

JESUS, GENDER, MARRIAGE, AND SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP

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PART I: ON GENDER AND MARRIAGE

Introduction: Where We Were then and Where We Are Now

In our world today, the kings are gone, monarchy has passed, and patriarchy is discredited. Egalitarianism is the ideal in the West, and elsewhere democratic ideals inspire hope for change. Ought our notions of marriage and family also be different, and if so, in what way? In the Bible, marriage derives its legitimacy from God, but today in the West, government is seen by many to be the ultimate authority for defining the nature and purpose of marriage and of family.

Human society began with family. Family began with parenthood. Parenthood demanded a two-gender arrangement, and this arrangement has proved universally successful until now. But change has happened in the past and continues to happen. Lifelong, exclusive relationship was always the ideal, but divorce happened, as Moses and Jesus both recognized. The monogamous arrangement implied in Genesis 2 had disappeared by Genesis 4 when Lamech had two wives, and God didn't appear to object at that time. At times polygamy seemed a good idea. Here are our questions:

1. Was marriage instituted by God in Genesis as an eternal covenant, or is it a socially malleable human invention that can become whatever human society wishes it to be?
2. What essentially is gender? If gender is not essential to marriage, then why did Jesus bring up male and female in Matthew 19 when that really wasn't the question asked of him?

On Hermeneutical Process: Looking Through The Eyes Of Jesus

A Matter Of Perspective- A couple of years ago a highly educated and successful Muslim apologist invited me to an *Iftar* meal at his *Masjid* during Ramadan. After the prayers and the meal, I spent almost three hours in Bible study with him as my teacher. We went through the entire Gospel of John in three hours as he pointed out all the places in John that clearly demonstrate Jesus' humanity. At the end of the exercise he said to me, "See, Jesus is truly a human person; therefore, he cannot possibly be divine." In order to say what he did, he had to ignore both the Jewish context of the story and John's intended audience. For every evidence of Deity presented by John, he had another explanation. His Islamic lens prevented seeing what was there. What is there violates the boundaries of possibility in his understanding.

Something similar can happen in conversation with Buddhists. Many Buddhists, such as the Vietnamese French evangelist, Thich Nhat Hanh, quote this statement of Jesus: "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 9:24). This statement fits well with Buddhist teaching on renunciation of desire, provided one leaves out the words "for my sake." The Buddhist lens makes these three words superfluous, while for the gospel writer, they are the clue to its meaning. The cultural lens one wears largely determines what

one is able to see.

Current popular perspective sees marriage as a malleable social institution that ought to serve the enhancement of individual happiness and fulfillment. That is why everyone has a right to marriage. This assumption needs to be validated. Is the principal purpose of marriage individual happiness and fulfillment, or might there be other social considerations? Does the egalitarian lens help or hinder us to see what is there?

The biblical foundation proposed for same-sex marriage is fundamentally the principle of inclusivism for the sake of justice. All other discussion of relevant biblical ideas builds from this foundation—that Jesus said, “Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden” (Matthew 11:18). All other disenfranchised and excluded members of society found acceptance with Jesus, and people of same-sex orientation must be included. It took hundreds of years for slaves and females to be recognized in this full inclusion, and it is time to include “gay” people as well.

Another question needs to be raised, however. What is marriage and what did Jesus have to say about it? The purpose of an institution must be defined before anyone can be either qualified or disqualified for membership. The first task at hand is to clarify our understanding of what marriage is in light of what Jesus has said about it, taking note of the Old Testament sources he used.

Jesus And Accommodating Structure- “Accommodating social structure” is one tool to help understand where we’ve come from. It is a tool Jesus gave us, quite incidentally, in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 following the Pharisee’s question about marriage and divorce. Jesus’ reply opens a window into his hermeneutics. He said the law on divorce was an accommodation to hardened unbelief, but that the original human charter did not include this provision. Jesus referenced the creation story as foundational in a way that the law could not duplicate and at a level the law could not achieve. Genesis was where Jesus began when talking about marriage.

On Divorce- Divorce violates the very nature of what it means to be human as God designed. According to Jesus, unbelief, then, is the root cause of divorce, not bad communication, not mental illness, not any kind of so-called incompatibility, nor any other diagnosis. These are merely complicating factors. If we don’t believe God can get us safely through a difficult time in marriage, then we tend to give up and blame some other relevant, but not decisive factors. Jesus rested his case entirely upon the creation story, and that settled the question. We can call Genesis 1-2 the Original Human Charter, because it takes precedence over the accommodations of the law and applies universally over time.

Women in ancient Egypt had essentially the same equal rights economically as in Western society today, in contrast with other ancient cultures (de Masson). Most marriage contracts involved economic matters, as also did divorce laws. Moses’ regulation of divorce followed the Egyptian approach, accepting the current cultural norm. When we follow the story through to the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, we find the prophet raging against the abuse to which permission for divorce eventually led (2:10-16 & 4:6). From an economic arrangement at the time of Moses, the prophetic vision of marriage had become a matter of faithfulness to God, thus of spiritual concern. This example provides a window into the process of divine revelation as a divine/human conversation from Genesis

through Malachi. Accommodating structures need to be seen as a temporary measure. They will not be common in a community of mature, growing faith.

There is no doctrine of marriage in Genesis 2 which Jesus quoted. There is no explicit teaching about the permanence of marriage, but Jesus found it there. It seems to be implicit in the words of Genesis, “one flesh” and “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” Separation would be drastic surgery. According to Jesus, to separate what God joins is to create a disagreement with God. “What God has joined, let no one separate.” No marriage ever really ends. Pieces of it carry on until death.

On Gender- Jesus pointed out that God made male and female in the beginning. It was quite gratuitous to say this. The question asked did not involve who could get married, but Jesus felt it necessary to make the point. There is only one clue in Genesis 1:26-28 as to what *Imago Dei* implies, and that is “male and female.” Genesis 2 again reaches a climax with the same idea. “Male and female” could not be a random, unnecessary comment. In a compact literary work such as Genesis 1-2, there is no room for pointless comments about what is obvious. In both Mark and Matthew, Jesus conflated the two accounts into one. “He made them male and female” (Genesis 1:26-28) and “they became one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

We know God by examining God’s image, and the Genesis account directs our focus to gender. The question is why, or to what purpose. To ignore this would be to make the same mistake a Buddhist makes when he reads Matthew 6:25. We dare not for cultural reasons ignore a phrase from Jesus that we find inconvenient or incompatible with current social theory.

The same logic Jesus used for the indissolubility of marriage, “This is what God made,” would also make male and female definitive for the institution, because this is what God made. Marriage is first of all the union of genders, and secondarily the union of persons. It appears that at creation there are two genders, no more and no less, and they are designed for marriage. Still, many people report experiences that might suggest otherwise. How do we validate and respond to what is reality for so many?

Before going on, we should also note the disciples’ response to Jesus’ pronouncement in Matthew’s account. They proposed that it might be better just not to marry rather than run the risk of having an unhappy marriage. This changed the topic to that of celibacy, a concept that Jesus endorsed, but with the acknowledgment that only some people would be able to accept his teaching. Celibacy is something we will discuss later (p. 93). Might Jesus today also acknowledge that his teaching on the two-gender requirement is simply beyond what many people are able to handle in our culture? These questions will occupy a good deal more space as we continue.

