The Gift and Glory of the Bride

An exegesis of Genesis 2:18-23

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CONTENTS

Genesis 2:18-23 (NASB 2020 | Alter)

[18]Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." [19]And out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. [20]The man gave names to all the livestock, and to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. [21]So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. [22]And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

[23]Then the man said,

"At last this is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called 'woman,'
Because she was taken out of man."

[18]And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the human to be alone, I shall make him a sustainer beside him." [19]And the LORD God fashioned from the soil each beast of the field and each fowl of the heavens and brought each to the human to see what he would call it, and whatever the human called a living creature, that was its name. [20]And the human called names to all the cattle and to the fowl of the heavens and to all the beasts of the field, but for the human no sustainer beside him was found. [21]And the LORD God cast a deep slumber on the human, and he slept, and He took one of his ribs and closed over the flesh where it had been, [22]and the LORD God built the rib He had taken from the human into a woman and He brought her to the human.

[23]And the human said:

"This one at last, bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh,
"This one shall be called Woman,
for from man was this one taken."[1]

1 INTRODUCTION

Christian weddings are glorious; they are glorious because the marriages they constitute are glorious—a sacred institution to be honored by all. Human sexuality is glorious. Man and woman, bearing together the image of God, is a glorious reality.

But there is a stark antithesis at work: The glorious vision that the Bible presents to us of the wonder of Christian marriage and the celebration of humanity as male and female juxtaposed with a dark cultural backdrop. As I finalize this paper, many individuals, institutions, and churches

1. Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary*, 3 vols. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019)

in our land energetically celebrate June as "Pride Month" and endorse with great pride and fanfare that which God abhors. The United States Senate recently confirmed our newest Supreme Court Justice, who, when asked if she could define the term "woman," responded that she could not. When pressed for the reason, she said it was because she was unqualified for the task of definition because she was not a "biologist." Let's be clear: Human personhood and sexual identity is not a *biological* question, any more than it is a legal, political, or psychological one. The issue is fundamentally *theological*—a matter of design and teleology—and any attempt at redefinition, or even to refuse a definition, is an act of moral rebellion, not a matter of scientific clarity.

We now swim in a sea of "gender-confusion," but it is clear that the "confusion" from which we suffer has become in many cases a euphemism for what really is outright *rebellion* against the Creator's design for sexual identity, social relationships—particularly marriage and the family—and human flourishing (cf., Rom. 1). The order of creation regarding human sexuality and the marriage covenant are being pervasively and systematically undermined. We desperately need to remember and hold fast to God's instruction on this matter, and to live it out with joy and fidelity in our own households and church communities.

This text from Genesis 2, which recounts the divine provision of a suitable helper for Adam, is "the deep well from which is drawn all biblical teaching on the covenant of marriage."[2] Given the antithesis of utter rebellion regarding sexual identity and familial integrity surrounding us, we would do well to meditate on God's revealed purposes and promises here, and train ourselves in his ways. As Bruce K. Waltke notes, "The creation accounts assert that our sexuality lies deeper than our physical characteristics and gender socialization, and that our embodiment as male or female profoundly influences the way we view the world."[3] The instruction of Scripture on these matters is primary and vital to all human existence.

2. R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, Preaching The Word Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 57.

3. Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 232.

2 SITUATING THE TEXT

Since the rise of the Documentary Hypothesis (DH), there has been constant debate on the composition of the Pentateuch and the historical process that gave rise to its final, canonical form. The relationship between Gen. 1:1-2:3(or 4a) and 2:4(or 4b)-25 is a case in point. The language of a "first" and "second" creation story has frequently been used to describe these two chapters, but mostly by those who embrace the basic tenants of the DH. Their case contends that "Genesis presents two originally independent creation stories, about five hundred years apart in origin."[4] However, this position seems arbitrary in light of a couple of obvious alternatives.

4. Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 22.

First, what keeps the "second" story from being read as simply a continuation of the "first," presenting a zoomed-in view from the panorama of the initial introduction to the creation? Second, what eliminates the

possibility that 2:4(or 4b)-25 is a commentary on Day 6 (Gen. 1:26-31)? So long as the plausibility of either of these views remains solidly intact (which I believe is the case), there is no warrant to accept the position arising from the DH. Gen. 1-2 is unified and consistent—literarily, historically, and theologically.[5] Not only this, but the clear difference in style and theological outlook between these two sections (which are recognized by virtually every reader and cannot reasonably be denied) "complement each other in the most remarkable way"[6]—playing with the tension between the transcendence and immanence of God in creation. The use of YHWH in 2:4ff emphasizes the personal nature of God's relationship to humanity in particular, which is exhibited by the content of the subsequent narrative.[7]

One helpful framework in which to understand the unity and consistency of the narrative in Genesis is offered by Waltke, who outlines the book of Genesis roughly in terms of a theatrical play. He designates Gen. 1:1-2:3 as the Prologue and Gen. 2:4-25 as Act 1 in Book 1, which encompasses the first of ten *tôlᵉḏôṯ* ("these are the generations of") cycles (2:4-4:26). In this scheme, our text is situated as Scene 2 of Act 1 (see outline in Figure 1).

