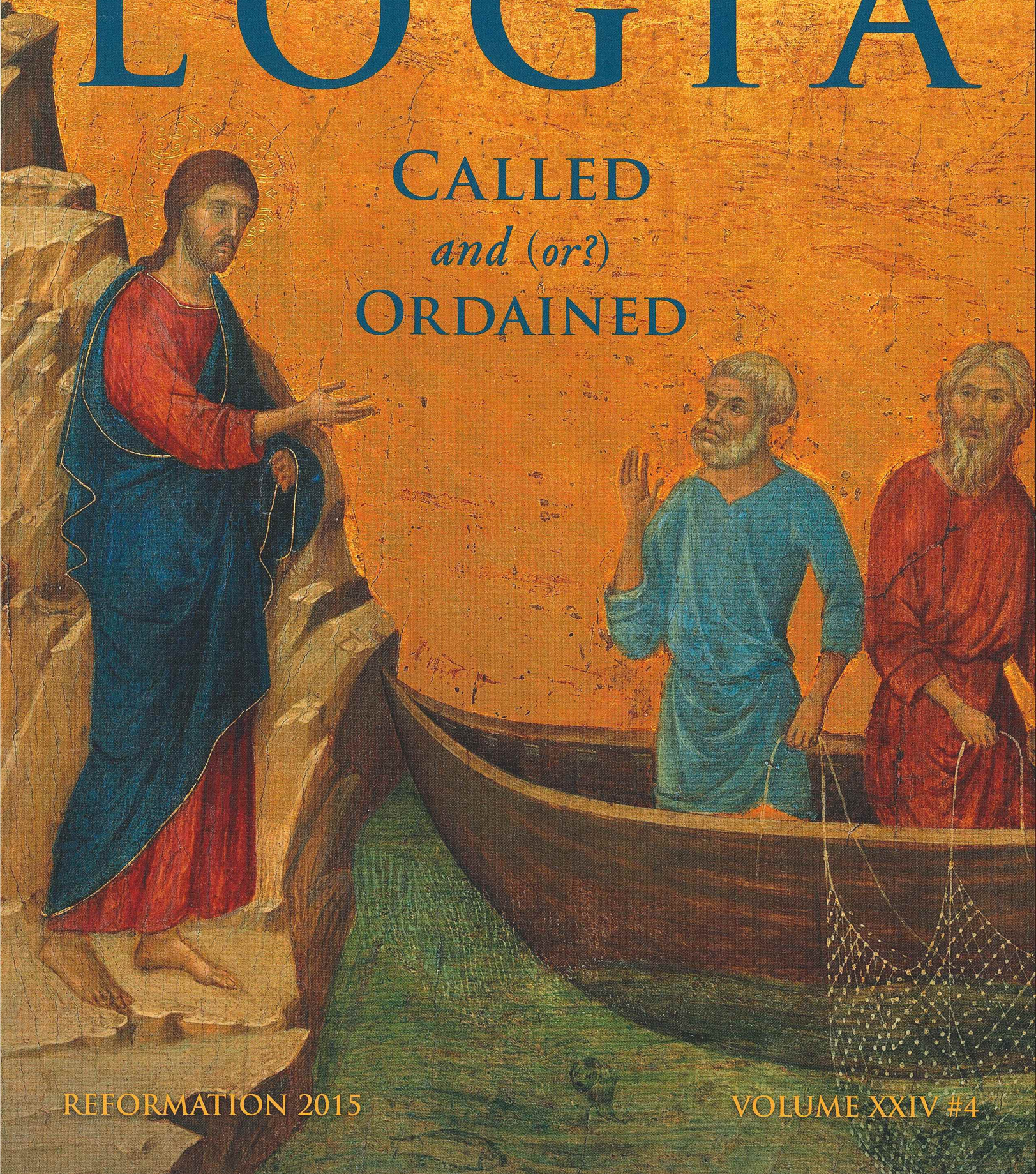


A journal of Lutheran theology

LOGIA

CALLED
and (or?)
ORDAINED



REFORMATION 2015

VOLUME XXIV #4

Does Ephesians 5:21 Support Mutual Submission?