The Social and Spiritual Purpose of Marriage: Why Did Jesus Reference Genesis?

Spiritual Foundations- “In the beginning” were Mom and Dad. In a child’s experience, first there was Mom, and then there was Dad. Mom and Dad confer identity as an unmerited gift to the child. But there is one more piece to be added. Before Mom and Dad, God was. The triad of God/man/woman is designed to provide the child a secure identity rooted in the secure, eternal commitment of love received from God and reciprocated by parents in their love for each other.

Seeing our parents as one, however, is not the usual experience, but every child wishes for the parents to be one. As a child, my own son would grab either my hand or my wife's hand and try to lead us together when he heard us arguing. When the woman was deceived and the man refused to submit to the authority of God, they found themselves at odds with each other, as the man blamed the woman and the woman blamed the snake. The consequence was that beginning with Genesis 3:16, the man ruled. This is the foundation of patriarchy.

After the fall in Genesis 3, economics determined the nature of marriage. Men dug and planted the soil or conducted business with each other, and women took care of children who would grow up to either work the soil, conduct business, or take care of more children. God never intended for marriage to be governed by mere economics, for "humanity does not live on bread alone" (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4). The human heart will not be satisfied when relationship is stuck at this level.

Human sex, as Paul described in Romans 1:18ff, became like that of the animals Adam and Eve were supposed to govern, with the result that human hierarchies came to match the dominance and submission patterns of the lower primates (Sax, ch. 2-3). Economics have to do with natural, biological, self-preservation. Paul calls this living "after the flesh" (Romans 8:5 KJV).

If God created us, then we cannot know who we are until we know who God is. According to Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is the exact representation or reflection of God's nature, God's image. In Jesus, then, we discover both who God is and who we are, and Jesus is better qualified to talk about marriage than anyone else. Marriage derives from a source far deeper than animal instinct and economic necessity.

Why Marry?- The teaching of the apostles builds upon the foundation Jesus laid. Paul wrote, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, *not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and* that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 NASB).

The shocking truth Paul describes in 1 Thessalonians is that sexual attraction (lustful passion) is not the fundamental reason one should marry. This myth lies at the root of patriarchy, where the woman exists to satisfy the man's desire. Egalitarianism today proposes to set this injustice right by making marriage a mere tool for mutual gratification. The biblical purpose for marriage, however, is to reflect the reality of God who instituted marriage. It is not to be an end in itself reflecting the mere image of lower primates and their natural inclinations.

1 Peter addresses the injustice in 3:7. "You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."

Hierarchy, Equality, And Identity - The only thing Genesis 1 tells us about humanity is that God's image on earth consists of two genders. Taking the text for what it says, male and female together are

the essential qualification for managing God's world. Genesis 2 reveals hierarchy. The man names the animals and removes their anonymity. Naming confers identity. That is his gift to them, but it is not a gift they can reciprocate. He is of a higher order than they are, and so he must be, in order to manage (govern) their affairs.

Then God puts the man to sleep. Upon awakening, he sees the woman and instantly recognizes himself in her. The man confers upon her a name and an identity. Here is one who can reciprocate. The name he gives is his own. *Ish* names her *Isha*. Male and female are not two identities, but rather two expressions of the same identity. In giving his own name, he recognizes his oneness with her in answer to his own incompleteness. He knew who and what the animals were, but until that moment he still could not know himself by just thinking about it. He needed a worthy opposite to play the game of life and discover himself in another.

In the male/female relationship, the hierarchy of man first, woman second disappeared like bones inside of flesh, and the two became one. Equality is for competitors. Oneness is for lovers. Love obliterates hierarchy, such that equality is not even thought of. In the original human charter for man and woman in Genesis, the oneness of a shared identity in Genesis 2 reveals the meaning and highlights the significance of male and female in Genesis 1. The experience described is that of two different entities that are in essence originally one (v. 21-22), and therefore capable of becoming one, but in a way they were not before. The experience is that of finding oneself in another (v. 24-25).

By taking the name he gave her, she found her identity in him. By giving her his name, he found his identity in her. In their shared DNA resided every potential necessary for humanity to manage God's world. Male and female in union with God, according to the original human charter, embody the reflection of a relational, social God, something neither could do alone.

There must be an equality to play the game of life, but paradoxically, equality cannot be the governing principle. In this divinely given human charter at creation, hierarchy is an ocean of love between man and woman, and equality is something that neither demands. Looking back from the higher elevation of the New Testament, we can say, in love they will *serve* one another (Ephesians 4:21).

As noted above, in Romans 1:24-25 Paul describes the degeneration of those who became like the animals they were intended to govern, because they could not govern themselves. When Darwin described competition and survival of the fittest, he saw what is truly there. But we are not merely sexual beings as Darwin's materialism describes. Rather we are beings whose properly managed gendered relationships are designed to reflect the reality of God as a unified social being in more than one person. Furthermore, the ancients saw marriage as the joining of two families, two clans, or even two nations (Ephesians 2:14-16), creating a metaphor that later described the relationship of Christ and his church.

Every person is equally human, but differently human at the same time. The unity of God in multiple persons is dimly seen in the background at creation and appears now and then throughout the Old Testament, but this truth could not be clearly articulated as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit until God appeared in human flesh. The New Testament clarifies what was dimly there already in the Old and

enables us to also understand the importance of gender in marriage.

We begin to see from the perspective of the New Testament what the patriarchal world of the Old could not see in the creation story. The unity of the one God is to be revealed in the unity of all humankind (John 17:20-21), and the image of that unity in Genesis is the one flesh of the man and the woman before sin corrupted the institution.

The unity of all humankind is what Jesus came to restore so as to reflect the reality of what God is. Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 is "That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." This is the gigantic eternal plan that marriage is designed to reflect in miniature.

What Jesus describes in John 17 is what theologians call *Perichoresis*, a kind of "mutual indwelling" or "reciprocal penetration," by which each finds one's own identity by means of relationship, and this is how Genesis 2 describes the relationship of man and woman in verse 24 (Leithart, p vii). In Matthew 19 and Mark 10 Jesus referenced Genesis 2 because of what it implies about the nature of God as a social reality at the foundation of Being, that is, of all that exists. Please note how the 20th century French Jesuit Sinologist Yves Raguin described the social being of God,

The Father is the Father in the depths of the Son.
And the Son is the Son in the depths of the Father.
Without the Father there would be no Son, and
Without the Son there would be no Father.
And the Holy Spirit is the love that binds them,
For God is love (Yves Raguin, p.126).

In like manner at the human level

The father is only father in relationship to the son/daughter,
But there could be neither father nor son nor daughter without the mother.
And the mother could not be mother without both father and child.
And a child is who it is because its parents are who they are,
Because without relationship we have no identity.
This reflects the reality of God as the original social Being.

In the world outside the home, one must earn one's place, but in the home identity is a gift at birth. This human reality reflects the reality of the believer's status before God at the moment of the new birth.

There is a parallel between sexual intercourse and the Eucharist, as a kind of covenant renewal. Paul's warnings in 1 Corinthians about taking communion in an unworthy manner suggest a parallel with sexual acts committed in an unworthy manner, not recognizing the covenant implied. This reveals how deeply spiritual both gender and sexuality are. Still, we know that variation from the original pattern was part of the Old Testament story. The Old Testament does not condemn patriarchy or polygamy

outright, and with this in the background, it is difficult to make a blanket condemnation of all same-sex relationships. We still have stones to overturn in search for an answer.