5. Much more could be said here regarding the controversy, but I consider that discussion to be outside the scope of this project.

6. T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promise Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 12.

7. It is interesting to note that the serpent in 3:1-5 always refers to God as only Elohim and never as YHWH Elohim—it "refuses to use God's personal name in the presence of Adam and Eve," in concert with its attempt to convince them that God remains a very distant reality, one who is not concerned with their moral integrity, a God who remains hidden and disengaged. See Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promise Land*, 12.

3 ANALYZING THE TEXT

LORD God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים | *yhwh ʾᵉlōhîm*). One of the obvious vocabulary differences between the first creation account (Gen. 1:1-2:2) and the second account (2:4-25), in which our text is set, is the designation of God. In the first account, God is designated as simply אֱלֹהִים (*ʾlōhîm*), whereas in our immediate context, he is referred to as יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים (*yhwh ʾlōhîm*).[8] YHWH is the personal name of God, later revealed to be the covenant name by which he is to be known by his people (Ex. 3:14-15). Elohim is a more formal reference to God, etymologically connoting the aspect of awe/fear, as in "the highest being which is to be awed/feared beyond all others." The double name YHWH Elohim in Gen. 2 reflects the personal aspects of the narrative, where the divine creator intimately relates to his creatures. Keil and Delitzsch put it plainly:

> In this section the combination Jehovah [YHWH] Elohim is expressive of the fact, that Jehovah is God, or one with Elohim. Hence Elohim is placed after Jehovah. For the constant use of the double name is not intended to teach that Elohim who created the world was Jehovah, but that Jehovah, who visited man in paradise, who punished him for the transgression of His command, but gave him a promise of victory over the tempter, was Elohim, the same God, who created the heavens and the earth.[9]

Though the details of YHWH's covenant relationship with his people have yet to be developed, the author introduces God's covenant name

8. Traditional source critics are in haste to conclude that this demonstrates the presence of two distinct source documents (traditionally referred to as the historically distinct "Priestly" (P) and "Yahwist" (Y) sources, *a la* Wellhausen [1844-1918]") that have been brought together to form the creation narratives. This suffers from a number of problems, one being that God is called Elohim alone in the address to the serpent, which supposedly is a part of the Yahwist source. It also fails to take into account that "the use of the double name, which occurs here twenty times though rarely met with elsewhere, is always significant." C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *A Commentary on the Old Testament*, Accordance electronic ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), par. 84. The two designations of God in Gen. 1-2 reveal a clear difference in style and theological outlook—that is undeniable; but rather than giving rise to the common concerns of source critics, they should be understood as complementary to one another.

9. Keil and Delitzsch, *A Commentary on the Old Testament*, par. 81.

Prologue (Gen. 1:1-2:3)

Book 1: The Account of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4-4:26)

Superscription (2:4a)

Act 1: Humanity on Probation (2:4b-25)

Scene 1: Man on Probation (2:4b-17)

Scene 2: Gift of the Bride (2:18-23)

Epilogue (2:24-25)

Act 2: The Fall and Its Consequences (3:1-24)

Scene 1: The Fall (3:1-7)

Scene 2: The Shape of Judgment (3:8-19)

Epilogue (3:20-24)

Act 3: Escalation of Sin in the Line of Cain (4:1-24)

Scene 1: Cain and Abel (4:1-16)

Scene 2: Lamech (4:17-24)

Epilogue (Transition to Book 2) (4:25-26)

Book 2: Adam's Descendents (5:1-6:8)

⋮

Book 10: The Account of Jacob's Descedents (37:2-50:26)

Figure 1: Source: Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 79–80.

in this present chapter to identify the covenant God, YWHW, with Elohim, the God who created and sustains all things by the power of his word.

said (אָמַר | *'amar*). In Gen. 1 God is introduced as the God who speaks and *acts* by speaking,[10] as is so dramatically on display in the first creation episode. Here in Gen. 2, God's speech reveals a deficiency in Adam's status, and anticipates a divine creative act consistent with what has come before that will remedy Adam's plight with a word: "Let there be woman!" But this, though expected, is not the LORD God's response.

not good (לֹא־תוֹב | *lo' ṭôḇ*). Adam's status is declared to be "not good"—a unilateral assessment by the LORD God who made him. The "not good" here should not be understood as merely the lack of something good or as Adam's being a less-than-optimal being, but otherwise fine. No, this construction indicates that Adam's condition is downright bad; it is highly emphatic. Logically, to deny that something is good does not necessarily assert that that thing is completely bad; there could

