

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MODERN CHURCH

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Introduction

From the earliest days of my church involvement, I have learned first-hand that the issue of “women in the church” (WC) is a topic with great potential for emotion and pain. More recently, this issue has taken on personal significance, since my wife has witnessed much abuse of complementarianism, and also because a major theological mentor of mine (Bruxy Cavey) is compellingly egalitarian. Finally, I feel within me a strong *desire* to become egalitarian – especially when I consider the untapped potential of the women in my local church.

I feel, therefore, blown and pushed in the direction of egalitarianism, on the storm-surges of peer-pressure, intellectual respect, and desire: in this study, I am searching desperately for a safe route through the “reefs” of the complementarian proof-texts (1 Cor. 11, 14, 1 Tim. 2), to reach safe harbours of egalitarianism on the other side.¹

Since it goes without saying in my circles that women are useful in virtually every sphere of ministry, the primary focus of CW is, for me, the role which gender plays in the church and especially whether women can be pastors, preach from the pulpit, lead men in a ministry context, teach in seminaries, etc.

In my study of CW, then, I will first identify my perception of the intellectual landscape, then carefully examine the options against Scriptures. This being done, I will examine 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 according to a Scriptural paradigm, and apply these Scriptures to modern church life.

¹ These words are almost the first thing which I wrote, and thus genuinely represent my pre-study angst.

Picking Sides

Commonly, the issue of CW is divided into the opposing sides of egalitarianism – which champions equality, especially from Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28 – and complementarians – who emphasize the differentiation of the genders, especially from Paul’s retelling of creation (1 Cor. 11, 14, 1 Tim. 2).

Although a good starting-place, I believe that the strict “either-or” options of complementarianism and egalitarianism must be expanded to more precisely describe the intellectual landscape of CW: thus “patriarchy” must be placed on the far “right” of pure complementarianism, and feminism on the far “left” of pure egalitarianism.

Broadly speaking, feminism can be defined as a secular movement with a socio-political agenda for championing femininity, and for combating patriarchalism.^{2 3} The defining characteristic of feminism is that it holds its agenda above scriptures and thus both distinguishes itself from pure egalitarianism – which ultimately upholds Scriptures⁴ – and removes itself from truly evangelical (a.k.a. Bible-centered) debate.⁵

² The reader should recognize that for the sake of this paper I am vesting meaning into words which some use as synonyms, and others parse differently: “complementarian,” for example, is also called “soft patriarchy” (Webb, Moore, etc.), and “egalitarian” is also called “evangelical feminism.”

³ Unfortunately, patriarchalists and even complementarians are also becoming increasingly reactionary, in defining themselves against feminism rather than in accordance to Scriptures.

⁴ As a consequence of this: 1) the frequently-enjoined argument that WC ultimately come down to “one’s view of scripture,” (e.g. Olofsson, Grudem) must be rejected, and 2) egalitarian scholarship cannot be dismissed offhandedly, but actually engaged with on Scriptural grounds.

⁵ For this reason, feminism will not be discussed further in this paper.

Patriarchy, on the other hand, can be understood as a perspective which reads Scriptures through the lens of Greek dualism and chauvinism.⁶ Thus Scriptures are misread to imply that women are ontologically more associated with the physical world and thus *less spiritual* and second-rate as compared to men. Because Patriarchy often operates under the guise of complementarianism, much effort will be put into rooting out and rejecting patriarchalism in this paper.⁷

Understanding authority in Christ's terms is the only sure way to avoid the extremes of either patriarchalism or feminism. According to Christ's paradigm, leadership is not a path of privilege, accolades and abundance; *it is a death sentence*. Following the path of Christ, a leader is not permitted to "lord" or "exercise authority" over his charges (Mat. 20:25ff, Mk 10:42ff): he is not to become a "benefactor" of those under him (Luke 22:25ff) or use his position to his advantage (Mat. 24:45-51). Just as Christ did not come to be served, but to serve and save (Mat. 20:28, Luke 10:45, Phil. 2:5-8), the Christian leader shrugs off any sense of status, tenderly kneeling before dirty feet, and daily stretching himself out on a cross of sacrifice for those under his care.

