. Worth corresponds to the category (person) rather than to variables within the category (variable traits of different persons). Worth pertains to the category of person *per se* (theory); role pertains to different persons' strengths (practice). Relative gifting corresponds with diversity-in-oneness for variant contributions to the common purpose. As in the body image, different members contribute differently to the one body according to their different capacities. Since different clusters of strengths are involved, comparing men and women is like comparing hearts and lungs, or "comparing apples and oranges," as the saying goes. Asking which are superior—men or women? is like asking which are better—hearts or lungs. That depends on whether the body needs oxygen or circulation. Being "inferior" at one role is different from being inferior. The idea that men and women have different relative strengths presumably corresponds to the differing role emphases that God assigns in marriage, the home, and the church.

Relative gifting does not automatically explain how the degree and distribution of these differences in gifting are sufficient to warrant a generalized provision for female deference in the home and the church. That matter remains to be studied more aptly in connection with the New Testament passages about ministry and the home.

One further refinement is necessary for representing the egalitarianism in its best form. The issue is not whether equality can coexist with deference but whether in their equality women must be the ones who defer—whether the men are first among equals (a kind of *primus inter pares*). Hierarchy need not contradict interpersonalism, but hierarchy that always grants male headship is unjust, “cursed,” fallen. Equality eliminates sex difference as a factor of measurement and dictates that men and women have equal opportunity for headship. Headship should be only in reference to the relevant factors of the common purpose. In a sense there is agreement on this point, and that is the reason for speaking about relative gifting. The idea is that God has more suitably gifted men for final leadership roles in mixed systems and has more suitably gifted women for the helping roles; God has more suitably gifted each in keeping with his differing purposes for them within the common body whether it is the home or the church or the two in light of each other. The comparison is not between the best of women and any male whatsoever, but between women who would be most capable in final leadership and the most capable men for that role. The accuracy and relevance of relative gifting have to be handled more deliberately later; it is mentioned here to indicate why “traditionalists” do not find egalitarian reasoning a cogent objection to their understanding of scripture.

E. Paul appeals to post-Fall factors as a basis for Christian practice (1 Corinthians 11:3, 10; 14:34; Ephesians 5:23). If female subordination is a cursed condition reversed in Christ, Paul’s appeal to Genesis 3:16 calls for explanation. As the only direct Old Testament statement of the female deference principle, Genesis 3:16 would be irrelevant—or at least *post facto*—for home and church operations. Normally interpreters suppose that Paul appealed to it in 1 Corinthians 14:34 only for expediency’s sake because he was temporalizing the Christian ideal to avoid hindering the Christian mission (cp. 1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 6:3; 8:21; 11:12; Titus 2:8; 1 Peter 2:12-15; 3:16). The same thing presumably happens with slavery (1 Corinthians 7:20-24; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1; Philemon; 1 Peter 2:18-25). Christian writers do not attempt to ban slavery; they ameliorate that institution by applying Christian principles to it. This procedure amounts to wisdom *vs.* “law” and relates to cultural expectancy and effectiveness for evangelism to unconverted Jews and pagans.

While such a scenario is conceivable, it may be just an *ad hoc* hypothesis for removing data that tells against an inadequate thesis.

(a) 1 Corinthians 14:34 contains no clue that Genesis 3:16 is confirmatory evidence rather than primary proof.

More importantly, (b) Paul combines Genesis 3:16 indiscriminately with other reasons that cannot be *post facto*: pre-Fall observations, correlations with the Godhead, comparisons with the Christ-church relationship, the nature of man *vs.* woman.

By parity of reason, (c) if we take Old Testament evidence as *post facto* on women’s roles, can we avoid doing it on Paul’s strictures on homosexuality?

(d) 1 Peter 3:1-2 is the only New Testament text that uses expediency for female deference; but in doing so, it includes chastity and respect; so expediency is a second reason rather than the only reason.

(e) Encouraging Christians to yield to injustice for expediency’s sake is a another thing from using an inappropriate argument for yielding to it. Using Genesis 3:16 to confirm female subordination would be inappropriate because the passage would be irrelevant to a Christian view of male-female relationships. (See also below under II, B.)



Finally, (f) we need adequate evidence for the alternative view—evidence that Christ has established egalitarianism, the subject below in Part II.

One final issue here is whether Genesis 3:16 describes the husband-wife relationship or at the man-woman relationship. It seems to speak about the husband-wife setting because it is combined with desire toward the husband. If that observation is true, it does not necessarily speak about men-women relationship between unmarried people (except insofar as relative gifting may be involved).

In summation, Genesis 3:16 does not represent a fallen condition resulting from the curse. New Testament writers base male-female order on pre-Fall considerations as well. Not everything in Genesis 3:7-24 differs from the pre-Fall condition; and even if it did, Christ has not yet removed any of these “curses.” Besides, subordination is not a curse. If the supposed “curse” of Genesis 3:16 has been removed in Christ, we question the exegetical and theological legitimacy of Paul’s appealing to it as an argument for female subordination in his Christian setting. From Genesis 1-3 as well as the way New Testament writers handle the man-woman issue, it would seem more likely that female subordination principle is rooted in purpose, nature, and history than in a cursed condition resulting from the Fall.

## II. Galatians 3:28 does not address roles.

Galatians 3:28 has served as the touchstone for the egalitarian principle that (a) in the home and in the church there are no role distinctions referenced to sex. Galatians 3:28 is the only statement of that supposed principle in the Bible. A man or a woman has as much “right” to lead as the other. An even more extreme alternative to hierarchical thinking is the belief that (b) in the home and the church there is only interpersonal leadership. There is no designated responsibility, hence, no supervisory authority in the home or the church; there is only natural leadership vs. formal leadership. Cooperation rather than structure is the *modus operandi*. At least the first of these two viewpoints are proposed implications of Paul’s statement that “*there is no male and female . . . because you are all one in Christ Jesus*.” The following entries address various ways by which women’s roles might come into the meaning of Galatians 3:28.