10. There is a sub-discipline of philosophy and linguistics known as "speech-act theory" that explores the semantic and ethical dimensions of performative speech. Analyzing biblical literature and theologizing using the tools of this discipline has yielded fruitful insights. Two examples come immediately to mind: William C. Pohl, *Ethical God-Talk in the Book of Job: Speaking to the Almighty*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (London: T&T Clark, 2020) and Vern Sheridan Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009).

be a spectrum between them.[11] Here the statement is not denying the goodness of Adam's condition, but rather asserting its badness. Perhaps since God is a Trinitarian plurality in himself and Adam was created in his image, the image demanded plurality as well (cf. 1:27). Whatever the exact reasons for man's aloneness being "not good," this assessment is in stark contrast to the "very good" we find in Gen. 1:6.

alone (לְבַדּוֹ | *l^e^bad*). The root from which this term stems (בַּד | *bad*[12]) has the concrete meaning of "limb" or "part."[13] In a certain sense, Adam was only a *part*, not a whole, in himself. His mere existence, and even his relationship with God, did not complete him. He was literally incomplete, yet alive—only a part of something more glorious that God was doing with him. There is danger in interpreting Adam's state as mere "loneliness." A distinction should be made between *aloneness* and *lonliness*, and one must be careful to not allow sentimentalism to cloud the meaning here. Adam's aloneness was "not good" primarily because he was unable to satisfy the responsibility God had given him to "multiply and fill the earth."[14] This does not necessarily mean that Adam did not possess a desire for human companionship or was unaware of his condition, but the emphasis is often on his loneliness without due reference to the broader context of God's revealed will for him.

I will *make* (עָשָׂה | *ʿāšāh*). God is resolved to put the situation right. The term עָשָׂה has a highly nuanced semantic range (taking up three pages of lexical content!).[15] One important dimension of the verb for our purposes here has to do with the sense of "dealing with" or "fixing" a problem; in this sense, God is committed to deal with Adam's present condition. As with everything else thus far in Genesis, all of the action begins with God. Divine initiative is at the root of everything that occurs in this narrative, as we see in the God-initiated verbs: "The LORD God *said*" (v. 18), "the LORD God *formed*/*brought*" (v. 19), "the LORD God *caused*," "He *took*" (v. 21), and "the LORD God *fashioned* (built)/*brought*" (v. 22). In each case the LORD God, the YHWH-Elohim, the Creator, the covenant-making/keeping God, takes the initiative to shape man and woman and their relationship. Everything here is rooted in his divine will. God's sovereign, unilateral resolve was unequivocal: "I will make him a helper suitable for him" (v. 18b).

helper fit (אֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ | *ʿēzer k^e^negdô*). This phrase is notoriously difficult to translate, and thus there has been significant debate on its precise meaning.[16] The combination of words is a *hapax legomenon*, appearing no where else in Hebrew scripture. This obstructs the ability to analyze the term synchronically (i.e., by considering how contemporary authors used a word or phrase in different contexts). We could attempt an interpretation by studying the meaning of the individual words separately, but this also precludes a straightforward path to understanding the term as a whole.[17] Nevertheless, we are constrained to

11. "The usual way of expressing a less than ideal situation is *ʾên ṭôḇ*, [meaning] 'it is lacking in goodness.'" Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 88, n. 30.

12. What an interesting morphological coincidence that the transliteration of the Hebrew root for "alone" renders the English word "bad." This linguistic fortuity matches a theological truth.

13. John R. Kohlenberger III and William D. Mounce, eds., *Kohlenbeger/Mounce Concise Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament* (https://www.teknia.com, 2012), s.v. *bad.*

14. "Of such a help the man stood in need, in order that he might fulfill his calling, not only to perpetuate and multiply his race, but to cultivate and govern the earth." Keil and Delitzsch, *A Commentary on the Old Testament*, par. 93.

15. See "**עשׂה**" in Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Edited and translated under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 890–892.

16. The debate of the interpretation of this phrase is intensified by the implications it has for current socio-theological issues, particularly feminism and the role of women in church government and society. Because of this, the exegetical stakes are high.

17. "In language the meaning of the whole may be more than, or at least different from, the sum of the parts. Many examples could be given in English; consider, e.g., 'special effects' or 'party whip.' For elements built into one word, consider the word 'paralegal.'" John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 176.

take this latter approach of semantic analysis—albeit less than ideal—by the mere fact that it is the only one available to us in this case.