Those who are still embroiled in the old "who wears the pants" debate demonstrate that they are not yet operating within the paradigm of servant-leadership.

⁶ Although ____ notes that North American Westernism also dehumanizes femininity, as seen especially in the sex/porn industry. FOOTNOTE!!

⁷ _____ says, "On a popular level, many egalitarians believe the complementarian view of headship is 'woman, get me my chips.' ...also on the popular level, many *complementarians* believe that the biblical view of headship is 'esteemed wife, please get me my chips, and then let us pray'." According to my definitions, this sort of a perspective would be designated "patriarchy."

God's Word on Gender

The Creation of Gender Through the Lens of Paul

Introduction

The two most important sources for Scriptural information on gender are the creation account and Paul⁸ - two sources which Christians are constrained to examine together.⁹

A point which must be made before examining these topics is that there seems to be an almost unlimited number of arguments which are based on possible interpretations of fine-points of the narrative. When these points are not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament (OT) text, or picked up by any New Testament (NT) authors I will brush over such “appeals to narrative” as inadequate bases for argument.¹⁰

⁸ This point would likely be contested by egalitarians, who tend to place great importance on the narratives of Scripture, as will be seen below.

⁹ The move of many scholars to begin by interpreting the Old Testament, then cast doubt on New Testament interpretations must be identified as a fundamentally *un-Christian* approach, since the authoritative commentary which the New Testament provides for the Old must be taken as the final word.

¹⁰ Adjacent to this point, it should be noted that many authors attempt to create sweeping emotional/rhetorical argument from stringing appeals to narrative together, with proof-texts interspersed and problem texts overruled or ignored: I find such “arguments” completely unsatisfactory.

Imago Dei (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:22-23, Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 11:7-8)

Some essential facts must be gleaned from Scripture's teaching of humanity's unique creation in the "image of God," (*imago Dei*): 1) humanity is deeply sexual, with maleness and femaleness running to the core of who we are, 2) *both* genders are created in the image of God, 2) both genders *together* reflect the image of God, thus: a) each gender uniquely reflects some portion of the image, b) each gender is lacking in some way without the other, c) the genders naturally fit together (or "complement") each other.

Two distortions must be rejected at this point. First, patriarchalists attempt to misquote Paul (1 Cor. 11:7-8)¹¹ and an appeal to narrative (Eve's creation from a rib) to support the theory of "derivative image" – that woman only reflects the *imago Dei* secondarily, by reflecting it in man. Conversely, egalitarians attempt to read Galatians 3:28 overtop of Genesis 1:27, as though the new covenant obliterated the distinctions between femininity and masculinity.¹²

Primogeniture (Gen. 2:7, 22, 1 Tim. 2:13)

Appealing to ancient near-eastern culture, patriarchalists and complementarians state that the concept of *primogeniture* (or "rights of the firstborn") applies to Adam, giving men a "birth-right" over women. Significantly, this ordering existed before the fall.

¹¹ A careful reading will show that Paul does *not* call woman the "image" of man, but only "glory." See Craig Blomberg, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), 211 for a discussion of "glory of man."

¹² In light of Gen. 1:27, however, Paul cannot be taken literally as saying "there is no such thing" as maleness and femaleness: thus, we must question "what division between male/female ended in Christ?" In context, Paul makes it clear that this division is one which has to do with covenant inclusion, or salvation.

Egalitarians work hard at countering *primogeniture*, stating that: 1) the larger creation narrative seems to work towards a climax, 2) Scriptures are clear that God is not automatically bound by *primogeniture*,¹³ and 3) the “*adam*” (“earthling,”¹⁴ or “Adam”) which God created in 2:7 may have been an androgynous humanoid, which was separated into a parallel creation of “*iysh*” (man) and “*iysha*” (woman) in verse 2:23 – thus functionally turning Adam and Eve into twins.