### A. Not an absolute principle

Galatians 3:28 would involve women’s roles if it were meant as an absolute principle in all issues in Christianity. That Paul did not mean his statement in every sense conceivable should be obvious from the fact that (1) such a meaning would justify homosexuality. (2) Such a meaning would also justify Gnostic superspirituality, an asceticism expressed in celibacy among other things (1 Timothy 4:3; cp. Hebrews 13:4). It was a lifestyle built on hypostatic dualism that led to denying physical appetites because they were evil, sexual drives included. What would prove too much does not prove what it seems to prove. Women’s roles in Christ are not necessarily affirmed in Galatians 3:28 because Paul is not stating an absolute principle. Related to all topics. He is not stating an absolute principle because that would contradict his teaching elsewhere.

The sense in which Paul means his list is evident from the kind of reason he gives for it: “*because you are all one [εἷς] in Christ Jesus*.” Rifts in society that exist elsewhere have no bearing on a person’s access to salvation, nor are these differences reproduced in Christ.

Nationality, social status, and sex do continue to exist, but they are not bases for disunity in Christ because they are irrelevant for getting into Christ. It is perhaps possible to translate εἷς to mean “alike” in this case, but it would mean “alike” relative to what it means to be in Christ vs. not able to be in him. We are all alike in God’s eyes, but we do not do the same things. (See also below in II C, ¶3.)

## B. The salvation topic

Galatians 3:28 would involve women’s roles if Paul intentionally directed it at ministry. Despite the fact that he is talking about salvation, interpreters continually quote the verse in ways that assume he was enunciating a principle applicable to women’s roles—one which he elsewhere supposedly temporalized for practical purposes.

But Paul’s topic is straightforward enough: salvation through Christ is for Gentiles as Gentiles as surely as it is for Jews. It is given to neither group uniformly because it is not based on physical descent from Abraham—as Jewish people were prone to feel—but on spiritual/interpersonal likeness to Abraham via identification. Christ is the “seed” of Abraham, and those who are in Christ receive the promise to Abraham and his seed. In God’s original promise, “seed” did not envision those who physically descended from the patriarch or were in some way legally included in him as an identity; “seed” envisioned more those who were descendants of his way of being in the sense of types of persons in behavior, identity, and commitment. They were his “spiritual sons.” They were connected to him by “faith” (interpersonally) rather than by flesh (biologically) or legal custom (legally). Physical descendants do tend to reflect their parents’ values—for good or ill, and ideally family values should be co-extensive with the family; but it is not the physical connection that makes for a blessed life; it is the family values and their correlating behaviors. Since not all sons reflect their upbringing, not all physical descendants of Abraham end up being blessed or being a blessing. Others who adopt his values are closer to him than physical children. “Seed” then is both collective and generic: it refers to a type of person and by extension to all the individual “seeds” in the type. Christ is the “type of seed,” and everyone identified with him is “a seed” in the “type of seed”; they are blessed and reconciled.

Throughout his discussion, Paul expresses salvation in the imagery and terminology of inheritance because the promise was to Abraham and to his seed. “Sons of Abraham” are sons by faith (vs. flesh = circumcision/uncircumcision); Gentiles are fellow heirs (3:14. cp. 1 Peter 3:7 wives are fellow heirs/joint heirs). “*Christ is the seed of Abraham*”; and if we are of Christ, we are sons of Abraham by inclusion in Christ.

The inclusion principle is not based on nationality, societal status, or sex. The only qualification is that a person have faith like Abraham. The statement that there is no bond-free, male-female, circumcised-uncircumcised parallels “joint-heirs” terminology in Romans 4:1-8:17; Ephesians 3:6; and Hebrews 11:9 (re c/u; cp. Galatians 3:14) and in 1 Peter 3:7 (re wives). “No bond-free, male-female, circumcised-uncircumcised” parallels “no respect of persons” in Ephesians 6:9 and Colossians 3:25 (re slave-masters = b/f) and Acts 10:34; Romans 2:10-11 (re Jew/Gentile = c/u). It has the same idea as “*Christ is all in all*” in Colossians 3:11 and “*There is no distinction*” in Romans 3:22; 10:12. In all these expressions the only relevancy is whether a person has faith. In the kingdom of God, no one is disenfranchized on any other basis than lack of faith.

One secondary consideration here is whether there was any reason for saying male-female rather than man-woman. The male-female terminology in combination does not occur frequently in scripture: 15 times in the canonical Hebrew OT and 3 times in the New Testament; the various editions of the LXX add 6 cases and subtract one; see the “Addendum: ‘Male and Female.’”). Of these eighteen (twenty-five), ten (eleven) refer to people, four being clustered in the redemption laws of Leviticus 27:1-8. Aside from Galatians, that leaves five “people” cases, all having connections with the creation account except for Numbers 5:3, which uses different terms from the ones in Galatians 3:28. Do these data suggest that the terminology in Galatians 3:28 intentionally reflects Genesis 1, or is there some other reason for the language? Either way, does it affect the meaning of the verse relative to women’s roles?

A couple of points probably belong to this question. (a) Had Paul said man and woman, he would have used ἀνὴρ and γυνή, which would have left unclear whether he *meant* “man and woman” or “husband and wife” since both words have two meanings. This ambiguity might then have been mistaken as a negative comment about marriage and played into the hand of Gnostics, who tried to interpret the Christian agenda as one in which a person attempted to pass out of the physical aspects of the human condition. Since Paul does not elsewhere in Galatians seem to deal with Gnostic influences among his readership, it is more likely that (b) “male and female” reflects the context of inheritance language. The issue in inheritance (3:28) was sex rather than age (ἀνὴρ vs. νήπιος; note Galatians 4:1-7; cp. 1 Corinthians 13:11) or marital status (ἀνὴρ [anēr] vs. γυνή [gynē] in the sense of husband vs. wife). “Man and woman” as adult terminology and “husband and wife” as marriage terminology would have blurred the inheritance imagery because these variables are foreign to inheritance customs.