At this point we have seen how delicately, comprehensively, and masterfully the holy covenant of marriage is designed to reflect the inherent sociability and oneness of the Eternal God. Even in its fallen state, marriage, as a patriarchal institution, has kept alive a metaphor that makes sense of the Father sending the Son to restore humanity.

The Place Of Children In The Scheme

The original blueprint for marriage begins with male and female in order to provide a secure identity for every person born, rooted in an irreversible commitment of love called marriage, but children are not the purpose of marriage.

Genesis 2 is where Jesus rooted his teaching on marriage; however, when discussing marriage, Jesus said nothing about children. While Jesus conflated Genesis 1:26 with 2:24 to emphasize the importance of both male and female in marriage, he avoided Genesis 1:27, "Be fruitful and multiply." This suggests that Jesus, contrary to all ancient patriarchal instincts, did not see having an heir as a necessary condition for a marriage to be valid. The parallel between Holy Communion and sexual intercourse is that each is the reenactment and reaffirmation of a covenant already in place.

Just as God in Trinity is complete apart from creation, so the union of a couple is complete in itself without children. But without creation God is not Creator, and without procreation the couples are not parents. Children are not essential to validate marriage, but they do appear in God's self-portrait as belonging to God's image as follows:

Marriage has been designed so that each succeeding generation can potentially observe and begin to appropriate, even before a child has the power of words, the love that God is through its earliest human contacts, namely, the daily life of love between Mom and Dad for each other. The relationship between parents is designed as a signpost pointing to God, supplemented by relationship with siblings and friends under the umbrella of the two families that gave birth to the father and the mother. The faithfulness of the grandparents can reinforce the unspoken message received by example from the parents, or it can help make up for the deficiency when parents fall short in their example. That children can consciously respond to God's Spirit at an extremely young age has been documented again and again, and we also need to take note that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit already at birth (Luke 1:15). I personally know children who when just learning to speak, already have demonstrated on their own initiative an awareness of God. From the moment of birth, the quality of the parents' mutual relationship can begin to awaken the child to the reality of God.

Jesus' teaching on servanthood is also made visible in the dynamics of parent/child interaction. Jesus taught that the first shall be last and the greatest must be servant of all (Matthew 23:11; Luke 22:26). This teaching is written into human biology such that the parent must serve the infant, but the infant can one day be superior to the parent, and this is what the parent desires. The way we supersede our parents may reflect the mystery John referenced in his first epistle, "We do not know what we will

be, but we will be like him" (1 John 3:2). Parenthood is intended to reveal God as a God of love in perfect unity as a social being, and parents will succeed in that task to the degree that they become one in love by God's continuing grace.

Gerhard Muller (Lopes and Alvare, p. 15) writes: "The perception of male and female is the essential grammar to educate the child as a person open to the mystery of God." "Sexual difference...guarantees the dignity of the person who is born, who will never be...the product of the isolated wish of an individual, but the fruit, always overflowing, of a spousal love that opens itself to the mystery" (of God who created marriage). If God is not just male, but female as well, then children need parents of both genders to best understand this reality, and to be raised by one's own biological parents is normally the most ideal arrangement for the best outcome in children.

We have seen the glory of God's original design for marriage and for family. The biblical story, however, does not provide any real examples that measure up to their potential. Still one must stand in awe of how well marriage and family, despite the perversions of God's design, have served quite universally in every human culture. Nowhere in scripture do we see polygamy condemned, and Jesus appears to accept divorce even while condemning it. One would think that if God accepts the divorced and the polygamists, then God would also accept other variations from the original model such as same-sex partners.

Acceptance, however, does not mean equal endorsement. Divorce is not good. Children need their own parents. We cannot say indiscriminately that all possible models of family are equal in effectiveness (*Encyclopedia of Children's Health*). However, sometimes models other than what God first designed have been and continue to be necessary and often are successful in our fallen world.

PART II : SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS: LEARNING TO LISTEN

During the '70s *His Magazine* (published at that time by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) published an article by Mary Stewart called "One Woman's Sexual Revolution." Sleeping around was a part of Stewart's normal weekend. For a period of time after her conversion to Jesus Christ, she found nothing incongruent about witnessing for Jesus to a bed partner, but she soon discovered a growing inner sense of discomfort with what she was doing. One day she realized this discomfort came from Jesus, and she stopped the practice completely, opting for celibacy. Sometimes we need to let God speak to the new believer about questionable practices rather than pounce with the law.

We need to hear from real people, learn how different each person's experience is, and not accept all-encompassing, simple explanations that invalidate their experience or produce easy advice that doesn't actually help. The following vignettes are from the experience of Christian gays.

Eve Tushnet: On Finding God- Eve describes for us the benefits of gay relationships she enjoyed earlier in life, and how she learned to listen, to forgive, and be forgiven, finding beauty and guidance in those relationships. Still after finding Christ in the church, she left all of that for something even better. (Tushnet, ch. 2 par. 22-26).

Tushnet describes the process of coming to Christ like this: “I tried to get my friends to explain the Church’s teaching on homosexuality. They had never raised the issue with me before... They answered the questions I was already asking, ... such as guilt, forgiveness, art, and creation, rather than the questions (they) might have assumed I was interested in.” The gay question was answered at the time when she brought up the topic: “They waited for me to raise the Gay Question.” (Tushnet, ch. 3 par. 32-33).

Part of the reason we have a Church in the first place (only a part, but an important part) is so that we’re not left to make up our own minds on every single issue...The Church exists because even the saints need guidance and, often, correction. So instead of asking myself whether I understood the reasoning behind the Church’s teaching— the reasoning of God— I asked myself whether I was more sure that gay sex was morally neutral or more sure that the Catholic Church had the authority to teach sexual morality. And much to my surprise and dismay, I found that I was more sure of the second. I found that I was willing to accept the Church’s teaching even when I didn’t understand it. I began to prepare for Baptism (Tushnet, ch. 3 par. 39-40).

Rosaria Butterfield: Sex And Identity - “Why is sexual sin so hard to deal with? Because often sexual sin becomes a sin of identity” (Butterfield, Preface, par. 11).

The nineteenth-century category of sexual orientation reflects Romanticism’s claim on epistemology, redefining men and women from people in God’s image with souls that will last forever to people whose sexual drives and gender identifications define them and liberate them and set them apart (Butterfield, ch. 4 par. 10).

The concept of sexual orientation was first used by Freud, and its effect, if not intent, was to radically resituate sexuality from its biblical/creational context to something completely new: the foundational drive that determines and defines human identity. Nothing short of personhood was at stake. By defining humanity according to sexual desires and segregating it according to its gendered object, Freud was—intentionally or not—suppressing the biblical category of being made in God’s image, male and female, and replacing it with the psychoanalytic category of sexual identity”(Butterfield, ch. 4 par. 6).

I do not read sanctification in the light of a dramatic change of feelings, but rather, in the heart change that lives sacrificially for Christ in obedience to his will, in spite of feelings that run counter to God’s command (Butterfield, ch. 6, par. 14).