Although interesting in their own right, each of these arguments fall flat in regards to the WC issue, since: 1) Paul himself wrote that, “it was Adam who was created first, and then Eve,” (1 Tim. 2:13, cf. also 1 Cor. 11:8), and 2) proceeds to vest theological significance to this ordering, as will be explored below.¹⁵

Ezer Neged (Gen. 2:18-19, 1 Cor. 11:9)

In the King James Bible, *ezer neged* (NASB - “helper suitable”) was translated as “help-meet” – thus making it easy for patriarchalists to read “ontological subservience” (that is, the belief that women exist to serve men) into the Scriptures.¹⁶ Egalitarians have pointed out, however, that this very influential translation is lacking, since *ezer* is elsewhere consistently used to refer to the one who has power coming to the aid of the

¹³ Cain, Esau, Ishmael and Reuben are classic examples of God upsetting the norm of *primogeniture*.

¹⁴ *Adam* refers to “the one who is from the *adamah* (earth, or red clay)” thus, “earthling” is a fair translation. Cavey, *Hot Potatoes* #3.

¹⁵ The fact that *primogeniture* is introduced by Paul himself is a fact which is conveniently skipped over by some egalitarians, who attempt to make this concept into a chauvinistic invention of complementarians.

¹⁶ Bruxy Cavey has helpfully illustrated this older version of “complimentarianism” as of a caddie and a golfer: neither is complete without the other, but the usefulness of the former is bound up completely in the function of the latter.

one in need¹⁷ (in nineteen out of twenty-one cases in the OT, it refers to God coming to the aid of his people!)¹⁸ and because *neged* refers literally to that which is “in front of, in sight of, opposite to,”¹⁹ specifically to “a counterpart or mate”²⁰ with no overtones of subservience.

While upholding the egalitarian critique of ontological subservience, I cannot escape from the plain sense of Paul’s words, that “man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake” (1 Cor. 11:9): I feel that the solution here is to situate this “helping” of woman to man within a broader framework, as will be explored below.

Kephale (Gen. 2, 1 Cor. 11:3-12, Eph. 5:22)

“But I want you to understand,” wrote Paul to the Corinthians, “that Christ is the *kephale* (head) of every *aner* (man/husband), and the *aner* is the *kephale* of a *gunae* (woman/wife), and God is the *kephale* of Christ,” (1 Cor. 11:3, cf. also Eph. 5:23). Paul supports this claim by appealing to two previously-established points in the creation-narrative: 1) Eve’s creation out of Adam (11:8) and 2) Eve’s creation “for the man’s

¹⁷ As paraphrased from Cavey, *Hot Potatoes #3*: also supported in other literature.

¹⁸ Gen. 2:18, 20; Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Psa. 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Isa. 30:5; Ezek. 12:14; Dan. 11:34; Hos. 13:9.

¹⁹ The Lockman Foundation, *New American Standard Updated Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1998) [program] Rick Meyers, *E-Sword*, 2004.

²⁰ James Strong, *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, (James Strong, 1890) [program] Rick Meyers, *E-Sword*, 2004.

sake” (11:9). The direct implication of this headship within First Corinthians is that the Corinthian women/wives are to wear “a symbol of authority” (v. 10) on their heads.²¹

Paul then balances this discussion of headship with a reminder of the interdependence of woman and man based on: 1) the role of women in childbirth, 2) the mutual dependence of both genders on God.

Egalitarians attempt to evade Paul’s message by reading “head” (*kephale*) as “source,”²² so that verse three (“...man is the ‘source’ of woman...”) may be tied to verse twelve (“...woman is the source of man...”), and “headship” becomes merely a restatement of the reciprocity and interdependence of the genders. It is difficult, however, to see how Paul could mandate a “sign of authority” from a discussion on mutuality. A second attempt is to posit that the concept of “headship” is incompatible with the relationships of Christ-to-church²³ or impossible within the Trinity.²⁴ These objections are undercut, however, by Jesus’ demonstration of servant-leadership.

On the other side of the spectrum, patriarchalists are quick to posit a concept of “ontological incompleteness:” that is, that without a male “head” (usually husband or father) a woman is fundamentally incomplete, and unable to make the most basic decisions, pray, or enjoy God’s blessings. Although neither man nor woman is complete in isolation, however, the idea that single women are somehow *more* incomplete than

²¹ Exasperatingly, Paul’s final rationale (v. 10) for coverings is “for the angels” – a phrase which, due to its complexity, will be omitted from this paper.