Another consideration is whether Paul meant anything significant by saying male and female rather than male nor female. The other two sets in 3:28 use the formula “*There is not nor* \_\_\_” instead of “*There is not \_ and \_*.”

(a) The difference may be due to the familiar creation language in Genesis 1. All the texts in the various LXX editions of Genesis (eleven cases), male and female combine in this order and join by and whether speaking of humans or animals (For an elaboration of other relevant data, see “Addendum: Male and Female.”) The phrase had perhaps become a set expression in the minds of people raised on the Old Testament. (

b) Paul’s similar listing in Colossians 3:11 puts and between the pairs that have nor (οὐδέ) between them here. 1 Corinthians 12:13 uses or (ἢτε, *eite*). Galatians 3:28 is the only text that mixes the and/or terminology.

(c) The different format may imply that Jews and Gentiles as well as bond and free were opposites whereas male and female are complements. The former were disjunctive and the latter was conjunctive. In the first two sets, a person could move from one alternative to the other, but that cannot happen with male and female.

In a somewhat different sense, Barth thought that (d) and relates to the idea that male and female are not in the abstract, or not viewed discretely. Mankind is man and woman in combination, a notion that derives from considering male and female as aspects of the image so that the image “exists” in the real combination rather than in the individual.

(e) Placing Galatians 3:28 in the egalitarian scenario and emphasizing the use of and rather than nor has sometimes been done in the interests of calling for a supposed return to the pre-Fall condition. But that cannot be the point of the and phraseology because that would make Paul deny the pre-Fall condition, not affirm it: “*there is not male and female . . . in Christ.*” The idea that the battle of the sexes is over is a good idea in and of itself, but that does

not make it the meaning of this verse. Hierarchical arrangement is not competition or a battle for worth. American individualism is the frame of reference that makes equality rather than unity the highest consideration among people. With equality in first place, the basis for worth comes from success in competition instead of contribution to the common cause, creation in the image of God, and positive interpersonal behavior. The peculiar nuances that could pertain to the form of the male-female statement, however, do not affect whether the verse has much connection with sex roles. We cannot be sure that the male-and-female format is anything more than a set phrase based on the Genesis formula.

We may ask two other questions about Galatians 3:28. First, what do these three sets have in *common*? The pairs are alike in being “*in Christ*,” that is, objects of salvation as relationship to God through Christ. Whether anything more is common to them is the subject of “*homogeneous lists*” discussed below.

Second, what is *peculiar* to these sets? Did Paul have any special reason for listing these three distinctions? (a) *He may have mentioned them simply as examples of irrelevant distinctions.* These kinds of differences play no part in whether someone is an object of the Abrahamic promise. Paul could just as well have said rich and poor, married and unmarried, old or young, barren or with children, *etc.* Elsewhere, in fact, he gives similar lists with varying numbers of components. Romans 2:10; 3:29; 9:24; 10:12; 15:9 and Ephesians 2:11-3:12 are among several that concentrate on one distinction—Jew-Greek/Gentile—as irrelevant in a kingdom built on faith, a spiritual kingdom, an interpersonal system. 1 Corinthians 12:13 names two non-germane sets—Jews and Greeks, bond and free. Colossians 3:11 lists three—Jews and Greeks [= circumcised and uncircumcised], barbarian and Scythian, bond and free. Romans 14 identifies a wide range of matters that are irrelevant to Christian faith and practice. Galatians 3:28 is unique in including male-female among irrelevant differences.

(Note: If we took Galatians 3:28 as an absolute and at the same time considered it typical of irrelevant distinctions, it would set aside parental responsibility as a positive principle. It was not a temporalizing of ideals to have children subject to parents. In Christ there are no parents and children. Paul touches on this point when he observes that there is no distinction between minors and slaves prior to the time children come of age (Galatians 4:1-11). Jews who were formerly under the Law were like minors, but now they have come of age, so to speak, and should not return to bondage. In other words, no longer is there any such thing as being a minor. Yet children are to obey their parents “*in the Lord*.” Galatians 3:28 is not a positive basis for egalitarianism; taking it that way would prove things we know are false.)

(b) *Paul may have mentioned the distinctions in 3:28 because they were relevant to inheritance customs.* Slaves did not inherit—except perhaps via adoption as heirs or in cases where there were no biological descendants (Genesis 15:1-4). Non-family members did not inherit—unless there was no one left in the family; circumcision was a “family” sign. Among Jews females did not inherit—except when there were no sons (Numbers 27:1-11; 36:1-13; note Numbers 27:9-11; Job’s daughters, however, inherited equal portions with their brothers: Job 42:15). Inheritance customs dictated that physical descendants, freemen, and sons became heirs. Since the blessing God promised to Abraham and his seed is conveyed in the imagery of inheritance, Paul may have listed these three sets because inheriting the blessing of Abraham does not follow Near Eastern inheritance laws. God’s blessing and promise consist of personal relationship and its consequences, and are awarded on the basis of interpersonal factors; so the

objects of the blessing and promise were not affected by the kinds of distinctions that governed the transfer of physical property or special privilege.

Relevance to inheritance laws may explain why Paul speaks of Jews *vs.* Gentiles in Galatians 3:28 rather than circumcised *vs.* uncircumcised, which is often the way he puts the same point. The difference is that Jews *vs.* Gentiles is a family statement and therefore coextensive with inheritance patterns. Circumcision was this family's sign; but the point is not what the family sign is or isn't, but who the heirs are or aren't.

Another way to raise this question about a reason for the items in Paul's list is to ask why male and female is in the list. Perhaps it is another way to state the circumcision-uncircumcision variable since women were not circumcised in Judaism. Circumcision was a kind of citizenship paper that a person carried with him, so to speak, in his flesh. This kind of citizenship mark could not apply to women. The nature of the covenant and the nature of the sign of the covenant need to correspond. The new covenant is not one in which the covenant sign could be of the sort it was under Mosaism or the this-world aspect of the Abrahamic covenant itself. In other words, the Christ covenant is a spiritual covenant, a non-material, non-fleshly, non-political covenant.

