

GOD AND GENDER

This study seeks to deal with the issue of whether God is above Gender and whether gender is an aspect of the essential nature of God. In addition it examines some of the issues relating to various theological views regarding gender. Although the study of gender is considered a non-essential of the faith it is greatly important for numerous reasons. Among those reasons is that many women have felt unempowered and disenfranchised by the views of Judaism and Christianity whereby God is considered male. Moreover males are treated with a preference over females. The hope of many feminist theologians is that males and females will be treated equally and not hierarchically. Women are not second class citizens in the Kingdom of God and do not expect to be treated as second class citizens today. Many societies for prolonged periods of time have kept women enslaved, uneducated and without the right to vote or the right to earn a living. Where there are no avenues for making a living, women are ultimately forced into servitude, slavery and prostitution.

Further women want to serve in positions in the church. Many women question whether historic theology is archaic and have contributed to holding women down despite the fact that they know that they are accepted and loved by God. Now they hope to be accorded the same treatment as males. Unfortunately, in my opinion, many of the efforts to achieve their goals have gone awry due to bad theology as well as bad attitudes from believers who may have good theology. One way to achieve an equal position to men is to have women ape the position of man. This can be done in several fashions. You can neuter God or at least attempt to do so. This would mean stripping God of both male and female characteristics. We make God genderless and those who follow God genderless. Equality can be obtained by neutering God or transforming man into females or females into men. Society seems to be well on the way of doing this. Dads become good dads only when they treat their children as women do. They are compassionate, tender, and allow their children to paint their toe nails and put lipstick on them. Despite this, it is still ultimately putting lipstick on a pig so to speak. We dress men in unisex clothing or better still in women's clothing. We demasculinize men and encourage homosexuality, transsexualism and other devices to destroy both male sexuality and the concept of male gender. At the same time, we encourage a similar process among women, transforming women to become more like men. We want women to adopt man-like characteristics, man's clothing and even sexuality that is more like a man. Again, by doing this, sexual and gender equality is achieved. Like the Sphinx, in Oedipus Rex, we cut everything down to size or stretch it to fit a new standard. If it is too male, we lop it off until we have men and women are looking more similar and equal. Men become more female and female become more male. Trans becomes the name of the game. And soon we have men thinking they are women and even competing athletically against biological women and robbing them of what is rightfully theirs. Equality has been achieved by getting male and female closer together but the price is an unnaturalness and a robbing of both sexes. The neutering of God and men (the "Bobbitt Treatment") is also illustrated in a rewriting of Scripture to satisfy the concerns of women. For instance the rewriting of the Episcopal Church's 1979 Prayer book to make sure that God is no longer referred to in masculine pronouns. Masculine terms like "He", "King" and "Father" must be excised. We are embarrassed when

Jesus begins the Model Prayer with “Our Father.” “Woke” pastors do silly things like ending prayers with “A Woman” instead of “Amen” and the silliness goes on.

Although an egalitarian model appears to be the preeminent position today, a complementarian position is still robust and feared by women. A “complementarian” view holds that God created male and female to work in compliment to one another. Each sex provides strength and supplements the weakness of the other. One of the reasons that Complimentarians are feared is because it is believed to be hierarchical with men on the top and women on the bottom. Feminist theologians believe that a hierarchical theology will put women back into slavery. Their concerns are justifiable and the risk is real if a Complementarian view is applied without love. Risking your position and freedom for the expectation of love from other Christians is at best considered “a leap of faith.” But let me pause for a moment and discuss a Complementarian view. To some degree there should be a mutual love, respect and even submission in the Complementarian view just as I believe that there is a loving relationship in the Trinity with God the Father, Jesus the Son and The Holy Spirit. They are separate but equal. They are different but the same. They coexist as One yet there are separate persons. The mystery of the Trinity, I believe, carries over to another trinity which is the relationship between God, women and men. Without love it does not work.

When I think of Complementarianism I do not think of hierarchical. Instead I think of spheres of influence and characteristics. Here are some of the characteristics I see in the respective spheres of influence of women and men.