²² This usage is roughly parallel to the English “head-waters.”

²³ Especially the others-centered, self-sacrificing, serving, vitalizing and up building role which Christ is said to fill in Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15-16, 5:23, Col. 1:18-19, 2:19.

²⁴ For further discussion, see Philip Cary, “The New Evangelical Subordinationism: Reading Inequality into the Trinity,” *Priscilla Papers* 20 (Autumn 2006):42-45., and

single men has no direct Biblical support: also, Paul has spoken in clear affirmation of female singleness (1 Cor. 7:34ff).

In context it seems that we can state only that Paul is here doing nothing more than stating that men are to be “heads” of their own homes.²⁵

The Fall – Gullibility (Gen. 3:6, 2 Cor. 11:2-3, 1 Tim. 2:13-14)

Usually considered somewhat of a linchpin for the patriarchalist argument, the gullibility of the female gender is strangely underrepresented in modern complementarian literature. The serious evangelical must grapple, however, with the fact that Eve is remembered as the quintessential picture of spiritual gullibility (2 Cor. 11:2-3), and that Paul seems to apply this fault to the entire female gender, and place limitations on them on the basis of it (1 Tim. 2:11-14).

The only serious objection²⁶ to this traditional reading is one which sees Eve's gullibility as tied to the secondhand nature of her reception of God's commandments. Her gullibility, then, is not a warning about the female gender, but to all who rely on second-hand revelation, rather than an unmediated experience with God's Word.²⁷

²⁵ The “headship” of a husband over a wife has relevance for CW, as will be discussed below.

²⁶ The typical *modus operandi* of egalitarians (e.g. Linda Belleville) seems to be to begin with a reinterpretation of Genesis 1-3, build up a full head of steam from women in the OT, Gen. 1:27 and Gal. 3:28, then attempt to steam-roll their way over 1 Tim. 2, as though this passage is a single, confusing, aberrant passage, to be ignored. Although common, such treatments can hardly be designated as “serious.”

²⁷ This position is argued by Cavey, Bilezikian.

Although not directly contradicted by the text, I feel that this option is a very clever misrepresentation of it – especially since Paul nowhere mentions the reception of God’s law in this passage, nor is there compelling evidence elsewhere that Paul regularly used Eve as an example of a gender-neutral example of spiritual gullibility.^{28 29}

Thus, I find it difficult to avoid the plain sense of Paul’s words here, that: 1) the gullibility of Eve was tied to her femininity, and 2) this gullibility applies in some way to the entire female gender.

The Fall – Culpability (Gen. 3:6b, 9, Rom. 5:14ff, 1 Cor. 15:22ff)

In the Genesis account, it was Eve who sinned first in taking of the fruit, yet God sought out and spoke to the man. Also, although the New Testament affirms that it was Eve, not Adam who was deceived (1 Tim. 2:14), it consistently lays the blame for original sin squarely on the shoulders of the Adam (Rom. 5:14ff, 1 Cor. 15:22ff).

In my mind, there does not seem to be a satisfactory answer for this reality other than that Adam was in a position of authority, and thus took on prime responsibility for a communal sin.

In passing, it should be noted that the Patriarchalist have at times tried to distort Scriptures to attribute enduring guilt and spiritual weakness to women.

²⁸ 2 Cor. 11:2-3 is often cited as an example of this: however, the fact that Paul subsumes the entire congregation under a female metaphor in the previous verse makes this a difficult supporting passage.

²⁹ In so saying, however, I recognize that this is among the stronger of the egalitarian arguments: in contrast to many other arguments which I have brushed over, I think this one deserves serious attention and – in the end – opens up room for congenial disagreement on this issue.