We must remember the originating purpose of the Galatian letter. Paul was responding to Judaizers who were trying to get Gentiles to be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. So, in Galatians 3:15-29 Paul stresses the fact that God's promise to Abraham was given before the Mosaic Law by some 430 years. So being included in Abraham's seed did not have anything to do with being under the Law of Moses. In a similar argument in Romans 4, Paul adds that God gave the promise to Abraham even before circumcision.

Suggestion (b) is especially apt because it provides a natural reason for including the male-female variable. That distinction does not occur in other lists of irrelevant distinctions because the contexts are not so closely tied to the Abrahamic promise and to inheritance language.

Instead of taking Galatians 3:28 as a statement related to salvation from sin, **some interpreters favoring egalitarianism make it a statement about salvation from bondage—bondage to Jewish laws and traditions.** The verse thus warns against regressing into a bondage to customs and laws based on distinctions outdated because of Christ. Since male-female is one of the distinctions Paul mentions, it must be discarded as an item of Christian practice. That means discarding it as a factor relevant to role assignments whether in the church or the home (Alvera Mickelsen, *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, 204-5).

That reconstruction may sound plausible because it picks up on terms and topics that do appear in the context of Galatians 3:28. The trouble is that it does not pick up on them the way Paul discusses them. His "bondage" theme is not in regard to items in the Mosaic Law, but in regard to law itself, particularly law and law-keeping ("works") as a basis for relationship to God, or salvation. Being released from law does not in itself mean being released from any of the specific expectations a law contains—moral expectancies, role expectancies, and so on. Those are subsequent issues determined by the new setting, by the nature of persons, the nature of personal relationship, and the division of labor in fulfilling joint purposes of persons. Expectancies and values do not have to be imbedded in law; interpersonal relationship ("faith") also contains expectancies and values, it may contain just as many of them, it may contain the

same ones, and it holds up the same perfection standard with respect to them; but it contains them in the interpersonal circumstance rather than in a legal one. The “bondage” issue is not a bondage to values and expectancies, but to legal perfection in such matters. If the point of release from bondage to law meant release from specific expectancies contained in a law—female deference, for example, a person could throw away moral expectancies as well. Release from bondage is not a release from male headship in ministry, but from legal perfection to be saved. Paul’s bondage topic is not ministry, but the Abrahamic promise of blessing unto salvation (3:29).

Among other things Judaizing teachers were trying to mix initial salvation through Christ (“faith,” “spirit”) with continued salvation by law-keeping (“works”; 3:2). They thought Gentile converts should be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5, *etc.*). Two things were wrong with that thinking. **First**, circumcision identified people with National Israel, which, coming 430 years later, was a secondary and temporary feature added to the earlier Abrahamic promise (3:17). A political aspect was not essential to the people of God. **Second**, in theory, circumcision committed people to the principle of personal perfection by putting them under the Law of National Israel. Paul tells them in effect, “*You cannot begin with trust in Christ [initial salvation] and continue with works of law [ongoing salvation]*” (3:3). People need salvation precisely because, from a practical standpoint, they cannot succeed at continuing to do everything the Law requires (3:10-12). Law requires personal perfection to avoid being an object of punishment (“accursed,” 3:10), alienation from God with its consequences. If Christ was needed because people could not maintain personal perfection before, why think they could do so now? In effect, what use would Christ be if all he gave was initial salvation? In theory, the Law creates bondage to a perfection that people cannot achieve and in consequence a bondage to separation from God and its consequences which they cannot escape. The alternative to personal righteousness is imputed righteousness—being viewed as righteous on the basis of being in Christ who is righteous. As the Righteous One, he epitomizes the seed of Abraham. By being viewed as righteous on the basis of identification with that Righteous One, people find release from the need to achieve perfect righteousness personally as a prerequisite for (being viewed as righteous unto) fellowship with God. In inheritance terms, for Jews, reverting to law after being under faith/grace is like becoming a minor again, during which time a son is no better off than a slave because he has not reached the age to inherit the benefits of sonship (4:1-3). It is like reverting to slavery after becoming a freeman. For Gentiles it is even worse. That is the sense in which the bondage theme relates to Paul’s discussion.

Principles and expectancies about male-female roles are not imbedded just in law, but in creation, in male-female gifting, and in the mission of Christ’s church. As a result, removing the Law does not automatically remove any provisions in the Law; what specifics change becomes a subsequent matter. Removing the Mosaic Law does take away the personal perfection requirement (3:10-12), the rituals related to salvation because the “Seed” has come, and Jewish national observances—new moons, sabbaths, the festival cycle, *etc.* (4:10). Gentiles have no reason to observe such practices, and Jewish Christians have no reason to revert to them. Christians are released from obligation to those expectancies. All of this is quite aside from what roles females, slaves, or Gentiles may serve. Again, it is not ministry but salvation that constitutes Paul’s subject and therefore the bondage imagery he brings into his presentation of that topic.

We also may raise a point of consistency if bondage in Galatians 3-4 means bondage to Jewish customs like sex-roles distinctions. That interpretation makes Paul deny in no uncertain

terms that Christians should follow these traditions. Indeed, he uses strong language against the Judaizers' agenda. If even an angel from heaven should preach what they were advocating, let him be accursed (1:6-9)! The Galatians are bewitched and foolish (3:1-3)! They are fallen from grace and separated from Christ (5:4)! Paul's message was incompatible with the Judaizing message. If Jewish role distinctions were included in the bondage that Paul so strenuously opposed, how could he turn around and ordain these very practices "*in all the churches*" (1 Corinthians 14:33; 11:34; 1 Timothy 2:8) even if—as is claimed—he did so only as a concession to cultural expectancies so as not to hinder the progress of the gospel? The adamant language of Galatians would disallow such concessions.