JOHN G. NORDLING



A POPULAR AND APPARENTLY INNOCENT WAY of understanding the Greek words ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in Ephesians 5:21 is “submit[ting] yourselves one to another”¹—which may be taken to mean that husbands should “submit” to their wives out of “self-sacrificial love and voluntary self-submission” and wives should “return the same.”² Tranquility between the genders at this juncture in American history would seem to require such reciprocal give-and-take, and some version of mutual submission is all but presupposed in everyday relationships at home, of course, but also increasingly at school (in the socialization of our young), in the way the two sexes relate to one another in secular society (television, movies, National Public Radio, etc.), and now, apparently, at church and among Christians. And yet, one may ask, does Ephesians 5:21 really support mutual submission as popularly understood? Perhaps not. So the first part of this article will consist of an exegetical examination of Ephesians 5:21, contrasting the popular (and I think pernicious) assumption with what Paul teaches in the Greek text. Second, we shall pay attention to the significance of the divine order that was established at creation, particularly in that ancient dictum that God “created man in his own image . . . ; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27).³ Third, we shall reflect on Paul’s statement that marriage illustrates a “great mystery” between Christ and the church (Eph 5:32), particularly as this is developed by John Chrysostom in Homily 20 (on Eph 5:22–33). Finally, in the conclusion, we shall revisit the idea of *mutual* submission with which this paper began: is it an appropriate way of speaking about the relationship between a man and woman in Christ in light of where our investigations have taken us?

AN EXEGETICAL EXAMINATION OF EPHESIANS 5:21

The mutual-submission interpretation of such passages as Ephesians 5:21 is making increasing headway in the church, including the Lutheran church. In a book entitled *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership*

and *Mutual Submission*,⁴ United Methodist minister Alan G. Padgett (professor of systematic theology at Luther Seminary) sets out an understanding of mutual submission that might seem—were one merely to judge a book by its title—quite benign. Unwary Lutherans might at first suppose that Padgett presents here a Christ who serves sinners humbly through the means of grace, in the way God himself does at the divine service. One quickly realizes while reading the book, however, that the “submission” Padgett envisions is of an entirely different sort than God’s service at the *Gottesdienst*. What Padgett primarily has in mind is a profoundly moralistic Christ who models a kind of mutual submission that all Christians should be about in their day-to-day lives. Thus, on almost every page he presents an extremely meek, servile, and even pusillanimous Christ who serves admirably as “the standard and moral exemplar” of strong, empowered Christians who serve weaker sisters and brothers—which may be a noble objective, admittedly.⁵ However, the main reason Padgett develops his ethic of mutual submission is because it has the potential of freeing the church from oppressive gender roles. Gender hierarchy derives not from Scripture itself, argues Padgett, but rather from the patriarchal philosophical systems of Greece and Rome.⁶ Ephesians 5:21 is one of several New Testament passages Padgett thinks have been wrongly used over time to keep women down.⁷ Rather, all Christians—whether men or women—are supposed to be “servant leaders,” take the servile part whenever possible, and follow Christ as he amazingly served others—as when, for example, he washed the disciples’ feet. Padgett mines the texts in an attempt to provide biblical affirmations of equality.

The passage upon which so much depends is Ephesians 5:21: “Being subject to one another [ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις] in the fear of Christ, [let] the wives [be subject] to their own husbands as to the Lord” (my own translation, paying atten-

JOHN G. NORDLING teaches at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. This article originally was presented at the Twenty-Eighth Annual Exegetical Symposium, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 22 January 2013, and read (with minor changes) at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa, in May 2013. Part I, “An Exegetical Examination of Ephesians 5:21,” appears as a Research Note in CTQ 77 (2013): 327–34.