The Curse – On the Woman (Gen. 3:16)

Eve's portion of the curse is likely the most hotly debated verse in the Genesis narrative. Traditionally, this verse has been seen to support patriarchy: recently, however, this verse has become very important for egalitarians, who see this event as the intrusion of hierarchy into human history. Thus, hierarchy must be fought against as a part of the curse.³⁰

In opposition to this, Bruce Ware (a modern patriarchalist) posits that the "desire" which Eve will feel for her husband is a desire to dominate, and thus Adam's justified response will be to "rule" over his wife.³¹

I believe that this passage brings out the core of the issue of WC – which is really an entrenchment of the ancient animosity between the genders. On the one side, patriarchalist men distort Scriptures to "rule" women: on the other, feminists "desire" to rule, and – as a false "mediation" – egalitarians seek to escape the fray by dispensing with any concept of hierarchy. Once again, however, the servant-leadership of Christ provides the only sure path to the reconciliation of the genders.

³⁰ Bruxy Cavey, for example, makes the point that in the same way that advances in technology strive to overcome the effects of the curse in childbirth and agriculture, so to societal progress should seek to overcome the curse's effect on gender.

³¹ Ware (the former president of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood) supports this thesis by a near parallel use of the word in 4:7, with reference to sin "desiring" Cane, who must "master" it: however, this is not the only linguistic possibility for *teshuqah* (cf. Cant. 7:10, for the only other Scriptural use of *teshuqah*). Bruce Ware, *Summaries of the Egalitarian and Complementarian Positions on the Role of Women in the Home and in Christian Ministry*, (Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 2006), [document on-line] available from <http://www.cbmw.com>; Internet. Accessed 20 Mar. 2009.

The Curse – Gender Specific (Gen. 3:17-19, 1 Tim. 2:15, Tit. 2:3-5)

Sometimes, the gender-specificity of the curse is brought to bear on the distinctions between the genders. That is, women are cursed in their marriages and in their fertility, while men are cursed in their occupation and as representatives of humanity.³² Although illustrative, however, I feel that this argument is too weak to be included in a summary paper such as this.

Appeals to Narrative

As has been mentioned above, I find appeals to narrative to be secondary arguments, and thus will only mention them briefly here:

Complementarians appeal to: 1) Adam’s direct reception of the law of the trees (2:16-17), and 2) Adam’s naming of Eve (2:23, 3:20), while egalitarians appeal to: 1) the mutual rulership of man and woman (1:29-30), and 2) the “leaving” of man to form a new family unit (2:24). Both sides believe that: 1) the snake’s speaking to Eve (3:1), and 2) Eve’s creation from a rib (2:21-22) bolsters their position.

Worshipping Community

As stated, I find appeals to narrative within the Creation account to be lacking; similarly, I find appeals to narrative within Scriptures and within Christian history to be even more unconvincing, since it is impossible to know which cases are normative versus

³² Ware goes so far as to the infamously enigmatic 2 Tim. 2:15 and the less problematic Tit. 2:5 as support for role-differentiation between the genders, even in the new kingdom. Bruce Ware,

exceptional, and the data can be presented so as to support either side. Again, however, thoroughness mandates their inclusion:

Egalitarians make appeal to the wives of the patriarchs, female leaders,³³ female prophets,³⁴ “Wisdom” and “The Proverbs 31-Woman” as examples of women taking the lead with God's approval. In the New Testament, mention is made of the women who followed and supported Jesus,³⁵ of Mary,³⁶ of the Samaritan woman,³⁷ of Priscilla and Aquila,³⁸ and of Phoebe the deaconess and Junia the apostle (Rom. 16:1, 7),³⁹ among others.^{40 41} Also, church history may be consulted for a multitude of examples of women in leadership and teaching roles.⁴²

³³ Especially Miriam (Exod. 15:20ff), Deborah (Jdg. 4-5), and Abigail (1 Sam. 25).

³⁴ Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Jdg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14, 2 Chr 34:22), Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3), and Anna (Luke 2:36) are designated as “prophetesses,” while Noadiah (Neh 6:14), and Jezebel (Rev. 2:20) are designated as false, or mislead prophets.

³⁵ Bruxy states that these women could rightly called “disciples” – as distinct from “Apostles” – and infers that they were likely included in the seventy of Luke 10.

³⁶ Who was commended for neglecting her feminine role in order to learn: Luke 10:42ff.

³⁷ Who is implicitly praised for “preaching” to a mixed audience, John 4:42ff.