**Another way of connecting Galatians 3:28 with ministry is to see it as a restatement of Joel 2:28-32.** The two texts are paralleled by connecting the "*no Jew/Gentile*" clause with "*all flesh*" and "*whoever will call on the name of the Lord.*" "*No bond/free*" corresponds with "*on my servants and on my handmaidens . . . I will pour out my Spirit.*" "*No male/female*" answers to "*your sons and your daughters will prophesy.*" Since the pouring forth of the Spirit in Joel is about revelation, Galatians is also about ministry as proclamation.

Although paralleling the two passages is interesting, we do not know that Paul intended to parallel them. Since there are only so many typical classifications of people, we should not be surprised at an undesigned overlap between Galatians 3:28 and Joel 2. The overlap is not complete; there is no age distinction in Galatians as there is in Joel. The significant point is not that the classifications overlap, but that the purposes of the overlapping lists are different. Admittedly Joel talks about ministry in its proclamation aspect, but Galatians is talking about salvation. Comments about the one do not automatically have implications for the other (see next heading). Furthermore, the problem in women's studies is not women in ministry, but women in normative ministry exercising authority of men. Joel is not talking about formal ministry, which is the concern in 1 Timothy 2, which supposedly contradicts Galatians 2. Women have all kinds of outlets for prophesying (Joel 2 > Acts 2) that have nothing to do with the limitation given in 1 Timothy 2. Galatians 3, 1 Timothy 2, and Joel 2 are talking about three different issues: Galatians talks about salvation, 1 Timothy talks about authoritative ministry, and Joel 2 simply talks about proclamation ministry without further definition. Prophesying is not forbidden to women and that is what Joel 2 predicted; authoritative teaching is what 1 Timothy 2 disallows. We do not go to Joel to find out what Paul means in Galatians because the basis for paralleling the two texts is really nothing more than the same assumption that makes Galatians speak about ministry in the first place. The whole approach simply restates the original claim that the no male-female clause includes ministry in its scope of reference.

Paul's topic is salvation; his talk about bondage is about bondage to the Law's perfection requirement in order to be saved—related to God; the male-female connection is that sex difference has no bearing on "inheriting" God's promise to Abraham.

**A third way of trying to connect Galatians 3:28 with ministry is to see it on the background of Jewish and even Hellenistic sayings that thank God for not making someone a woman** (see Klyne Snodgrass in *Women, Authority & the Bible*, 168-70). Galatians becomes a corrective on such degrading views of women. Again, **(a)** the difficulty is imagining such sayings as the context for the verse rather than observing the context that is here for all to see. Furthermore, **(b)** if 3:28 were a corrective on such Jewish notions, it would correct degrading women's worth, which is simply a different thing from roles. Only by correlating rank and worth

does abandoning negative evaluations of women pertain to abandoning the female deference principle. Finally, (c) if Paul is consciously proposing 3:28 as a corrective on such Jewish tradition, how apt is he to be turning around elsewhere and advocating Jewish traditional prejudices, which is one explanation for the supposed tension between Galatians and 1 Timothy 2, *etc.*? Putting 3:28 in conscious opposition to Jewish tradition decreases the likelihood that we can account for Paul's inconsistency by claiming unconscious insight in Galatians *vs.* Jewish practices toward women in his other writings.

### C. Roles as parallel to the salvation topic

Galatians 3:28 would involve women's roles if roles were a subset of membership. Membership in a group is based on the purpose of the group, the need people have for the purpose of the group, and their willingness to commit themselves to the purposes, values, and behaviors of that group. Roles within the group are based on the abilities of group members, which introduces the relative gifting concept again. Salvation corresponds with the first of these issues; ministry corresponds with the second. There is a difference between whether a person belongs to the body and which organ in that body that person is. We are all the same in God's eyes, but we do not do the same things. There is one body, but there are many members of that one body. There is likeness relative to what there is one of, but difference relative to what there are many of. Not having a particular role in the body (seeing by an eye, *e.g.*) does not mean a person is not part of the body (1 Corinthians 12:15-16). Obviously then, being part of the body and being one *vs.* another organ in the body are different matters. If they are different issues, they can be governed by different principles without contradiction. As a result, if Paul says there is no male and female relative to membership in the body, he does not thereby lay down the principle that there is no male and female relative to serving as one organ or another within the body. Membership is based on purpose; roles are based on ability and need. So, Galatians 3:28 does not include egalitarianism as a sub-principle.

At the risk of reiterating the obvious, we note that (1) Paul says that there is no male and female, not that there is no husband and wife, father and mother, parents and children, elders and deacons, *etc.* Salvation as *reconciliation* applies to all human persons because they have the same *interpersonal capacity* and the same righteousness need. Sex does not affect the relevance and availability of salvation. More specific issues within the sexual variant become subsequent issues—who will mother children and who will father them. Paul's subject is interpersonal relationship, not status and role in the home and the church within that interpersonal context—salvation, not ministry.

(2) The reason Paul gives for saying that there is no male and female in Christ is that we are all “one” in Christ (Galatians 3:28). The sense, then, in which he means there is no male-female in Christ is a sense that fits with unity, if unity is what Paul means by “*we are all one.*” Since there can be diversity within unity, there can be diverse roles and statuses within unity, and there can be diverse roles and statuses based on sex within unity. By “one” Paul more likely means identity, however. Jew-Gentile, male-female, slave-free share the same identity; they are “*in Christ*” and “*of Christ*” (cp. 1 Corinthians 1:12-13; 3:23). They are parts of the same “seed” even as Jews and Gentiles are part of the same olive tree (Romans 11:16b-24), the same lump/full-harvest (Romans 11:16a), the same temple court (Ephesians 2:11-18), the same citizenry (Ephesians 2:19), household (Ephesians 2:19), building (Ephesians 2:20-22), and other images New Testament writers use to express the common identity and purpose of those who are



“*in Christ*” (3:28) and “*of Christ*” (3:29). From the reason for stating something we can infer what the statement means.