The term אֵזֶר (*ʾēzer* ["helper"]) should not be taken to have a diminishing or subservient denotation.[18] It is the same term used to describe God as the helper of Israel (cf. Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:7; 1 Sam. 7:12). This term is often used to reference God's aid against Israel's enemies (cf. Ps. 20:2; 121:1-2; 124:8). Moses referred to God as his "helper" (same term) who delivered him from Pharaoh (Ex. 18:4). God is the "helper" *par excellence*. That is the term being used here in Genesis 2:18. So man's "helper" would be "no weak, slavish sister by any stretch of a misogynist's imagination."[19] "Helper" is, by itself, too weak to communicate the nuance of אֵזֶר; it suggests merely an auxiliary function, which is not the sense of the Hebrew term. Elsewhere, the sense is "active intervention on behalf of someone, especially in military contexts."[20] Yet, in this particular context, there is certainly a requirement of this helper's submission in the government of the relationship, as is implied by the basic notion of the English "help." The order is also important—woman was created to help the man, not *vice versa* (See 1 Tim. 2:13). But ontologically they are of the same order, and she functions to complete what is lacking in him, and "to honor his vocation, to share his enjoyment, and to respect the prohibition."[21]

18. "It carries no implications regarding the relationship or relative status of the individuals involved." Walton, *Genesis*, 176.

19. Hughes, *Genesis*, 50.

20. Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, Gen. 2:18.

21. Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 88.

כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*kᵉnegdô*) is very difficult to analyze because the morphology is problematic. This construction is "a combination of two prepositions with the appendage of the third masculine singular pronominal suffix."[22] In cases like this, the whole does not equal the sum of its parts, so a straightforward analysis is not possible. Our confidence in translating the meaning of a term rests in our ability to analyze the compound in context, but being a *hapax legomenon*, this is not possible, posing a serious hermeneutical danger.[23] Walton suggests that "the best procedure from a methodological standpoint in this kind of situation is to find something sufficiently vague to cover the territory," and in this vein he thinks the terms "partner" or "counterpart" to be as good a translation as any, since partner best represents the "helper" part of the combination, and "counterpart" captures more of the sense of the whole. If linguistic liberty would allow us to make words up, the term "counterpartner" would serve the task of translation well.[24]

22. Walton, *Genesis*, 176.

23. "As a result of the lack of synchronic information and the ambiguity of the diachronic information, most interpreters find in this phrase whatever they come to it looking for." ibid.

24. ibid., 177.

The exegetical difficulties notwithstanding, we can at the very least glean, with great confidence, that the function of the helper would be complementary to the man's—a helper *fit for him*—literally, "a like opposite him" or "one according to his opposite" (though still according to his *kind*). The woman would be a corresponding counterpart with a unique role. As a counterpart she would share in his nature. Male and female, together, were created in the image of God (cf. 1:27), and as his matching opposite, she would supply what was lacking in him. At the same time, there is also an objective structure to the woman's relationship to man. She originates as the satisfaction for man's existential need, which

also reveals her purpose as man's corresponding helpmate who makes it possible for him to fulfill his divinely assigned mission and to relish in all of God's creation, particularly in her, as his divinely supplied companion in whom he finds wholeness and delight. She is custom built for him, and is "superior to any animal in her ability to help."[25] This is why the Apostle Paul would say that the man was not made for the woman "but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:9). The woman would make it possible for man to do what he could never do alone—and likewise for the woman. Something "very good" was about to remedy man's aloneness.

call/gave names. The origin and phenomenon of language is not discussed in the Genesis narrative, but the narrator will later emphasize its diversity (Gen. 11). Waltke notes that the empirical evidence suggests that "language is devolving, not evolving," i.e., devolving from the LORD God (*yhwy ʾlōhîm*) to man (*ʾadam*).[26]

Whereas before, in Gen. 1:1-2:3, God had been the namer of creation, conferring the names "Day" and "Night" and "Earth," etc., as an indication of his sovereignty over creation, now Adam, God's agent, will perform this sovereign, kingly naming function.[27] In this act of naming, Adam imitates God and follows the cultural mandate (1:26), bringing the world under his dominion. In the order of creation, man is beneath the heavenly beings but higher than the animals.

The process of naming challenged Adam's intellectual capacities. Naming demanded acquaintance with and understanding of the animals. "It was not, as we so often imagine, a whimsical process of reviewing a ten-mile pet parade."[28] We must not regard the names that Adam gave the animals as merely denoting their outward, superficial characteristics, "but as [denoting] a deep and direct insight into the nature of the animals,"[29] made possible by careful observation and insight, which penetrated far deeper than knowledge that comes from simple, half-baked reflection. Naming, in this way, is not only an act of authority and responsibility, but it is also an act of wisdom—an exercise in the comprehension of the true nature of things.[30]

Adam (אָדָם | *ʾaḏām*). Adam's name is an etymological pun on the Hebrew אֲדָמָה (*ʾaḏāmāh*). This parallels the relationship between the English words "human" and "humus."[31] The term אָדָם is used to designate both the generic "humanity" and the particular proper noun "Adam," or "the human."

brought...not found. The two purposes revealed for which the animals were brought to Adam are (1) to name them, and (2) to make Adam aware of his aloneness and need for a fit companion. As Adam fulfilled his kingly responsibility of interpreting the animals for what they were and giving them appropriate names corresponding to their kind, his differentiating capacity became acute. As such, he saw there was none that corresponded to him. In the process he must have also realized