³⁸ Egalitarians often infer primacy from the fact that four out of six times, Priscilla is mentioned before her husband in the NT (Acts 18:2, 18, 26, Rom. 16:3, 1 Cor. 16:19, 2 Cor. 4:19): thus, she may have had a leading role in discipling the powerful evangelist Apollos (Acts 18:24-28, cf. 1 Cor. 3:6) and leading their house-church (Rom. 16:3-5).

³⁹ I have found complementarian/patriarchal scholarship (e.g. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 220-228) which attempts to mute the femininity or authority of Phoebe and Junia to be both lacking and unnecessary.

⁴⁰ For an exhaustive list, see, Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible*, (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishing, 1955).

⁴¹ Mention is also sometimes made of the fact that gifts are given irregardless of gender: thus there were likely many unnamed representatives of each gift, from both genders. See especially Acts 2:17ff, and also Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4, etc.

⁴² For a very thorough examination of this topic, see Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity: Volume I & II* (Dublin, Ireland: Colour Books, 2000).

In opposition to these examples, complementarians note the overwhelming presence of masculinity within teaching and leadership roles, and find reasons to attribute exceptionality to the cases of female leadership & teaching. Once again, the weakness of “appeals to narrative” shows itself, and we are driven again to other portions of Scripture.

Household Codes (Eph. 5:17-33, Col. 3:16-25, 1 Pet. 3:1-9)

There are three passages – sometimes called the “household codes”⁴³ – in the NT which speak strongly to the issue of gender. From these passages, (Eph. 5:17-33, Col. 3:16-25, and 1 Pet. 3:1-9), as well as a sampling of other NT texts, a clear picture of the Christian marriage begins to emerge.

First of all, household order⁴⁴ is adjacent to the spiritual life of the believing community (Eph. 4:1, Col. 3:1, 17, 23, 1 Pet. 2:1-5), and secondly, mutual submission (Eph. 5:21) and the mutual reception of grace (Gal. 3:28, 1 Pet. 3:7) is the paradigm within which marriage operates. Within this, husbands are to: 1) love (Eph. 5:25, Col. 3:19) 2) honor (1 Pet. 3:7), 3) protect (1 Pet. 3:7), 4) provide for (1 Tim. 5:8) and 5) lay down their lives for (Eph. 5:25-30) their wives as part of their role as servant-leaders. Wives, on the other hand, must: 1) submit to (Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, 1 Pet. 3:1-6), 2) respect (Eph. 5:33) and 3) love (Tit. 2:4) their husbands, to 4) adorn themselves with a gentle and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:1-6), with modesty and good works (1 Tim. 2:9), reverence (Tit. 2:3), respectful and gender-appropriate attire (1 Cor. 11) and 5) to care diligently for the affairs of their own households (Prov. 31, Tit. 2:4).

⁴³ Because the household codes are not precisely on-topic, I will not spend time on counter-arguments but will stick with the plain-sense of the text, as I understand it.

⁴⁴ For the importance of household order, cf. also the qualifications of an overseer, 1 Tim. 3:4-5, Tit. 1:6.

When taken as a whole, the Scriptural view of marriage begins to resemble a thoroughly Christianized version of the “gentleman and lady” of older European tradition.⁴⁵ Thus, quintessential maleness is pictured as a man tenderly providing and pouring out his life for his wife and family as a servant-leader, while quintessential femaleness is pictured as a woman reverently supporting her husband and caring for their children. Encasing this relationship is the radical equality of the new kingdom, in which the symbolism of “foot-washing” works itself out in everyday sacrifice and service, so that the genders complement each other in perfect equality, to beautifully reflect the image of God.

Since patriarchalists are unable to free themselves from Genesis 3:16, they distort God’s beautiful ideal of mutuality for the shallow pleasures of “ruling over” women. Conversely, egalitarians are unable to free themselves from the patriarchalists’ power/value view of hierarchy,⁴⁶ and – in a just rejection of patriarchy⁴⁷ – they push too far and miss out on God’s beautiful ideal for gender.

Since sexuality is fundamental to humanity, we should expect that the gender differentiation which is most clearly visible in marriage should also bear significance in the church.⁴⁸ On this, ___ is helpful, extrapolating from the meaning of “Eve” that the female gender has been called to be “life-givers:” thus, a robust “women’s ministry” is

⁴⁵ I see this model as *illustrative* only, and am placing no interpretive weight on it.