James writes that in temptation “each one is carried away and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14). Butterfield adds that these desires do not come from the devil. These desires are inherent within our own nature, and therefore susceptible to deception in not only the unregenerate, but also the spiritually immature. According to Romans, “sexual sin is a fruit of something larger than its own desire” (Butterfield, ch. 1. par. 49). “It is the moral anesthetic of our day to ask God and our friends to only understand our sin from our point of view” (Butterfield, ch. 3, par 50-51).

We have seen the witness of two lesbian women, both deeply committed to Jesus Christ, one

making that commitment through the agency and authority of the church, and the other through the agency and authority of scripture, but both reflecting the same reality of liberty from sin and the power of the Spirit in their lives. Debra Hirsch will be the third witness to this kind of experience.

Debra Hirsch: On Community and Evangelism- Earlier we referenced Mary Stewart's experience of first meeting Christ, and then gradually discovering a growing sense of discomfort over the sexual practices that had once been only natural and justifiable for her apart from Christ. Debra describes something similar, and her ministry reflects this understanding. She came to Christ after a drug dealer friend of hers came back from prison where he had read the scripture for the first time and met Jesus. The process of disciplining, however, began before her conversion. "God had been on my case for a long time, yet I didn't realize it," she writes. "Even in my own misguided way was I pursuing him." (Hirsch, p. 173).

She goes on to say that we need to pray with the assumption that God is on someone's case. Often, however, we pray for our agenda rather than God's agenda. Debra describes a conversation with one woman who prayed for a gay man at her work place. She prayed that this man's relationship with another man would break up. She confessed to thinking that God would not accept this man until he changed. Hirsch wrote,

It is this cracked and damaging theology that lies beneath some of the ministries set up to make gay people straight. We should by now be clear...that heterosexuality doesn't give a person a direct ticket to heaven, a relationship with Jesus Christ does (Hirsch, p. 175).

When we see people primarily as sinners rather than as the Image of God, we fail to connect. What we end up with is nothing more than "sin management and behavior modification" (Hirsch, p. 168-72).

Sometimes conversion to Christ is like the experience of falling asleep on the train in one country and waking up in another country without the awareness of when the boundary was crossed. Debra's ministry involved inviting people to get on the train so that discipleship begins before and not after conversion. She points out that we don't know the exact moment of new birth for any of Jesus' disciples. They decided to get on the train because they wanted to learn from Jesus. In such cases, "acceptance precedes repentance" (Hirsch, p. 201).

Those who are already established in a disciplining relationship at the time of conversion have a strong foundation for building their new- found faith, as her ministry so clearly illustrates.

Accepting strangers can be scary. People like to give to the poor or homeless from a safe distance, but community can only be built when people start getting close (Hirsch, p. 154), and the church often runs in fear from LGBT people. "Much of the GLBT anger at Christianity is rooted in the pain of misunderstanding and outright, unsympathetic rejection they have experienced by the church" (Hirsch, p. 176-7). Debra's testimony and ministry provide a window to see how God is at work when we take the risks of getting close to people.

More on Community- Butterfield writes that community "takes time, friendship, and proximity..."

not blogs or 'internet communities'. This is a feet-on-the-floor and place-at-the-table problem" (Butterfield, ch. 6, par. 33). Sarcasm and anger expressed on the internet can only do harm, not good. "Ideas that divide must travel with warm pots of chicken soup when a friend is sick, and shoulder-to-shoulder gardening" (Butterfield, ch. 6, last par.). People are more important than positions they take (Butterfield, ch. 6, last two par.). People are more complicated than ideas that they embrace (Butterfield, ch. 7, par. 65). However, making people feel safe and welcome is not the final goal of Christian hospitality (Butterfield, ch. 7, par. 28). Butterfield wrote,

Community in my LGBT community derived from shared identities and shared oppressions, that is, from the ways in which we were alike. By contrast, Christian community derives not primarily from our similarities, but from our shared futures in Christ's righteousness, that is a shared vocation (Butterfield, ch. 7, par. 7).

Tushnet added,

At a retreat on LGBT Christian issues, one of the other participants said something that stuck with me: 'Sexual wholeness is more a property of communities or churches than it is of individuals.' When it isn't a property of our local Christian communities, why not, and how can we change that?" (Tushnet, ch. 10, last par.).

I concur with these observations. Holy sexuality is a community value. Individualistic egalitarianism makes it purely a personal matter. This is dangerous and destructive. It leads to social disintegration. God is bringing the gay experience to our attention, however, as something in need of holy integration into all our self-understanding as a redeemed community. In the bibliography the reader can find the stories of Tim Otto, Debra Hirsch, Rosaria Butterfield, Eve Tushnet, and Mario Bergner, every one of which is singularly unique and worthwhile for our learning and our edification.

In his book, *Oriented to Faith*, Tim Otto reports a time when he realized he had a choice to make between spending his life seeking (sexual) pleasure or following Jesus. He chose Jesus, and not long afterward became involved in a community living arrangement with Church of the Sojourners in San Francisco (p. 20-21). In community he found his needs for relationship and identity were met.

A gay friend of mine named Tom had been removed from his position in the United States Army because he was homosexual, and that rejection added a wound in his being. On one occasion Tom told me that his desire was to be loved by a man, that is, for his manhood to be validated by other men, as I understood him. Putting his story together, I realized how painful his expulsion from military service had been. The overwhelmingly male, military institution had determined that Tom wasn't qualified as a man for their company. We spent many nights together in a tent camping and in hotels traveling. Based upon our conversations together, I concluded it wasn't sex as much as acceptance he sought. Again the real need was for a place in community that did not negate his own sense of self.

Perhaps it is the unresolved shame over sexual matters in our own lives as leaders that hinders ministry to people like them. Butterfield writes, "It is not possible to deal with the details of our humiliating lives when the logs in the eyes of others keep clobbering around like drunken drivers"

(Butterfield ch 6 par 11). Nothing speaks more loudly than appropriate confession of our faults (sins) and the testimony of God's power both to save and to keep us from the power of sin.

FROM PATRIARCHY TO EGALITARIANISM: WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AND WHERE WE ARE GOING

When the patriarchal Hebrews read their own story of creation in Genesis, they saw hierarchy, but they could not see the oneness that was there. It is only from the perspective of the New Testament that we begin to see what Divine hierarchy looks like and how the oneness of God is reflected in male and female in Genesis 2:24.

With the breakdown of the old hierarchy today, egalitarianism has emerged. Were it not for the gospel, egalitarianism could not have arisen, but we must not confuse egalitarianism with the gospel. Egalitarianism guarantees class and gender strife, because someone must enforce the rules. There will always be winners and losers, and the winners will determine what is fair. Without the transforming work of the gospel, justice will always be just out of reach.

Consumer society has made sex, marriage, and/or children into consumer goods to which all deserve equal access, and "the right to consume has become the criteria of reference for all other rights" (Lopes and Alvare, Farouq, p. 43). Lopes, Alvare and Moore wrote that in reality,

the (egalitarian) sexual revolution is not liberation at all, but simply the imposition of a different sort of patriarchy. The sexual revolution empowers men to pursue a Darwinian fantasy of the predatory alpha-male, rooted in the values of power, prestige, and personal pleasure. Does anyone really believe these things will empower women or children? We see the wreckage of sexuality as self-expression all around us, and we will see more yet. And the stakes are not merely social or cultural but profoundly spiritual (Lopes and Alvare, Moore, p. 51).