#### D. Lack of secondary homogeneity in lists

Galatians 3:28 could involve women’s roles if secondary characteristics of items in a list necessarily possessed homogeneity. The reasoning would go as follows: although salvation in Christ is the direct subject in the context of Galatians 3-4, a secondary characteristic of the sets in Galatians 3:28 is that these distinctions have no place in determining who can serve in what roles in the church of Christ. Since we agree that Jew *vs.* Gentile and circumcised *vs.* uncircumcised would have no place in determining who can serve in what roles, then we can conclude that male *vs.* female have no place in determining roles.

But the assumption that would justify such an inference is not true. Listings do not necessarily have secondary homogeneity. Galatians 3:28 lists distinctions irrelevant to salvation. Just because sets of distinctions are all alike in that respect does not tell us whether they are also alike in other respects or in every respect. We observe, then, that lists are not necessarily homogeneous beyond the originating principle. For example, in the same list Acts 15:20, 29 combines moral matters (fornication) and expediencies (eating things sacrificed to idols—as well as eating blood = things strangled?). Elsewhere eating things sacrificed to idols Paul treats as a matter of expediency (1 Corinthians 8; 10:23-33). Under proper conditions a person could do what Acts 15 prohibits, which means it is not a moral matter even though it is listed beside a moral matter. The characteristics lists for elders and deacons combine moral matters with leadership characteristics (1 Timothy 3:2-12; Titus 1:6-9). Lists are not necessarily homogeneous.

The heterogeneity of lists is important here because it eliminates the propriety of the following argument pattern: since role distinctions based on two of the pairs in Galatians 3:28 are illegitimate, role distinctions based on the third pair are also illegitimate. Since role equality is not the subject of the list, it lies beyond Paul’s reason for listing the sets. Since lists are not homogeneous beyond the author’s point of interest, we cannot exegetically claim that some second characteristic of one or two entries must be true also of the others. Conversely, just because we agree that the master-slave distinction beyond salvation is bad does not mean that we should agree that the male-female and Jew-Gentile distinctions beyond salvation are also bad. If the impropriety of slavery argues for the impropriety of sex-roles, it argues for the impropriety of national distinctions among Christians since there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Unlike Jew-Gentile or master-slave, male-female is not rooted in anything that is fallen. It is a created difference pronounced good from the beginning. Any role emphases implicit in that created difference are likewise good. God created the male-female distinction; he temporarily established the Jew-Gentile distinction; but sinful people created the slave-master distinction. Even within Christ the distinctions that Paul lists do exist: there are male and female (Genesis 1:27; 5:2; *etc.*; Matthew 19:4 = Mark 10:6); there are national distinctions; there are slave and free. Whether any or all of them ought to exist in non-salvific matters is appropriate to ask; but they are further questions answered from additional information from elsewhere rather than by over-extending this text. If any of these distinctions are bad, we know that on other grounds than Galatians 3:28.

Appealing to Galatians 3:28 as a statement about roles would at best have to represent a theological inference rather than an exegetical observation. It is one thing to say that these

distinctions do not affect who can be included in a “system”; it is another to say they are irrelevant to roles and statuses within the system. Inheritance rules, for example, could stipulate that a woman may inherit just like her brothers; that would not mean she did not have to defer to the husband she married later. Authorial intent does not address sexuality, slavery, or nationality in every respect but only in respect to Paul’s topic—inheritance, salvation, reconciliation.

### **E. Generalization from Paul’s topic to egalitarianism**

Galatians 3:28 would involve women’s roles if salvation derived from a principle that could be generalized to ministry. By the nature of language, statements cannot be absolutized. By the fact of context, Paul’s subject in Galatians 3-4 is salvation. By the nature of reality, roles are not a subset of salvation. By the nature of language convention, lists are not necessarily homogeneous beyond their thematic principle. The only other way of involving Galatians 3:28 in the roles question is to do so by a generalization principle. Applying the “no-distinction clause” to women’s roles must be treated as a generalization process because the clause itself does not deal with roles. The proper question then is how an interpreter can legitimately generalize from Paul’s topic to one he is not discussing, and how he can do that without pushing it to an absolute and thereby creating contradictions within Holy Writ. If a principle of generalization cannot be applied consistently, it should not be applied at all.

As said above, by the nature of the case roles are not automatically addressed by inheritance. At a high point in that presentation, Paul makes his statement that in Abraham’s “seed,” that is, in Christ, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female. Consequently, it is in respect to his topic obviously that he means there is no distinction based on these differences.

It is axiomatic in theological interpretation that generalization must be to like cases/issues. Theoretically a principle stated in one connection may be limited to that connection, may be an absolute idea, or something in between. If it cannot be taken absolutely, as argued above, how can we generalize it without making it an absolute? It is appropriate to observe that a principle stated in one connection need not be limited to that application. The writer may be applying a broader concept to his specific topic, but there must be a natural way to show that other applications are like the one specified. Since the qualifications for salvation are not the same as those for roles and statuses, we should conclude that whatever may be said for the egalitarian idea itself, it has no place being associated with this passage. If this text is really the only statement of the egalitarian principle, then there is no statement of that egalitarian principle. If the principle is true, it has to be derived some other way.

### **F. Galatians 3:28 and other New Testament directives on women’s roles**

Galatians 3:28 needs to relate to other New Testament directives that do not promote an egalitarian understanding of men and women in marriage, the home, and the church. In Paul we must look at 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:33-36; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Timothy 2:8-15. In Peter’s letters we must deal with his household teaching in 1 Peter 3:1-8. There are three ways of relating these texts to Galatians.

On the assumption that Galatians is talking about egalitarianism, those with a relatively low view of inspiration say that **(1) Paul was simply inconsistent**. Paul simply did not recognize the incompatibility.