⁴⁶ _____ says, “When complementarians speak of the genders ‘complementing’ each other, they mean one thing and one thing only: that men are to rule over women.”

⁴⁷ Complementarians who warn against encroaching feminism should look to their own camp, since much – if not all – of the fuel for egalitarian fires springs from the discontinuity between patriarchal hierarchy and Biblical equality.

⁴⁸ Due to time constraints, I am skipping over the position that gender roles only apply in the home, not the church.

one which mirrors a woman's role in the home – working humbly and quietly in the background to make the church “look, smell and taste good,”⁴⁹ specializing in compassion, tenderness, and community,⁵⁰ and with a special focus on women and children's ministry.⁵¹ Although I believe that ____'s insights need to be nuanced to include exceptions (as I have done, below), I believe that they accurately represent Scripture's “normal” view of gender in the church. This model will be invaluable as we proceed into the turbulent waters of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Church Polity (1 Cor. 14:28-35, 1 Tim. 2:11-12)

Broad Attempts at Evasion

In an attempt to evade Paul's message in these passages, Egalitarians tend to: 1) attempt to argue for a peculiar context within Ephesus or Corinth, or 2) argue for a “principles-based” hermeneutic, which avoids direct application of Paul's words.

Although it continues to be presented as plausible,⁵² serious works have gone into refuting influence of a “feminist Ephesus,”⁵³ or some other cultural influence in Paul.

⁴⁹ _____ -

⁵⁰ Phil. 4:2 is sometimes used as example of the lead which women play in cultivating relational stability.

⁵¹ Those who would reject such a model on the basis of it's not being “fair” are not yet thinking God's thoughts (Mark 8:33) on the matter, and also dramatically underplay the indispensability of such feminine roles for the lasting impact of the Gospel.

⁵² Cavey, *Hot Potatoes #3*; Adelia Deufeld Wiens, *Gender in the New Testament*, ed. Carol Penner, *Women and Men: Gender in the Church*, (Waterloo, ON: Mennonite Publishing House, 1998), see also Webb's elaborate restatement of this premise in William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001).

⁵³ S.M. Baugh's essay “A Foreign World: Ephesus In The First Century,” Eds. A. J. Köstenberger, T. R. Schreiner, And H. S. Baldwin In *Women In The Church: A Fresh Analysis Of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 47-48, is frequently cited by complementarians as the final word on the issue.

This work is unnecessary, however, since (unlike many in the CW debate!) Paul refused to define himself negatively against his opponents but brought “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,” (2 Cor. 10:5), evaluating ideas from every source against the deposit of “sound doctrine” (1Ti. 4:6; 6:3; 2Ti. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1). With this methodology, even a pagan altar (Acts 17:23) or an hedonistic slogan (1 Cor. 6:13ff) may become a spring-board for solid doctrinal discourse. It is also clear that Paul is capable of localizing an injunction within a specific situation (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26ff), and he seems to be doing the opposite here (1 Cor. 11:2, 1 Tim. 3:14-15).

In a more subtle approach, Cavey teaches that Christians must read the Bible “Jesusly,” by looking for the principle *behind* the precept, then applying the *principle* to modern situations. While agreeing whole-heartedly with this approach, I would counter that there are many cases (especially from the NT) when an examination of “the principle behind the precept” will lead one in a complete circle, to an application which is identical to the precept! This is especially the case when the context of the modern Christian is the same as that of the original readers,⁵⁴ as seems to be the case with WC.

1 Corinthians 14

On the surface, first Corinthians 14:34-35 seems to favor complementarianism and even patriarchy; when one digs deeper, however, the passage becomes elusive and ultimately drives the reader elsewhere for a conclusion.

⁵⁴ Naturally, this is *not* the case on issues which are heavily influenced by culture, such as the “holy kiss” (Rom. 16:16; 1Co. 16:20; 2Co. 13:12; 1Th. 5:26), and head coverings (1 Cor. 11).