Women—The birth of children and their nurturing and raising is one of those functions. In essence, women can do something that man cannot really do. They create life. They create children naturally with only the most modest help from men. Men are relegated to a lesser style of creation. They can create art and many other things but they do not create human life. The woman is the bearer of man and ultimately “The Seed” prophesied in Genesis by God. The Messiah or “The Seed” is the salvation of both men and women, Jesus Christ. Women have many characteristics that have been found in their sphere of influence. They are more peaceful, more gentle, more attractive, show tenderness, mercy, patience and grace. They are fierce in protecting their children. They run households and businesses and are industrious. Women can sometimes endure greater pain and are more longsuffering than men. Whereas men are perhaps simpler and more direct, women are often more subtle and more verbal. In the past they often did not appear to hold extraordinary power but in many occasions exercised great power through their roles as mother, wife and lover. A couple of old sayings illustrate this truth. One of these sayings is “The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world.” Another saying which reflects reality was that it was “Helen who launched a thousand ships against Troy”. Throughout history many women have excelled as great rulers including Monarchs in Britain such as Victoria, Elizabeth I and Elizabeth II.

Men—Men are physically larger and stronger. They are experts at tilling fields and being warriors. They talk less than women and are more direct. If women are soft, men are rough. As a general statement men are more aggressive than women, at least their aggressiveness is demonstrated differently. Men are protectors. If women exhibit grace, men are more likely to come down on the side of the law. Men can be creative, but ultimately they are not life givers or the bearers and nurturers of children. Men are

likely to favor sports and social items that are tied to physical contact and prowess. The majority of the great generals and warriors in history have been men. Many great military commanders have been men including Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Douglas MacArthur, George Patton and many others.

Despite these spheres of influence, there are always exceptions. For instance Jean of Arc was a great warrior and Deborah was a great judge. In addition there are many areas where key qualities may overlap. For instance great wisdom can be shown through both men and women. Compassion and mercy might be seen both through Mother Teresa and through Francis of Assisi.

Leadership can take place anywhere but it is most likely to take place in the area of the respective sphere of influence.

The Creation of Men and Women

In the first account found in Genesis, the creation of men and women are lumped together. The creation of men and women are described in Genesis 1:26-28 which states the following:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, accordingly to Our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing which moves on the earth".

There are two creation accounts. One is in the first chapter of Genesis from which I quoted above. The second account is found in Genesis 2 and is a more detailed account of the creation of Adam first and then the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam. Some scholars believe that there were two independent creation accounts and ancient compilers of Genesis were hesitant to choose so they included both. Other scholars, including many evangelical scholars, believe that there is only one creation account and that the second chapter is really a more detailed account of the creation account found in Genesis 1.

The account in Genesis 2 :15-17 and Genesis 2:20-25 are reproduced below:

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree in the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die".

And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." ...But for Adam there was not found a Helper comparable to him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept, and

He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman and he brought her to man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Many feminist theologians prefer the account in Genesis 1 because there is less differentiation between man and woman. Both men and women were both created apparently simultaneously in God's image, both are given dominion over the animals and the garden. There is more a sense of egalitarianism and equality in the Genesis 1 account.

In the second account in Genesis 2, man precedes woman into the garden. Man is naming the animals before woman is created. When woman is created, she is not created out of the dirt like man and the animals. Instead she is created out of the rib of Adam. Woman is viewed more as a helper to man. Many feminist theologians find that a "helper" instead of being an equal to man is more subservient. That being said, Scripture says that God was looking for a helper who was "comparable" to man. I believe God was allowing some tasks to be handled jointly. In other areas, the particular individual man or woman would take primary leadership in their areas of specialty.

The view where men and women are created "equally" and share equal dominion over the earth is called "Egalitarianism." The hierarchy came as a result of sin in Genesis 3:16 where God says to woman: "Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you."

The contrasting Complimentarian view is set forth in a Statement of Evangelicals called the Danvers Statement which was a statement prepared by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in 1987. In that statement some of the conclusions are the following:

Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons
And distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18)...

Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and
was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor. 11:7-9)...

Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship
In the family and in the covenant community (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19;
1 Tim 2:11-15).

It is of interest to me that the Danvers Statement did not clearly deal with the Genesis 3:16 passage where God tells Eve, "Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you." Could it be possible that the intent of God for there to be equality but it is the results of the fall that propels us into Complimentarianism and the results of Adam's "rulership" over the family and the need for male "headship" in the "covenant community."

The effects of sin still result in death to us but we overcome death through our faith in Christ. Because of both history, sin and the Genesis judgment we may still be faced with male rulership in certain aspects of the "covenant community." Yet is that our true destiny and what God ultimately wants? Women still face pain in childbirth and the residual effects of sin remain. The residual effects of man's rulership may continue because of sin and the weakness in the human race, both male and female, because of sin.

Despite the fact that I may accept some aspects of Complimentarianism, I am not sure I accept all of the conclusions. I believe Scripture teaches that God loves women and men equally. As a child of God, I do not see myself as a male child of God but only as a child of God. Likewise I believe my wife sees herself as a child of God not a female child of God. We somehow return to our Edenic innocence in the Kingdom of God. God deals directly with my wife just as He deals directly with me. I am not a necessary intermediary between her and God nor is she an intermediary to me.

In Heaven there are no husbands and wives. (Luke 20:29-36). Instead we are like the angels. My treatment of my wife is carefully watched over by God who is her ultimate master and to whom she has a ready appeal (and has used it in the past). If we as males have some type of "rulership" in the church, the same principles apply. The women in the church are as highly valued as the males. There are no second class Christians. There is to be a spirit of Love where the leadership exhibits the lessons of service, humility and foot washing if necessary. Our treatment of the women in our lives and in our churches is carefully watched by God. If we mess up, our prayers will not be answered and we shall answer for our lack of love. The problem is that we are not serious about this love business. Further both Christian and non-Christian men are quick to appropriate the "rulership" concept for their own selfish purposes. The purpose of the concept is not to keep women in sexual or gender slavery but to enable them protection and freedom to walk in their spiritual callings. Frankly, the church has not done a good job in this area and we can and should do better.

There are numerous other questions that arise in the Creation Account (s). For instance, did God create the animals and birds with two sexes. I presume that He did. However, we do need to keep in mind that there are a number of strange reproductive systems in nature and creation. Further it was expected that both the created animals would multiply and that would also be true of man. In Genesis 1:28 God said to them "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it." In the Genesis 2 passage, we have Adam in the Garden of Eden before Eve tending it and keeping it (Gen. 2:15). In addition, it is Adam who is naming the animals and birds (Gen. 2:19). Many Complimentarian theologians seem to have concluded that Adam was more important because he came BEFORE Eve and because he had responsibilities prior to Eve. However this is not necessarily true. Earlier is not always better. In fact later made models at least of machinery seem to have some improvements (that being said, human creators come with assorted deficiencies whereas God does not). Further, God said that he was seeking to make someone "comparable" to man. Both Rabbinical and other scholars have also made much that God made Eve from the rib of man evidencing an equality of position.

It should be noted that when God comes back into the Garden after the Fall, God called to Adam and addressed him first (Gen. 3:9). It is Adam who answers and explains to God what happens. Interestingly Adam throws Eve "under the bus." He blames both women and God Himself. Look at his words, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." In effect, the Fall is already working sinfully in man. Not only have Adam and Eve not obeyed God, but Adam says "Well, you gave me this woman and she offered me the fruit and I ate it" trying to excuse himself while claiming it is not only the woman's fault but even the fault of God Himself for bringing Eve to him.

As part of the punishment, God does not punish women with childbirth but with pain in childbirth. (Gen. 3:16). Here God addresses part of the punishment for sin in the sphere where the woman has authority.