Others claim that **(2) Galatians 3:28 represents progress in his thought.** The difficulty is that Paul's writings fall in the wrong order for that to work. More and more the standard view among evangelicals is that Galatians was Paul's first letter while 1 Timothy was one of his last. But Galatians contains the insightful "breakthrough" while 1 Timothy is most explicit against women ruling men. The counter-response, of course, is to deny the Pauline authorship of the pastorals. That denial can be coupled with a new reason for wanting to delay the writing of Galatians till after the Thessalonian and Corinthian correspondence. That still leaves the prison letters, but again more liberal critics remove the prison letters from the Roman imprisonment of Acts 28 and put them in a postulated earlier imprisonment in Ephesus, which could conceivably get them ahead of a late-date Galatians. A more extreme approach is to take Ephesians and Colossians away from Paul altogether. Even that move does not satisfy matters very well because there would be little if any time lapse between Ephesians-Colossians and Galatians.

Somewhat less extreme is the idea that **(3) Galatians states the absolute principle while these other passages represent concessions to contemporary cultural norms in order not to hinder the Christian mission.**

The viewpoint advocated above is that **(4) Galatians and these other references are not talking about the same topic.** The former speaks in inheritance language about the equal access to being in Christ the "seed" of Abraham, whether Jew-Gentile, slave-free, or male-female. The other statements address practical male-female patterns within Christ in marriage and ministry with the potential for cultural conditioning in certain respects, which must then be investigated on an item-for-item basis.

Although the context of Galatians 3:28 deals with salvation, there are implications here for other than strictly salvation matters, including ministry. The fact that God does not make Jew-Gentile, circumcision-uncircumcision, male-female distinctions in salvation (vertical) implies equal value, which has social implications (horizontal) because of the positive attitude that must exist in both directions across such variables. God's comparable attitude toward all classes of lowly humanity removes any justification for lowly humans to stress superior rank as a basis for greater worth over other lowly humans. Salvation is a vertical fellowship issue; so it must impact horizontal social issues. That prioritizes the interpersonal category, which makes subsequent all other matters in human interaction: marriage, parenting, leadership, evangelism, education. The characteristics of interpersonal relationships are retained rather than set aside when we move on into these more specialized settings. Positive interpersonal principles qualify how we function in these more specialized settings, and they set boundaries on appropriate method. Prioritizing the interpersonal category means that we accomplish as much as possible by the dynamics of the more fundamental reality before invoking the distinctive add-ons in the more specialized settings themselves. For these more specialized operations, there will be less reliance on authority and more reliance on influence, which is a primary pattern dictated by equal worth in human persons. This approach eliminates the correlation of relative worth with relative rank and certain abilities.

From this point on, however, the egalitarian viewpoint overextends an otherwise important insight. Absolutizing most things makes them false, and egalitarianism is no exception. Equality of persons does not remove the need for assigned responsibility and the supervisory authority concomitant to it, nor does equality of persons eliminate considering the relative strengths of persons in assigning responsibilities to the best advantage so as to make sure that the full range of responsibilities are covered that life in the home plus the church entails. The

ideal is unity, which celebrates diversity, not equality, which fosters sameness and individualism and removes the positive basis for the social dimension.

In the past, the real problem with leadership ministry has been the abuse of authority, so the solution is to get rid of the abuse, not the authority. The problem has been connecting worth with position and ability and then overdoing the differences between men and women in regard to ability; so the solution is to disconnect worth from rank and ability, not try to act as if gifting differences do not exist between the sexes. Even as we do not consider everyone within the same sex equally qualified for a certain role, we do not consider women and men equally qualified for every role. We must guard against getting caught in the classic pendulum effect where, in our attempt to relieve one falsehood, we replace it with another. That does not solve the problem; it merely exchanges an old set of problems for a new set. And who knows? They may be worse. People have equal value but not equal gifts; they have equal value but not equal rank. Although there are implications in Galatians 3:28 for other than strictly salvation matters, the implications have to do with the manner of ministering, not the roles in ministry. Roles and hierarchy in leadership and division of labor rest on relative strengths of persons for various ministries.

Alvera Mickelsen, in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, 177ff., speaks of identifying highest norms, which is really an important principle as long as it does not create a canon within a canon. Doing the latter pits certain parts of scripture against others, which involves the practitioner in a lower view of scripture than we are willing to take. Furthermore, highest norms do not oppose lower ones; they contextualize them and qualify them. The love standard in Christianity's primary category does qualify the way in which formal leadership operates, but it does not necessarily determine who should serve in what formal leadership roles.

### **G. Paul's non-sequential frame of reference**

Crucial to the proper handling of Galatians 3:28 is the fact that Paul is not primarily talking about something that is part of a time sequence. He is not contrasting the way things are in Christ from the way they were before, but the way things are in Christ from the way they are outside of him. The principles for being "*in Christ*" are not a change from before, but a contrast to alternatives. It is not so much something present vs. something past as it is one sort vs. another sort. It is not a change in God's way of doing things so much as a re-affirmation of the way God has always done things. The issue involves what is secondary vs. what is primary. The promise to Abraham is a more basic frame of reference than the Mosaic Law and National Israel as shown by the fact that promise preceded law (3:15-29) and even circumcision (Romans 4), and the Law did not annul the former, more basic system (3:15-17). Mosaism was a temporary add-on for practical purposes, not theological ones; God instituted the Law for practical purposes, not soteriological ones. Time comes into the picture only because in this case what was secondary was also temporary. If we want to identify a sequence, it is not the pristine-fallen-redeemed scenario that egalitarianism wants to talk about, but the Abrahamic-Mosaic-Christian scenario, a faith-(works)-faith series. In fact, salvation by faith is not in a series because it was the case before the Law, during the time of the Law, and in the Christian era. Faith-grace-promise has always been the basis for relating to God. In other words, salvation has always been interpersonal. Paul's frame of reference returns to Abraham in his state of uncircumcision, not to Adam and Eve in their unfallen condition.