25. Ephram, quoted in Thomas C. Oden, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2019), 66.

26. Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 89, n. 35. Spencer-Jones and Exell note that "[t]he portrait here delineated of the first man is something widely different from that of an infantile savage slowly groping his way towards the possession of articulate speech and intelligible language by imitation of the sounds of animals. Speech and language both spring full-formed, though not completely matured, from the *primus homo* of the Bible." Donald Maurice Spence-Jones and Joseph S. Exell, eds., *The Pulpit Commentary (Psalms-Malachi)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), par. 1106

27. "The naming of something or someone is a token of lordship (cf. Num. 23:38; 2 Kings 23:34; 24;17; 2 Chron. 36:4). The Lord of the universe named the parts of the universe and its time-divisions (1:5, 8, 10), and he left it to man to determine the names of those creatures over which He had given him dominion." U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part I: From Adam to Noah, Genesis I—VI 8, trans. from the Hebrew Israel Abrahams (Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2005), 130; "...Adam's speaking and naming of the animals expresses part of his rule over the creation and reflects God's naming of parts of creation in Genesis 1 through his creative speech." G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 83.

28. Hughes, *Genesis*, 59.

29. Ibid.

30. King Solomon comes readily to mind; his applied wisdom extended to the natural world, and in particular to the animal kingdom (1 Kings 4:33).

31. In an attempt to preserve the correspondence of the pun, Robert Alter translates אָדָם (*ʾadam*) as "human, humus of the earth." Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, Gen. 2:7.

that many of the animals had a social companionship that he lacked. So, naturally, Adam began to long for companionship with a being like himself. It is reasonable to surmise that the man began to ache for a corresponding other. It is as if God was preparing him to value this forthcoming helper.[32]

32. See Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 89; Spence-Jones and Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary (Psalms-Malachi)*, par. 1106.

deep sleep. A deep or heavy sleep like that of Adam is often divinely induced in Scripture. Such was Abraham's slumber when God made a covenant with him, passing between the pieces of the sacrifice as "a smoking firepot and a flaming torch" (Gen. 15:12-19). Jonah apparently experienced a similarly induced sleep (cf. Jon. 1:1-5). Gerhard Von Rad comments that "God's miraculous creating permits no watching. Man cannot perceive God 'in the act,' cannot observe his miracles in their genesis; he can revere God's creative activity only as an actually accomplished fact."[33] "Sleep" in Scripture is often used as a metaphor for death, which has deep typological significance with respect to the death-sleep of the Last Adam, Jesus Messiah, and the birth of the Church, his Bride, from his side.

33. Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 84.

one...rib (צֶלַע | *tzela'*). Lit. "something bent," "side." As to whether the rib refers to the side (as it does in some other parts of Scripture) or a specific rib is open to debate. The word translated "rib" is not used anatomically anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is usually used to refer to the side of a building or room. But the anatomical "rib" seems correct here because the Scripture clearly states that God took "one of his ribs," whereas something like "one of his sides" does not seem as fitting. (However, Hebrew is a very poetic language, and the possibility of double meaning is high.[34]) Additionally, the "one...rib" should be understood to refer to both flesh and bone,[35] which fits well with Adam's declaration that the woman is "flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone." The language pictures a long, curved, glistening rib "still moist with Adam's blood and warm with his marrow."[36] The "rib" is not to be taken as merely a metaphor, as some have suggested, but actual—carrying immense theological implications. Woman was made of the same stuff as man—the same bone, the same flesh, etc. Her correspondence in form, her femaleness, her estrogens were shaped and constituted from what was already in the man. Eve was the first human person to be created from a living being, and subsequently, all human life would come from her, Eve, the "mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20).[37] Because she came from Adam, she perfectly shared the image of God. Their mutual flesh lies behind Gen. 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

34. "Just as the rib is found at the side of the man and is attached to him, even so the good wife, the rib of her husband, stands at his side to be his helper-counterpart, and her soul is bound up with his." Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 134

35. "...there is an Akkadian cognate that shares the same semantic range and is used anatomically. Even there, however, it is rarely used to refer only to the bone. It indicates the area of the ribs but includes the flesh and muscle as well." Walton, *Genesis*, 177.

36. Hughes, *Genesis*, 60.

37. חַוָּה (*ḥawwāh*)—Eve, "life."

made (rt בָּנָה | *bānāh*). God uses a distinctive technique to create the woman. In the prologue to Genesis (1:1-2:3), God *speaks* the heavens and the earth into existence. In Genesis 2, God *forms* (יָצַר | *yāṣar* ["form," "potter"]) the man from the dust of the earth, as a potter with clay, then breathes his life-giving and animating spirit into him (v. 7). But

with the woman, he takes the living man and puts him to sleep, extracts material from him, and *fashions*[38] the woman. God *forms* the man, but he *builds* the woman from the man.