Also in Genesis 3:16 it says “You desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” Here is a note on this verse from The New King James Study Bible explaining this passage:

The word desire can also mean “an attempt to usurp or control” as in 4.7. We can paraphrase the last two lines of this verse this way: “You will now have a tendency to dominate your husband, and he will have a tendency to act as a tyrant over you. The battle of the sexes has begun. Each strives for control and neither lives in the best interest of the other (see Phil. 2:3, 4). The antidote is in the restoration of mutual respect and dignity through Jesus Christ (see Eph. 5:21-33).

Man is also under judgment in his area of authority which is farming the ground. Now instead of things being easy they will be hard. There will be thorns and man will work by the sweat of his face until man dies and returns to the earth from which he was originally made. (Gen. 3:16-19).

God Thought of as a Male

When the Hebrews dealt with God they thought of Him as a man as opposed to a woman.

The Jews had a very high view of God and the name of God. Although God was often referred to in anthropomorphic terms, the Hebrews were forbidden to make any images or representations of God. In Scripture we find many of the anthropomorphisms used to describe God.

Although the Jews believed that God transcended the material, God is often spoken of having human characteristics. For instance He is described as having hands (Is. 5:22), feet (Gen. 3:8; Is. 63:3), eyes (Amos 9:3) and ears (Deut. 9:18). God is viewed as “walking in the Garden in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8). In Ezekiel 1:26, God is seen as being in a human form and seated on a throne. (See also Psm. 44:24).

Other anthropomorphisms describe God as being angry (1 Chron. 13:10) and regretful (Jer. 42:10). In short, there are many anthropomorphisms in the Bible. In Genesis 6:6 it says that YHWH regretted that he made man and his heart was saddened. Regret is, of course, an anthropomorphism.

The far most prevalent view of God in the Bible is that God has the characteristics of a male. In Exodus 15:3, God (YHWH) is seen as a “man of war”. In Hebrew there are no neuter nouns and therefore nouns are treated as male or female. The name of YHWH is a masculine noun. With it go masculine verbs and masculine adjectives.

I believe that encompassed within man and woman are the many characteristics from being created in the image of God. In Scripture we find many of the characteristics of God which we describe as “female” characteristics. These characteristics include many of the most wonderful characteristics of God and people. They include: love, mercy, kindness, longsuffering, patience, compassion and many similar characteristics. These are characteristics which both men and women value and which touch us in our most innermost hearts.

Although we see these characteristics all over the Scriptures there are certain Scriptures where God is pictured with strong female imagery. Below are a few of them.

Is. 42:14—The Lord cries out “like a woman in labor.”

Hosea 13:7—God is pictured like a lion, like a leopard and like a “she-bear deprived of her cubs.”

Job 38—Job sees the creation process being like the giving of birth. Job 38:28-29:

Has the rain a father?
Or who has begotten the drops of dew
From whose womb comes the ice?
And the frost of heaven, who gives it birth?

John 3:3,16—Jesus spoke of a spiritual birth. We must be born again. We are born again not of flesh but from the very Spirit of God.

Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34—Jesus says to Jerusalem—“Like a hen I would have gathered you”.

Ex. 19:4—God protects us like an eagle taking the chicks on their wings and flying away. “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself”. (See also Deut. 32:11).

Is. 42:15—“Can a woman forget her nursing child and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget yet I will not forget you.”

Is. 66:12-13 says:

Behold I will extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream,
Then you shall feed,
On her sides shall you be carried
And be dandled on her knees
As one whom his mother comforts,
So I will comfort you;
And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

In short, man and woman are made in the image of God. Man does not have the whole image and characteristics of God in him and woman does not have the whole image and characteristics of God in her. When they come together in marriage and in sex there is, as a general rule, a truer representation of God together than either manifests separately. Man and woman were made to be together. Further, they were made to come together in unity not only for the purposes of reproduction and fulfilling the command to “go and multiply” but also for the purpose of finding comfort and completion together and for the purpose of producing, nurturing and raising children with care, love and discipline.

Why Satan Hates the Male/Female Relationship.