In verse thirty-four, Paul categorically silences⁵⁵ the women in the Corinthian church – but how can this be reconciled with Paul’s earlier words on proper female decorum *while* publicly praying and prophesying (1 Cor. 11:5ff)? Obviously, this silence refers to a particular *sort* of speaking: but is this the judging of prophecy (the immediately preceding context) or the asking of uneducated and culturally-inappropriate questions (immediately proceeding context)? Both options have significant problems,⁵⁶ and so the inconclusiveness of this passage ultimately pushes readers elsewhere for a conclusion.

1 Timothy 2:9-15

With cultural and hermeneutical evasions ruled out, the only major possibility remaining for egalitarians is to make Paul’s “I do not allow” to apply only to inappropriate or domineering teaching: a possibility which is unlikely for logical reasons (why would Paul limit only women from teaching in a domineering manner?) and for syntactical reasons.⁵⁷

Egalitarian evasions aside, the plain sense of 1 Timothy 2:13-14 is not difficult to understand. The context of 2:13-14, as well as the combination *authenteo* and *diakonos*

⁵⁵ Although interesting, I did not find that an examination of *sigao* (“silent”) was relevant to CW.

⁵⁶ In both cases, one wonders why Paul did not specify the *reason* for a limited silence: also, if Paul meant this silence to refer to judging prophecy, how does “let them ask their own husbands at home” fit? The theory that Paul simply means to keep the Corinthian women from asking rude and uneducated questions fits verse 35 well, but is difficult to reconcile with the flow of the text – especially the force and apparent universality of verse 34 – and it begs the question, “were *all* the women uneducated, and prone to inane questioning?”

⁵⁷ When connected by *oude* (“nor”), a pair of words is normally considered together as being either both negative, or both positive: thus, it is easier to read both *didasko* (“teaching”) and *authenteo* as positive – but forbidden – activities, than to see one as positive, and the other as negative, or to see *authenteo* as modifying *didasko*. See Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 64-74 for further discussion.

make it clear that the matter of public, authoritative teaching from Scriptures which is primarily under discussion here, with the leadership role which is implied by such an activity clearly implied, and supported by the following passage (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Paul clearly forbids women from participating in such roles, based on God's created ideal of the genders.

The Difficult Work of Application

Many scholars seem to rest their case once their study of Scriptures has been exhausted, it is precisely here that the real work begins! While the question of women preaching to mixed congregants or heading up "one-man-pastor" churches seems to be clearly answered, the great diversity of modern ministry contexts requires careful application. Among the difficult points are: 1) confusion over a modern equivalent to "prophecy," 2) ambiguity over public vs. private teaching, leadership, 3) ambiguity surrounding "church," "para-church," and "secular" vocation, 4) modern "platforms" (e.g. radio, internet) with an unknown audience, 5) positions which only occasionally include oversight over men, 6) positions which include oversight and teaching over men, but are still under the authority of overseers, 7) exceptions in cases of male absence.

Because one's stance on these issues depends on more complex applications of Scripture, I believe that the final outworkings of CW allows for a broad range of applications, and one's own denomination or church is likely the best place to go for such direction.

Conclusion

With this study behind me, I can see now that my pre-study angst was based on a misunderstanding of complementarianism. For this reason, I was easily swayed towards egalitarian philosophies – while fearing deep down that I was being too “soft” for God. Secretly, I always felt a sense of uneasiness in my quasi-egalitarianism, as though I was attempting to force both my wife’s femininity and my masculinity into exactly the same mould. I also had the uneasy feeling of muting some Scriptures.

Being liberated into a fully complementarian position, I feel relieved and profoundly humbled by the deep calling which is placed on me as a man, and specifically as a husband/father. I realize now that I have operated at times out of a patriarchal dismissal of their needs, under my “more important” career-choices – even when operating under egalitarian “equality,” I have not gone nearly far enough!

The call to *lay down my life* for my family is the largest challenge of my life. Strangely, however, I know intuitively that I was uniquely crafted for this challenge and – by God’s strength – able to more than conquer the task.

What an adventure to be finally yoked to the “easy yoke” which God has designed for me to bear, as head of my family, and leader in our communal ministry within Christ’s body, the church!