38. Alter translates it even more literally with "builds." Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*.

brought her to the man. Just as God brought "every animal of the field and every bird of the sky" (v. 19) before Adam, here God brings this new creature, woman, before Adam to be recognized and named. However, the sense goes beyond a mere parallel to v. 19. U. Cassuto observes that "[t]he prenominal suffix emphasizes the object. God was like a father who presents his son with a valuable gift that is bound to please him and be cherished by him. 'See [he says] what I have prepared for you.'"[39] In this first marriage ceremony, if you will, God attends the woman as a figurative father-of-the-bride and brings her down the aisle of the sacred garden-temple of Eden to the man. The botanical setting of Eden is still intuitively imitated in modern wedding ceremonies around the world. We are told later (v. 25) that man "shall leave" his natural family and be "joined" to his wife. Biblically-informed wedding ceremonies mimic this pattern modeled here in that the groom steps toward the bride and her father to retrieve her, and together, as a result of his initiative, they approach the cover of God's presence and seal their vows before him and their families, creating a new household.

39. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 135.

the man *said* (See note on "said" above.). Like his creator, Adam expresses himself through spoken language in response to what has been created.

bone of my bones…flesh of my flesh. This is the traditional kinship formula of Israel. Whereas English speaks of "blood" relationships, the Hebrew idiom speaks of "flesh and bone."[40] Similar versions of this formula appear in Gen. 29:14; Judg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:12-13, and from these, some argue that "your bone and your flesh" is an affirmation not simply of kinship but also of loyalty.[41] In other words, "circumstances will not dictate or determine a relationship previously agreed to by both parties, and certainly adverse circumstances will not undermine it."[42] This meaning is consistent with the covenantal nature of marriage alluded to in vv. 24-25. In Adam's case, the utterance would be literally true,[43] but in all subsequent marriages it is understood to be metaphorical, based on this archetype.

40. Hughes, *Genesis*, 61.

41. The phrase would be the equivalent of our modern commitment "in sickness and in health."

42. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 29.

43. i.e., "…he could employ this phrase in the full sense of the words." Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 136.

she shall be *called*. Just as Adam exercised his kingly authority and wisdom in naming the animals, he now has the privilege of naming the stunning new creature who was not merely brought to him from the outside, but who was rather taken from himself. Adam names his wife twice—here, and also in 3:20: "Now the man named his wife Eve…" This double-naming establishes Adam's authority and leadership in the home economy.

woman (אִשָּׁה | *'iššâ*)…taken out of man (אִישׁ | *'iš*). Man's name is derivative of his origin from the אֲדָמָה (*'aḏāmāh*), so it is quite fitting

that the woman's name be derived from man, the source from whom her existence has its origin. In naming her "woman," he also names himself "man"; the nature of their relationship is utterly clear by the very morphology of the names themselves.[44] Martin Luther captures this in his German translation, rendering אִשָּׁה (*'iššâ*) as *Männin* ("female man"). The Old Latin *vira* ("woman") from *vir* ("man") is also illustrative. This is just as explicit in the English words "man" and "woman," but familiarity softens the effect. This suggests that there is an onto-linguistic reality to the divine order of man and woman, and their relationship to one another. It is a profound truth deeply embedded in the fabric of reality.

44. "The narrator names him by his relation to the ground, but Adam names himself in relation to his wife." Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 89.

4 BRIEF LITERARY-THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

One of the dominant ideas that emerges from a careful study of the text is that the woman is both a divine gift and the glory of man, the complement of creation. This plays directly into Paul's statement that the woman is the glory of man. If anyone doubts that Christian scripture dignifies women and magnifies their status in the world, then let them reckon carefully with this text. Even in its own cultural-historical context, "such a separate narration of woman's creation is without parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature." [45]

This view of the woman is enhanced and brought to a climax by the growing anticipation built into the narrative structure. Vv. 19-20 serve as a peculiar interruption in the narrative.[46] With the perspective of Genesis 1 in view, we fully expect, after God declared Adam's situation "not good," an immediate act of creation to flow from the divine utterance that is introduced by the formula, "And God said…'let there be Woman!'" Here, however, we must wait two verses for the promised creation of a helpmate while we follow the process of the first human's giving names to all living creatures. This seems a bit odd.

In Hebrew, vv. 19-20 are enveloped in the phrase *'ēzer kᵉnegdô*. This literary setting functions to aid in the narrative explosion that is soon to come. The helper has been promised. She is then withheld for two carefully framed verses while God allows the man to perform his unique function as the bestower of names on things. There is a sort of implicit irony in this order of narrated events. Man is superior to all other living creatures because only he can employ language, only he has the level of consciousness that makes him capable of linguistic ordering. But it is this very consciousness that also makes him aware of his solitude in contrast to the rest of the zoological kingdom. "The contrast at play here between a mateless man calling names to a mute world of mated creatures is brought out by a careful finesse of Hebrew syntax,"[47] and thus the dramatic irony of Adam's situation is well established, yet soon to be resolved.