We can thank the effects of the gospel for the end of patriarchy. The egalitarian lens, however, equally fails to see what is there in the New Testament. Just like the Muslim apologist who insisted there is no evidence in the New Testament for the Deity of Christ, so the egalitarian reading of Matthew 19, Mark 10, Romans 1, and the other condemnations of same-sex relationship in the New Testament reads into the text assumptions that are not really there.

HOWEVER

I propose that in secular, egalitarian, consumer society, same-sex marriage is a social necessity, just as divorce is a social necessity in a world of unbelief. Same-sex marriage offers benefits and meets many personal needs. There are good things in same sex relationship, as Eve Tushnet has told us. All goodness is from God, and we need to remember that wherever goodness appears, there is an opportunity to reach up and seek after God. How will the church offer acceptance to all, and at the same time hold to the biblical understanding?

SCIENCE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

Those who argue that same-sex marriage is a new biblical insight, perhaps even a new revelation,

usually begin with their insights from science. Scientific observation is not wrong or irrelevant, but has its limits. There is no Holy Spirit empowerment that conquers the desires and deeds of the flesh in a scientific explanation. From the perspective of science, the “deeds of the flesh,” as Paul described, are normal human behavior apart from transforming grace.

For some time, any reference to God as creator has been anathema to most in the scientific community. Religion is permitted as a therapeutic tool in diagnosis and therapy, but this god is a mere social construct and not the reality of the Eternal One. We must recognize that sometimes scientific observation has required a re-evaluation of biblical interpretation. All truth is God’s truth. As we look at science, however, we will remember that science observes the natural world and makes its conclusions on the basis of natural law alone. Science also needs constraint and guidance from scripture.

The strange thing about the scientific community is that with regard to same-sex attraction, certain questions have become politically unacceptable. Freud considered same-sex attraction to be a malady needing cure. After Freud, the conclusion of the scientific community has been that if you can’t cure it, there must be nothing wrong. Any research attempting to find a cause has come under a degree of suspicion. We know why some people have blue eyes and others brown, some are tall and some are short. We have no idea why some people are attracted to the same gender, and yet there has developed a palpable paranoia about research into the why. This suggests an underlying fear that something might eventually be found wrong, and that cannot be permitted.

Science has been quite thorough with classifying the varieties of attraction. We now have G L B T and Q, and the list of varieties is growing. People who are attracted to small children or to animals really do need to be included in the list of varieties, not because these activities are right or wrong, but because they exist. One is not being scientific if they are excluded. The fact that science does not know causation is reason for continuing research. We need to insist that science be practiced scientifically without political manipulation or fear of what might be discovered.

Based upon natural science, there must be something wrong about same-sex attraction, unless one is willing to reject Darwin’s most fundamental assumption that the purpose and meaning of life is to survive and reproduce. According to this way of thinking, failure to reproduce is the ultimate disaster in a world of competition and survival of the fittest. One doesn’t need the God hypothesis to observe this.

SIN, SINNER, AND SINNED AGAINST: ROMANS 1 18-32 AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY

We will look now at what may be the most controversial passage in scripture regarding same-sex relationships. What appears to be the clearest and best elaborated condemnation of homosexual activity in the Bible comes from Romans 1:18-32. I intend to show, however, that rather than a diatribe against gay people, Romans 1 was written to address a different issue altogether.

Romans was written to address Jew-Gentile relationships. It involves the sinfulness of two communities, Jew and Gentile. The writer does not intend to describe the personal regress of moral degeneration for an individual. Rather it describes a process of community degeneration, whereby the fickle tyranny of natural attractions have overcome people who lost their anchor in God.

According to the text, humanity universally ignored and suppressed the knowledge of God, choosing instead to follow its own futile speculations. The social effect was devastating, and behavior fell to the level of the beasts (Romans 1:22-23) that humans were originally intended to manage and govern (Genesis 1:26-28). In this state of disorientation, the king (the alpha male) took the females he liked, and with his enhanced power made slaves of all others in the community, resembling the order of dogs, cattle, and other primates so that tooth and claw governed everything. (I suggest reading the opening verses of Genesis 6 with this New Testament picture in mind. By the time one gets to verse 11 of Genesis 6, the earth was filled with violence.)

“Therefore God gave them up.” Gender became equated primarily with sex. The richness of everything else that God included in the fabric of gender interaction was lost as the focus became concentrated on sex. This has led to the dysfunction described in Romans 1:28-32. We see this playing out in our own individualistic, narcissist, genital-gazing nation, where sexual attraction has been made into an identity. With nothing but natural selection and survival of the fittest to tell us who we are, each new generation becomes the victim of the previous one in a downward spiral that only God can redeem based upon repentance.

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SINNED AGAINST: ROMANS 1:26-27

The Scapegoat Phenomenon- In 1969 I was returning to Chicago from my parents’ home in South Dakota when I picked up a hitchhiker along the road in Wisconsin. The man, about my age, confessed that he was deeply troubled about being gay. I listened to his woes without proposing any solutions except to offer Jesus, since Jesus was really all I had to offer. Later I told my father about the encounter, and my dad warned me about getting involved with such a person.

My father’s reaction was typical of his generation. Debra Hirsch (*Redeeming Sex*, ch. 9) describes just how squeamish many people are about even touching someone who is gay. It seems that every society has its untouchables, from the ceremonially unclean Jews of Jesus’ time to the outcasts of India, to gays in traditional North America. Jesus shocked his contemporaries when he touched the untouchables. The church cannot run away from people on the basis of same-sex attraction and at the same time follow Jesus. We will now try to lay a biblical framework for doing that, supported by a few observations from the social sciences.

Years ago as a young parent, I discovered that certain behaviors of my own children provoked a surge of rage in me that was shocking. I discovered that when my children’s behaviors provoked such rage, the behaviors were in reality an innocent imitation of Dad’s behavior. They became God’s way for revealing to me the reality of what I had not seen in myself. The scapegoat is one who reveals in some way the wrongs within one’s self that one cannot and will not acknowledge. A more public example of this would be apartheid and mob lynching. The very sight of the black man in the post-slavery era reminded the guilty community of its own collective shame and humiliation; therefore, the black man had to be vilified and kept out of the sight of “normal” society. Might not the presence of gay people among us also trigger a reminder of our own lack of sexual wholeness? Perhaps the strong, instinctive negative reaction reveals an infection in our own souls that we have failed to recognize, much less

confront.

Effects of Scapegoating- In Romans 1:18-25, Paul discusses the social consequences that followed the disintegration of the gender relationship as he had described. He seems to imply that it is in sexual relationships where social disintegration first appears (v. 24), and then describes same-sex erotic relationship as a further consequence (v. 26-27). If our description of marriage in Part I is even only partially true, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the bedroom is exponentially more significant than the boardroom as the foundational cause for social dysfunction and violence in the world. In verses 28-32 we have a long list of destructive attitudes and behaviors that characterize the affected community and its leadership.