There are a number of reasons why Satan hates the relationship between women and men. Some of those reasons are the following:

- Satan hates it that men and women were made in the image of God.
- Satan does not want to see a unity of purpose between a man and a woman. Instead of unity he wants to see disunity, conflict and strife.
- Satan hates the fact that man and woman are commanded to multiply. Instead Satan loves to see man and woman destroyed through war, disease, and abortion. Abortion is a particular delight to Satan because he can encourage potential parents to kill their own innocent offspring. As Jesus said, Satan came to “kill, deceive and destroy.”
- Satan likes to replace sexual pleasure between man and woman with pain, shame, bondage and hurt. Instead of pleasure, Satan prefers masochism and sadism.
- Satan wants to destroy loving heterosexual families because in two parents of opposite sexes in a loving relationship, there is more a reflection of all the attributes of God.
- Satan wanted to prevent the Seed (the “Messiah”) from ever being born. Having failed in that, Satan now wants to take revenge against mankind and in particular Woman for bearing the “Seed” who has crushed the head of the Serpent of Old.
- Satan wants to confuse the genders. He wants men to act like women and women to act like men. Satan does not want the female attributes from God to be seen at the end of this Age.
- The Church is the bride of Christ. Satan does not want the church to exhibit bride-like qualities or the qualities shown by the female aspects of God.

The Second Eve and the Bride of Christ.

The people of God have always been pictured as having a spousal relationship with God. In Hosea, God is pictured as Hosea and God’s people are pictured as Gomer who sold herself into slavery because of her evil and lustful ways. God purchases us from slavery and restores us into a covenant relationship. In a bilateral covenant each party makes certain statements and covenant promises. In fact in marriage, we see the making of these representations in the vows we take. These vows are life-long vows and reflect a covenant “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, , to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death.”

Satan wants there to be a confusion in gender. The church is the Bride of Christ. Satan wants the church to take on the male characteristics of God not the female characteristics of the Bride. He wants us to demand equality to God. Instead of being submissive to Christ he wants us to be demanding of our rights and to usurp Christ from his rightful place of leadership. Satan does not want us to adopt the female mindset nor an attitude of love, faithfulness, obedience and submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

God’s plan is that we are to be The Second Eve and we are to be the Bride of Christ. We are the helpmeet to the Bridegroom Jesus. We take his name, we become his spouse, we assist in promulgating the gospel and seeing people saved. From the word of God, the action of the Holy Spirit and our efforts new birth takes place. People are born into the Kingdom of God.

As the Bride of Christ we are to embrace the female characteristics of God. These characteristics include the following:

- We are to be obedient to the leadership of Jesus Christ.
- We are to give birth through the Spirit of God to the children of God.
- We are submissive to the direction of God.
- We become a thing of beauty through holiness and good acts.
- We are in love with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.
- We follow Jesus wherever he tells us.
- We are in covenant relationship with Jesus.
- We are married to Christ and become one with him spiritually.
- We find peace in our relationship with Christ.
- We become gentle and kind.
- Jesus is our provider.
- Jesus is our defender.
- Jesus will return for us.
- Jesus has prepared a heavenly home for us.
- Jesus has prepared a new body for us.

A Few Final Comments.

As mentioned above the people of God take on a spousal relationship with God. The Hebrew Nation was our mother. From the Hebrew Nation came Mary. Mary conceived the Messiah who was the Seed of Woman and who came to bring deliverance of mankind through Jesus Christ. The church is like the Hebrew Nation. It too is the Bride and Jesus is our Bridegroom. Jesus is coming for his church. The role of the church is to prepare herself for the coming of the Bridegroom. Part of that preparation is to take on the female characteristics of God such as being loving, being faithful and being obedient to the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. As the people of God we are involved in the birthing and delivering of people into the Kingdom of God. Also as the Bride of Christ we prepare ourselves for the Bridegroom. We make our bridal gown white by washing it in the blood of Jesus. We also purify ourselves through holy acts and good deeds so that we will be resplendent to the Bridegroom. The church at the end of time will joyfully embrace the female characteristics of God in fulfilling its role as the Bride of Christ.