The woman's creation out of Adam is the basis, not only for her ontological equality, but also for her tender companionship. As the Puritan

45. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 28.

46. The following analysis is adapted in part from Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 30–36.

47. ibid., 34

Matthew Henry quaintly coined it: the woman was "not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."[48] So here it is: Eve was taken out of Adam so that he might embrace with great love a part of his very self. This is the basis upon which the apostle Paul commands husbands to love their wives: "So husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are parts of His body" (Eph. 5-28-30 NASB).

The woman was a stunning creature, to say the least. She was the prototype of all women fresh from the well of creation. Every aspect of her was perfect—she was glorious, as Adam's response confirms. Having been acquainted with his need (see note on "brought…not found" above), Adam's powers of discernment had been elevated by his close evaluation of God's creatures. So Adam's response was nothing short of a shout of ecstasy and a song of celebration. His rapturous song constitutes the first human words quoted in the Bible. This is also the first poetic couplet in God's Word (the first poetic *verse* was in 1:27). Gordon Wenham points out that the five short lines of this poem employ all the standard techniques of Hebrew poetry: parallelism (lines 2-3; 4-5), assonance and word play (woman/man); chiasmus (ABC/CB'A') and verbal repetition.[49] These are not obvious in translation, but are striking in Hebrew, as are the rhythmic and aural components.[50]

John Calvin beautifully paraphrases Adam's sentiment: "Now at length I have obtained a suitable companion, who is part of the substance of my flesh, and in whom I behold, as it were, another self."[51] Such astonished ecstasy he had at the sight of this glorious being! He had found his companion and his longed-for love. He was no longer alone, and was satisfied in every way.

In the giving of the bride, God completely surrounds the man by this new female presence,[52] which can even be detected syntactically. There is a tendency to gloss right over the profound artistry of this little poem because of its conciseness. But as Robert Alter points out, "the cryptic conciseness of Hebrew literature is a reflection, not of primitiveness [which we assume], but of profound art."[53] That truth is very clearly demonstrated in this majestic little song. The placement of the pronoun (זֹאת | *zo't*) used to refer to the woman gives the impression that the man is completely surrounded by this new creature's presence, imaging poetically what the apostle Paul will later express when he says that woman is the glory of man. Each of the two lines of this poem/song begins with the feminine indicative pronoun ("this [feminine] one") which is also the last Hebrew word of the poem, cinching it in a tight envelope structure, and constituting a double chiasm, with the pronoun placed at the beginning, middle, and end. Most English translations do not follow the Hebrew syntax for readability, but Alter's translation, which more strictly follows the original word

48. "Perhaps this reads a little too much into the rib, but it expresses well the biblical ideal of marriage." Gordon J. Wenham et al., eds., *New Bible Commentary* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1994), 62.

49. Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 70, quoted in Hughes, *Genesis*, 61.

50. This poem-song also has a pronounced rhythmic pattern. The first line consists (in Hebrew) of three parts with two stresses each. We get a little sense of this in English….[This] rhythm belongs to the very form of the cry. The first verse's two-beat rhythm comes from Adam's explosive surprise, while the second verse's three-beat rhythm gives the thought some solemnity and elegance. ibid.

51. John Calvin, *Genesis*, ed. and trans. John King (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1965), 125.

52. This parallels the presence of the animals that surrounded him in 2:19.

53. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 18.

order, reveals the effect:

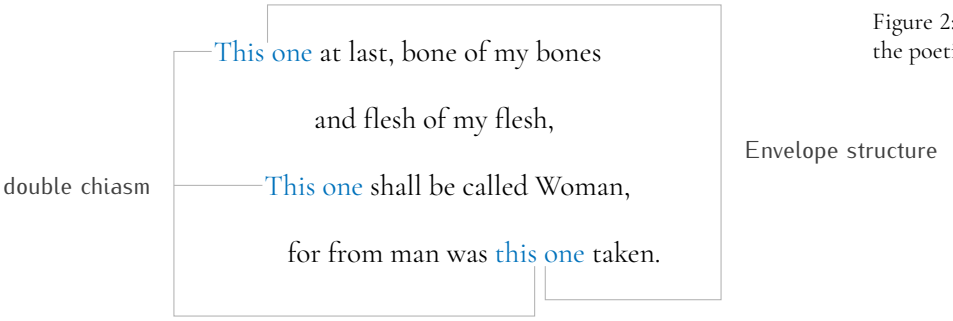

Figure 2: Woman as the glory of man in the poetic structure of Gen. 2:23.