In the absence of God, human affairs become skewed and dysfunctional. The original pair in the garden were not just a dyad, but part of a triad involving God. When the triad was damaged by the exclusion of God, the dyad also was damaged and unity became impossible, hence the necessity for patriarchy. Instead of being primarily oriented towards God, male and female became oriented towards each other as their source of meaning and fulfillment, which placed a burden upon both that neither could fulfill. When the hierarchy of God above all was rejected, a new hierarchy immediately sprung into place, man above woman. This fundamentally distorted the identity of both. We will call this gender disorientation. The disoriented gay person can then become the ideal scapegoat for the sexual disorientation of the entire community.

The Identified Patient- According to current family-systems theory, when a family is in severe dysfunction, often one member of the family becomes the barometer of that family's level of dysfunction. This person is called the Identified Patient (IP). This person acts out in socially inappropriate ways the relational disorder of the family. As applied to the whole of society, this would be one way to explain why some people go to jail and most do not. Every outcast is in some respect an identified patient of the community.

The identified patient then, is one who carries within his or her own person the dysfunction of the family, or in this case, the overall gender disorientation of the community. In a society of universal gender disorientation, let's say for example, of machismo bravado as the ideal for men, and beauty queen for women, then all of society has accepted a distortion of gender identity contrary to God's intention, and some people who don't fit the ideal become the IP. People who don't fit the ideal will find difficulty embracing their own gender identity in the distorted form presented to them while growing up. Maleness, for example, is measured by testosterone levels, a simplistic and definitely unbiblical way of thinking. Many men who don't match the expected gender stereotypes would still fit God's ideal of maleness, as my conversations with Tom revealed. The same would be true for women who do not fit the artificially contrived societal notions of femininity.

Perhaps people who have made sexual orientation their identity did not really make this choice on their own. I suggest that "homosexual" was an identity assigned them by a paranoid community, skittish about this reality and insecure about its own identity. For the homosexually inclined persons to accept the identity assigned by the community is a common IP, scapegoat response.

Debra Hirsch describes the dehumanization and self-rejection experienced by many gay people (Hirsch p. 162) who bear the sins of the community within their psyches and bodies. This, in fact, is the definition of scapegoat. So, in the universal gender disorientation of our society, we see the identified patient and the scapegoat theory not as completely separate concepts. One can result in the other. Our generation has decided that the way out of this dilemma is for everyone to choose one's identity based upon sexual preference.

Today we not only have L, G, B, T, and Q, we have much more. One website (<http://www.apath.org/rede/23.html>) identifies sixty-three different combinations of male and female. This really amounts to sixty-three identities plus preference. When presented with such absurdities, it is no wonder that young people are confused about identity, as identity is not longer a gift, but rather the obligation to make a difficult choice. The choice is complicated by a plethora of conflicting messages and a multitude of social pressures, including instances of abuse. In theory preference is king, but in reality, confusion reigns.

This dead-end system functions under an illusion that makes personal rights and individual choice to be the ultimate good, the only restraint being the rights of others, but whether someone else is harmed is a matter of opinion. A pedophile will insist that no one is being harmed, and will claim that to have been molested as a child was a benefit the pedophile wishes to pass on to someone else. Who is to say whether this is insanity or not? Perhaps the pedophile is right and those who criticize are just being judgmental. After all, the pedophile's perspective is his or her own reality. I do apologize to all my readers for including this horrible example, but I think it does graphically illustrate how far from reality we have come. The pedophile's obvious self-deception serves as a mirror to humanity of how we all have been guilty of self-deception and blame, and are capable of scapegoating.

Whatever we might say about it, there are two genders and no more. A male attracted to men and who likes women's clothing is not a new gender. He is a male attracted to men who also likes women's clothing. A woman who likes male activities is a woman who likes male activities, and nothing more. The transgender person is probably someone who cannot fit the unhealthy gender stereotypes presented by society, and might just be the ultimate scapegoat victim of a gender- confused world. If we can understand Paul's critique in Romans 1:18-32 to be social commentary rather than judgment upon individuals, the IP and scapegoat conclusion is reasonable.

LEARNING TO RESPOND: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND A PROPOSAL

In the light of what we know about scapegoating, and in the light of what we observe about gender and marriage in scripture, what does the church offer? There is only one thing we offer. We offer acceptance with forgiveness for sinners through the cross. That is all we have—Jesus Christ and him crucified. Those who are not sinners need not apply. Those who are unaware of sin or want to justify sin will not apply. Even the scapegoats must come as fellow-sinners in need of grace. Jesus both saves us from the power of sin and heals the wounds of sin.

A holy addiction: on celibacy and sexual bonding- Paul repeatedly warned against *porneia*, as did the church officially in Acts 15, referring to any kind of sexual impropriety. Progressives often claim that

the biblical demand of celibacy until marriage and then sex exclusive to marriage is unfair to homosexuals, based on the fact that not all have the gift of celibacy. In our time when early marriage of *all* young adults is discouraged, this is a spurious argument for same-sex marriage.

Everyone is born with the gift of celibacy. Puberty does not remove the gift. The “gifts” of celibacy and virginity are related. The gift of virginity is resident in every person until they give it away. (For more on sexual bonding, see Joy on *Bonding: Relationships in the Image of God* in the bibliography.) Those who have inappropriately given their gift to someone else and then say they do not have this gift are speaking the truth. They do not have it because they gave it away to someone, or unfortunately, it may have been wrested away through fraud and/or coercion. A spiritual and emotional bond is formed between two people in the sex act. An emotional and spiritual wound is created with every broken bond, and the scars formed will complicate one’s capacity for bonding in the future. It is possible to recover from the wounds of a broken sexual bond by God’s grace and remain celibate from then on, but for most people, the drive to connect demands another partner, and often another, and then another.

Paul wrote that one who commits fornication sins against one’s own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). Neuroscience today reveals a great deal about how someone can sin against one’s own body. The effects of sex on the human brain during orgasm can be similar to the effects of heroin. God has designed our bodies for addiction to sex, and before sex is emotionally and spiritually safe, there must be a safe time, a safe place, and a safe, worthy partner to share this emotional attachment that is irrevocable.

Here contemporary neuroscience reinforces the reality explored decades ago by Donald Joy referenced above. We do well to pay attention, as Paul again writes, “Do not fall asleep!” Do not be taken in by the world’s enticement and destroy the gift of celibacy until there is an emotionally safe place for it as sanctioned by scripture. When sex is reserved for the wedding night, then the already developed practice of chastity will help protect the marriage from outside intrusion. Based upon the biblical teaching, it is not unreasonable to teach that if in fact as many claim, same-sex attraction is God-given, then we can assume the gift of celibacy God-given at birth will be sufficient for life, although, (as with Jesus’ comment on divorce) not all will be able to receive this.

Consequences and Warning- Romans 1:24 tells us that “God gave them up (to their own desires).” The same truth is expressed in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 where Paul writes, “For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false.” Also in Exodus we read six times that Pharaoh hardened his heart, after which God hardened Pharaoh’s heart (9:25). The idea that God causes sinners to sin seems to be implied, but this needs a bit of nuance. What we observe is that persistent refusal to recognize the truth of God leads to a psychological and spiritual point of no return such that repentance becomes impossible.