Galatians 3:28 has only an apparent connection with women's roles in the home and the church. Admittedly the words "*there is no male and female . . . in Christ*" could express the idea that in Christ there are no role distinctions based on sex. But a statement does not mean whatever it could mean, but what it is intended to mean here. The intended meaning of propositional statements is determined by none other than the author—not the reader or some authoritative third party. Without adherence to that semantic principle there can be no such thing as communication. Authorial intent is determined and discovered by context and the nature of the case.

(1) Paul did not mean Galatians 3:28 as an absolute principle because that would make him contradict teachings he gave elsewhere.

(2) The context of Galatians 3:28 shows clearly that Paul's subject is salvation communicated in inheritance language. As to their *positive* meaning, a set of words must be interpreted relative to the author's frame of reference. Context shows that 3:28 is not a universal principle, but a positive principle applicable to inheritance of the Abrahamic promise. So, Paul means "*no male and female*" in the sense and circumstance that pertains to salvation and identity with God through Christ; hence, he is not positively and directly addressing roles, ministry, or service.

(3) By the nature of the case, roles are not a subset under salvation or identity.

If the question of role options is not a subset within salvation, relating Galatians 3:28 to women's roles must come from generalizing some implicit principle to subjects beyond salvation, that is, by theological interpretation, by necessary inference. The nature of language together with the law of context requires that applying a statement beyond authorial intent cannot be done by absolutizing it. It is not to be taken in just any and every sense or circumstance, but as *restrictive* to meant meaning. Applying a concept beyond authorial intent must pertain to like issues.

(4) In this case generalization cannot be done by appealing to characteristics of other items in the same list, because lists are not necessarily homogeneous beyond the common element that originates them.

Finally, we emphasize again that (5) generalization can go only to like cases. Rights to ministry, service, and roles within a group do not derive from the same factors as membership in the group. So, egalitarianism for none of the three sets can be generalized from the salvation concept.

Egalitarianism, if true, needs to come from elsewhere. There remains no other apparent way of connecting Galatians 3:28 with equalitarianism in domestic and ecclesiastical life.

## Summary

We close with a summary correlated with hermeneutical method. The presentation above assumes the principle that a claim needs to bear its positive burden of proof at least reasonably well. Where possible, we have tried, nevertheless, to assume the negative argument by pointing out factors that oppose the reconstruction egalitarianism puts on these passages. When that has not been possible, we have simply observed that the concepts associated with Genesis 1-3:6 + 3:16 + Galatians 2:38 do not come from them. Rather, the equal-subordinate-equal scenario appears to parallel the texts rather than derive from them. At each point it fails to meet the qualifications of exegetical process and theological method.

In the first step (a) the scenario does not carry its burden of proof because it plays on silence in Genesis 1, saying that no distinction is made there between man and woman. Though true, that point would help the argument only if equality contradicted order, which is merely part of the disagreement. In fact, there are indications in Genesis 2 that order was part of the pristine human condition. In step two (b) the idea that female deference is a fallen condition rests on the assumption that 3:16 introduces a different man-woman relationship and speaks of something from which Christians are delivered except for temporalizing factors. But as a matter of fact, we have not been delivered from any of the other conditions of the “cursed” state—at least as yet. In step three (c) egalitarians read Galatians 3:28 as if Paul were stating a universal principle or discussing roles whereas he is addressing lack of distinction in the availability of salvation through Christ. His topic is salvation, not ministry.

### Conclusion

The fundamental mistake in reading Galatians 3:28 is assuming that it belongs in the context of a larger time-sequence scenario rather than taking it simply as a description of the in-Christ situation. Making Genesis 1-2 + Genesis 3 + Galatians 3:28 a sequence merely impresses on the data a format from the outside, a pattern in a reader’s mind. That egalitarian reconstruction in effect puts other readers in a defensive posture pressed down with a negative burden of proof. Certain observations within the text, however, show that the time-sequence scenario is not what Paul had in mind. For example, (1) he does not say, “*There is ‘no longer’ Jew-Gentile, male-female.*” (2) Actually, there is male-female despite his saying there is not. (3) Paul would be denying more than Genesis 3:16 if he were speaking in a way that belonged to the sequential sense. The equal-subordinate-equal scenario means that the first and third entry are alike, but Paul negates what would be the third entry in this series. He would be denying Genesis 1 by saying that there is no male and female. Galatians 3:28 would not then be a return to the supposed pre-Fall Edenic condition, as the scenario requires, but a denial even of that. (4) Paul’s whole argument in Galatians is that the condition he affirms has never been otherwise in the sense that he means to be speaking, and he means to be speaking as far as relationship to God is concerned, which is what “*in Christ*” amounts to.

Putting Paul’s comment into a sequence scenario automatically makes the alternatives wrong—or at least less than ideal. Without an assumption about sequence, the alternatives are not necessarily bad or good; they are simply irrelevant to Paul’s topic—irrelevant to being in Christ and therefore to inheriting the Abrahamic promise. The non-sequential reading does not negate the presence or even the relevance of these features to matters aside from inheriting the Abrahamic promise. Whether these irrelevancies are bad in other connections we must decide on other bases. Retaining the male-female distinction in other respects is acceptable and necessary if other information warrants, and retaining the distinction does not necessitate approving slavery or maintaining Jew-Gentile distinctions because other information leads us away from doing so. That amounts to the point made earlier about secondary heterogeneity of lists.

In other words, it is the sequential context that is responsible for the implication that the alternatives to Paul’s listed items are irrelevant or wicked. Putting Galatians 3:28 in the sequential scenario and making the egalitarian inference are merely circular reasoning; they amount to the same thing: claiming sequence equals claiming the alternatives are bad. So the

egalitarian claim is not an exegetical conclusion but merely the ramification of the original presupposition, namely, that Genesis **1-2** + Genesis **3** + Galatians **3:28** form a scenario.

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