This is brilliantly and carefully put together. Here, through the very structure of human language, we perceive the woman as the glory of man, like a kind of aura proceeding out of him, a like unto himself; she is distinct, yet inseparable from him. Her presence surrounds the one to whom she will be a help fit for him. What a marvelous poetic image.

We have seen already how God had honed Adam's naming powers in the previous episode, and now the man spontaneously declares, "She shall be called woman (*ʾiššâ*), because she was taken out of man (*ʾiš*)." The sound play celebrates their relationship. Adam restated his own name imbedded in hers. Adam prophetically anticipated the deepest intimacy between himself and his new bride. Thankfully, as previously mentioned in the exegetical notes, this comes across just as clearly in our own English terms for man and woman.

Interestingly, the word here used for woman (*ʾiššâ*) is also a play on the term for fire (אֵשָׁה | *ʾeššâ*), which produces such a fruitful metaphor for her essence and her relationship to the man. The glorious bride sets man's heart and imagination and body on fire. The fire of the proverbial hearth is the heartbeat of the home. Fire is often associated with passionate love as well as domestic stability. In ancient contexts, it is also associated with sacrifice and covenant ritual,[54] which is quite fitting here in this paradigmatic marriage covenant, where the sacrificial nature of the bond between man and woman is on display.

54. cf. Lev. 1:7; 6:9; 10:1.

In sum, this text teaches unequivocally that the woman is a glorious being! (To menfolk, they are often gloriously enigmatic, but glorious nonetheless.) Woman's creation story is magnificent. The woman is God's answer to an otherwise insurmountable problem. She is God's instrument of completion. The woman is a garden of delight and a vessel of new life. She is endowed with the inclination and capacities of tenderness, nurturing care, emotional intelligence, and relational sensitivity. She is also a

paradox, but so are all the other profound realities of this world.

Not only is she a gift to man and to the world, the woman *possesses* gifts—significant and unique gifts—to share for the edification[55] of the body. In the church, in the home, and in the marriage, she has great power to adorn the gospel with grace and beauty insofar as she exercise faithfulness to the Lord toward that for which he has designed her.

Our text ends on the cusp of the epilogue of vv. 24-25. The typological significance of this wedding text is theological bedrock, but falls beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, I will comment briefly on marriage.

There is great mystery in the marriage union, as Paul says in Ephesians 5, and the Bible's teaching on this provides one of the primary analogies for understanding how God in Christ constitutes, relates to, and defines the Church and her mission. Typologically, the Church is born of water and blood from the pierced side of the Last Adam in his death sleep, from which he emerges in victory to proclaim his song over us, that we might now serve him and help accomplish the mission given him by God the Father.

Wendell Berry, the farmer-poet, says that most modern marriages constitute a form of virtual divorce. They often entail two successful careerists constantly asserting and defending their rights and privileges, and thus, in effect, negotiating how things are to be divided rather than united. Modern marriage is a consumer-based institution, and so taking is much more valuable than giving. Authentic marriage, Berry contends, is exactly the opposite. There the husband and wife belong not only to each other and their children, but also to the marriage itself—to that public and permanent naming of their relation that has been sworn before God and neighbor. It sustains them when mere romance fails, for "mine" and "thine" have been declared "ours"—as it once was in Eden—side by side and hand in hand in the full presence and under the blessing of God.[56]

> The Sabbath and marriage are the only social institutions that antedate the Fall; they are not the result of the Fall, nor is the male-female ordained social relationship the result of the Fall. The home is foundational in God's program of salvation in part because it reflects God's covenant relationship with Israel and the cradle where the godly seed is brought into being and nurtured. In the warm embrace of a husband and wife, God ordains their fellowship and their giving birth to his offspring.[57]

New Testament Connection

In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul deals with a number of particular issues affecting the worshipping community at Corinth. In chs. 11-14, in particular, Paul addresses various issues in the life of the church, such as head coverings, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, prophecy and tongues, and orderly worship. In charging the Corinthians with certain sinful practices, or in defending or clarifying the proper corrective, Paul would sometimes appeal to the order of creation as the rational basis of his argument. This is the case in 11:2-16, where Paul addresses the issue of head coverings. Leav-

55. Woman is "built" from man, and she has the capacity to return the favor, poetically, as she builds up the man and the communities constituted by her union with him, namely the family and the church.

56. See Wendell Berry, "Feminism, the Body, and the Machine," in *What are people for?*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2010, 180-181.

57. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 232.

ing the interpretive details of this passage aside, I want to simply highlight Paul's statement that "man is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man" (11:7). This demonstrates Paul's direct application of our text to a particular problematic practice in the Corinthian church. He is reflecting on some of the theological insights detailed here, and making judgements and issuing commands in light of them. Paul did not treat the revealed order of creation as merely an interesting story of origins; he understood the teaching of Gen. 2 to be *normative*, both theologically (method) and ethically (application). In this, Paul serves as our model of teaching and applying the whole counsel of God to every issue of life.

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