In the case of Pharaoh the decision seems applicable to Pharaoh personally, but in 1 Timothy and here in Romans 1 where “God gave them up,” the plural noun indicates the decision of a community or a group. Let us beware. God’s judgment upon a community, such as with Sodom or in the conquest of Canaan, may be an act of mercy to protect future generations from their evil influence. God’s others

from the evil influence of such group. God's judgments are always just.

God was at work in the world throughout the patriarchal period, and God is at work in the egalitarian world as well. New accommodating structures may arise, but those believers who knowingly and deliberately choose the path of an accommodating structure, whether that be divorce, polygamy, or same-sex marriage—run a risk of trampling on the blood of Christ and denying its power.

There are baptized people in the church who have entered into a sexually bonded, same-gender relationship apart from what Genesis and Jesus define as marriage, and who then have come to the church demanding a change of theological teaching in order to accommodate them, based on the fact that Jesus loves everyone. For them the greatest sin is to be judgmental about someone else's sin. Might not we call this blackmail? It does appear manipulative and duplicitous.

The proposal: listen to the world-wide church and learn- In some parts of the world, polygamy is still practiced. Early missionaries condemned polygamy in Africa and inadvertently sent women into prostitution when their newly baptized husbands were commanded to give up the "surplus" wives as a condition for baptism. Today this has changed. A Maasai friend of mine from Kenya told me that as soon as the church in his country began to accept polygamous men for baptism, the church in Maasai land grew rapidly. Pushback against the polygamous system is maintained by refusing leadership positions for polygamous men.

If we can recognize same-sex marriage to be an accommodating structure within egalitarian society while at the same time restricting people so involved from leadership positions in church, then we will show that we are capable of learning from non-white non-Americans (for a change) and be consistent with the pattern Jesus showed us. We love and accept all as Jesus did, but that doesn't mean all who are loved and accepted are thereby qualified to lead, regardless of what natural gifts they may have. I propose we learn from our African brothers and sisters to become as Spirit-led and creative in our context as they have been in theirs.

ROMANS 1:28-32 FOR OUR TIME: A PARAPHRASE WITH WARNING

Because they did not wish to include God in their thoughts, they expunged God from education and all public discourse, except for those occasions when religious sentiment could be utilized to bolster the prevailing ideology. In their vain imagination, they put their trust in commerce and industry and democracy, making personal rights and desires their highest value. When God gave them up, sex became a controlling obsession and a means of exploitative, commercial manipulation, while public trust plummeted, marriage failed, and fear of violence grew exponentially.

MY CONFESSION

Beginning elementary school, I was highly motivated to learn to read for one specific purpose. I wanted to be able to read the book that I saw my father reading every morning before he went to work. By age 7 I had my own Bible, reading as best I could, stumbling over big words, and running to Mom for explanations. One day I read in Timothy, "Flee youthful lusts." "Whatever are youthful lusts?" I asked.

“Well, let’s say you see a woman walking on the street and you start thinking about her vagina and her private parts, then that would be a youthful lust,” she replied. “Oh,” I said to myself. “I do that all the time. I’ll just not do that anymore.” And I didn’t. There was, however, no way Mom could detail all the ways one might be involved with “youthful lusts” while growing up, and society gave me plenty other opportunities to engage my voyeuristic propensity for youthful lust.

Still I was a good kid. I was better than others, and I didn’t do what other guys did with girls in a car somewhere, or so I thought. But there was one relative who suffered my inappropriate advances in a way that I imagined to be acceptable. After all, to show affection for relatives was fine according to the rules, as I understood and interpreted my mother’s teaching. Then one day, as a young adult, the Lord woke me up to that fact that I was as much a hypocrite as any Pharisee could be. Suddenly I saw the gates of hell open, and the Lord showed me the darkness, such that I feared for my life, afraid to go to sleep at night. I called out to the Lord, and the text of Psalm 4:8 immediately came to mind. “In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety.” My fears quieted so that I could sleep. As soon as possible, I went to admit and declare my fault and ask for forgiveness. It took decades to rebuild our trust, but it has grown and continues to do so.

The real test came after being married for many years. When a certain student I tutored for a number of years turned 18, the tempter whispered, “She’s available. Play this right and she will be yours. God will forgive you.” I found the suggestion highly enticing, and struggled for months to resist. There was, of course, another voice, a voice that I had heard many times before, but this time with unusual clarity. “The choice is yours. Do you want to spend the rest of your life serving me, or do you want to spend the rest of your life in recovery?” “I want the joy of serving you, Lord,” I responded, not once, but again and again. There were many desperate, quiet prayers offered before each tutoring session to which I was obligated, and fantasies persisted afterward, but God was faithful to keep me from falling. I also told my wife and asked her to hold me accountable.

After this experience, the low-hanging fruit in the Garden of Eden took on a depth of meaning I had not known before. Unfortunately for Adam and Eve, at the beginning of Genesis 3, they only knew God as Creator and their rightful obligations to him; they didn’t yet have the Savior I had come to know.

I loved my wife and my family, but I confess that natural, human motivation fails under the persistent harassment of fleshly temptation. Only the bonds (yes, bondage) of love with the Incarnate Lover will suffice. Regardless of sexual attractions, those who keep their eyes on Jesus can resist temptation.

About the time of my college graduation I learned just how sharply the divorce rate among believers was rising. “O God,” I cried out. “I am no stronger or better than any of my contemporaries. What is there to keep me from the same experience?” Immediately Psalm 91:7 came to mind: “A thousand will fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.” After forty-two years of marriage I can report that God has been faithful to us, and my wife and I have been faithful to each other. I found that in the war against the flesh and the devil, it is essential to have someone holding your hand who will never let go. As a single until age 30, Jesus held my hand, and that

was sufficient. After marriage I discovered someone holding each hand, and I needed both.

Postscript on Male Leadership from 1 Timothy 2:11-15

1 Timothy 2:11-15 is a text that many preachers today prefer to avoid because of its incompatibility with egalitarian ideology. It appears to be another painful dose of patriarchal injustice. Here is the text:

¹¹A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. ¹²But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. ¹³For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. ¹⁴And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

When Paul first preached the gospel in the Roman world, few women would have been qualified for leadership in the church. With the changes the gospel brought, a new liberty not experienced before was emerging, and it appears the new freedom to stand up and speak got somewhat out of hand in Timothy's church. Paul tells Timothy to deal with the disorder. In his paraphrase of the passage, Eugene Peterson translates verse 12, "They (the women) should be quiet and obedient along with everyone else". Classroom decorum needed be maintained.

Paul did honor the service of a few educated women who did take positions of leadership. Phoebe (Romans 16:1) and Priscilla (Acts 18, Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 16, 1 Timothy 4) were two. It was the common pattern at the time for men to lead, but not exclusively so. Paul gives primary leadership to men as an established norm, based upon Genesis. The question for us is whether this is a universal norm or a vestige of patriarchy not applicable to egalitarian society. Why did Paul make an issue of the man being first?

I suggest the relationship of male and female may be in some sense asymmetrical. A perfect, symmetrical balance of power cannot guarantee the oneness that the creation story prescribes. Perfect balance only guarantees perpetual conflict in a sinful world. That is why patriarchy was necessary. Perhaps a simple example can help us understand the difference between equality and oneness. My right and left hand are not equal. When peeling an apple the left hand holds the apple and the right hand handles the knife. While the right hand may be superior in handling the knife, the right hand is still helpless without the support of the left. In terms of risk, the left hand suffers the greater danger of injury, but not nearly so much danger as would the right hand were the roles reversed. Unity is achieved when both hands match their differences and cover for each other. Equality exists only when each member equally needs the other. The fact that some are left-handed and some ambidextrous does not change the norm.

Asymmetry lies at the foundation of the material world. We learn in physics that at the Big Bang the perfect symmetry of the universe was shattered by a quantum fluctuation. Had there not been an imbalance between the quantity of matter and anti-matter, the material universe could not have come to be. This principle is found repeatedly in chemistry and biology as well. "That something is not identical to its mirror image is a property known as chirality" (<http://theastronomist>).

fieldofscience.com/ 2011/01/universe-and-life-is-asymmetric.html).

Chirality can also describe our human existence as well. The genetic basis of every living human is 100% human. No one person is more or less human than another. Yet no two humans are perfectly equal. This being true, we should also expect chirality to characterize gender. In history, men have been the builders, explorers, and inventors. They have always pioneered. But sometimes women have done this too, and done as well as men, even better. In the New Testament, whenever God called and gifted women for leadership, Paul accepted them. But he still recognized in the creation story the expectation for men to lead and women to support them as the norm.

Biblical complementarians argue that male leadership does not obliterate equality. A complementary relationship is easily illustrated in the relationship between a board and the nail that secures the board in place on the joist of a building. The nail may seem hardly as significant as the board, but the board is helpless without the nail. This should help us understand what we read in Genesis 2:20 where the woman is the helper. We might say she keeps him in his place. In this metaphor, the board is first and the nail is second, but neither has relevance apart from the joist to which they adhere, and both are useless without the other. In the service of God mutual submission and obedience become holy and empowering. Having defended complementarianism, however, I wish to dig deeper.

There is hierarchy in the Godhead, an asymmetrical relationship, if you please. The Father sent the Son and the Son obeyed. Although at one with God, Jesus did not insist on equality (Philippians 2:6). Oneness and equality are two different concepts. Jesus' relationship with his disciples reflects his relationship to the Father, "I no longer call you servants." He said. "A servant does not know the master's business. (Instead) I call you friends. Every (secret) the Father has told me, I have told you" (John 15:15). The sharing of secrets produces intimacy, and intimacy makes oneness possible. In the preceding verse, however, Jesus also said, "You are my friends if you do what I command." This retains hierarchy. Authority does not go away with intimacy.

In the beginning, the task of the man to dress and keep God's garden was to be a shared experience once the woman arrived, but sin destroyed the trust necessary for this to work, with the result that men and women divided into their own separate spheres except for reproductive and domestic necessity. Men took leadership because they were designed to do so. Men have been first in exploration, invention, and building of civilization, mostly without female input, but every civilization the men have built has fallen down. The board without the nail cannot stay in place forever.

Might it be that absence of women in the design of economic construction was the missing piece? Men who care for children and women who visit the work site fits well with what Genesis 2 envisions, but probably not in perfect equality. Perfect equality is sterile and unnatural. In some areas women should dominate, in other areas men. This is natural. But this does not alter the original gender hierarchy.

From Genesis 3 onward in the fallen and sinful world, patriarchy, monarchy, and slavery built human civilization. There has never been a female-led civilization. Men were the explorers, the builders, the conquerors, and the managers. They took the number one position because they were number one

at creation. What we see, however, is raw nature apart from grace. If, however, according to Jesus, the first will be last and the last first, then how does this play out? Jesus' teaching reveals the final outcome. The last become first, even though it may not appear to be going that way.

Imagine a village with a factory providing employment and a bridge connecting the village to the larger world. The factory and the bridge make it possible for the village to prosper and participate in civilization. The engineers who built the bridge were men. The visionaries and builders who designed and built the factory were men. The women raised the children. Let us suppose some danger comes to the village, perhaps a forest fire raging over the hillside. Among the three assets of the village, the bridge, the factory, and the children, which will demand the highest priority for protection from the fire? Every decent village in all human civilization would let the factory and the bridge burn before it abandoned its children. In reality, then, on a day-to-day basis, whose role would be ultimately more vital to the protection of the village assets? Who is entrusted with the greatest treasure? Whose task is more significant for the future of the social order, the men's or the women's? That which appears more significant and worthwhile turns out to be less significant in the overall scheme.

If women do not readily step up to leadership as we want them to do in egalitarian society, it is not merely because they were not socialized to do so. God designed the men to lead, and in a fallen world, patriarchy was the shape of society in which they could lead. Oneness, as envisioned in Genesis 2:24, is only possible when trust has been established, and when trust is reestablished, hierarchy recedes from mind, and nobody cares who leads. Men usually do, but when God calls women, it needn't bother anyone.

Chirality applies not merely to marriage, but also to the way in which male and female were are designed to interrelate and work together in society outside of marriage. But the unredeemed erotic imagination has made this arrangement unworkable, as current experience continues to demonstrate. Patriarchy emerged in the beginning to restrain the sexual chaos of society and abuse of women, that continues to grow in our society where sexual harassment complaints, inappropriate office romance, and dormitory misuse of women multiplies year by year.

The norm of male leadership will happen, whether in healthy or unhealthy ways. As we try to control bad-boy behavior, women continue to be oppressed as much as ever, and I would challenge the notion that egalitarianism has accomplished anything of real significance. Women have made great strides in terms of status according to the world's ideals, that is, in political and economic parity, but the effect has actually divided men and women more than it has united them. Today among the underclass, the norm seems increasingly to be an order of poor, single mothers and free-ranging, predatory males, whose violence the system cannot manage, and so it incarcerates them in ever growing numbers. Today in our universities, rape, abuse, and the betrayal of young women by young men is appalling, while the system scrambles to understand what is happening.

Paul wrote to Timothy that womankind is saved through child-bearing. Elsewhere he insists we all are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). What does he mean, being saved through child-bearing? Since God promised that a seed of the woman would dispatch the snake, it has been common

for men to fantasize themselves as saviors of the world. Most conquerors and tyrants have seen themselves in this role, and millions more at least dream of being the hero who rescues the damsel from distress in a dragon's den or other such monster.

Typically, women, when given the chance in some way, have wished to be the mother of the hero. We observe this women's conflict in the patriarchal stories of Genesis 12ff and in the harem of many a king, whenever political succession has been in doubt. Our society perceives these phenomenon to be the consequence of biblical patriarchy, while in fact it derives from natural law as Darwin described it. Egalitarians propose to rectify this situation by force of law with the hope that eventually social custom will make equality a reality. Unfortunately, as Paul teaches, the law cannot save us (Romans 1-8).

Whenever a New Testament writer appeals to Old Testament authority as Paul does here in Timothy, we need to take note, because there is usually some foundational truth at stake. In 1 Timothy 2, Paul applies the foundational truth of the creation story to the situation in Timothy's church. Here he insists on a norm of male leadership, but in other situations he also showed flexibility in blessing women whom God raised up for certain leadership roles. We need also to remember that in the end the first are last and the last first, and when we are truly one in Christ, it may become hard to notice which is which. Even the ancient Chinese philosopher, Laotze, understood something of this truth. He said "A leader is best when people barely know he exists; when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves" (Laotze).

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