1. So Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 41.
2. Ibid., 41–42.
3. English Bible translations are from the ESV, unless otherwise noted.
4. See my review of Padgett’s book at LOGIA Online (<http://www.logia.org/logia-online/170>).
5. Padgett, *As Christ Submits*, 46. For other places where Padgett points to Jesus as a moral or ethical “example” see pages 37 and 45.
6. Ibid., 2, 88.
7. Other New Testament passages Padgett engages are 1 Pet 3:1–6; Tit 2:1–10; and 1 Tim 6:8–15 (p. 79–101); and 1 Cor 11:2–16 (p. 103–24).

tion to the NRSV, which Padgett prefers). Padgett's translation, "submitting yourselves one to another," for ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις already favors mutual submission. After all, the present participle ὑποτασσόμενοι does indeed occur in the middle voice ("submitting yourselves") and Padgett makes much of the reflexive pronoun ἀλλήλοις; he thinks it applies to both sexes equally, and not merely of women submitting to their husbands. Thus, reasons Padgett, husbands should "submit" to their wives out of "self-sacrificial love and voluntary self-submission" and wives should "return the same,"⁸ just as the church willingly and joyfully submits to Christ (see Eph 5:24). It seems a pretty good argument and one that may be at least partially correct. Probably many well-intended Christians will accept Padgett's arguments enthusiastically.

***Submission is not reciprocal
but follows an ordered pattern
between the two sexes that
God created in his image.***

Observation reveals, however, that Ephesians 5:21 is not complete in itself but functions as a kind of "general heading"⁹ for the specific callings of Christians that follow in the household code of Ephesians 5:22–6:9; namely, wives vis-à-vis husbands (5:22–33), children vis-à-vis parents (6:1–4), and slaves vis-à-vis masters (6:5–9). Therefore, Padgett—and with Padgett all egalitarian interpretations of Ephesians 5:21—would do well to heed the following three points distilled from P. T. O'Brien's commentary on Ephesians.¹⁰

First, in the New Testament ὑποτάσσω ("to submit") regularly describes the submission of someone in an ordered arrangement to another who is above the first—that is, in authority over that person. Here it is instructive to consider the examples that support this admittedly sweeping assertion: the submission of Jesus to his parents (Luke 2:51); of demons to the disciples (Luke 10:17, 20); of citizens to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1; Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13); of all things in the universe to Christ (1 Cor 15:27 [citing Ps 8:7, LXX]; Eph 1:22); of angels, authorities, and powers to Christ (1 Pet 3:22); of Christ to God the Father (1 Cor 15:28); of church members to their leaders (1 Cor 16:15–16; 1 Pet 5:5); of the church to Christ (Eph 5:24); of slaves to their masters (Tit 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18); of Christians to God (Heb 12:9; Jas 4:7); and of wives to their husbands (Col 3:18; Tit 2:4–5; 1 Pet 3:5). In none of the passages wherein the verb ὑποτάσσω

appears are the relationships ever reversed—that is, Joseph and Mary are not subject to the boy Jesus according to Luke's account, the disciples are not subject to demons, the governing authorities are not subject to the citizens, nor Christ to the universe nor the unseen powers, nor God the Father to Christ the Son, nor leaders to the church members, nor Christ to the church, nor masters to slaves, nor God to Christians, and now (here is the kicker), not husbands to wives. Therefore, according to the textual evidence, ὑποτάσσω does not describe "symmetrical" relationships at all, but rather *ordered* relationships wherein some persons are "over" and others "under."¹¹

Second, Padgett's reciprocal interpretation of Ephesians 5:21 rests mainly upon that little pronoun ἀλλήλοις ("to one another"): "the term one another (*allēlois*) in Ephesians (4:2, 32) and in Paul's letters in general indicates something that applies to each member of the church and not merely to a few."¹² Closer examination reveals, however, that the pronoun ἀλλήλοις is not always reciprocal. Sometimes it is, to be sure, in which case the translation "everyone to everyone" is in order; however, as is often the case with words that occur frequently in Scripture, context determines meaning and one size does not fit all. Thus, the reciprocal pronoun appears in an admittedly few New Testament passages where symmetrical relationships cannot be in view. One such passage is Revelation 6:4, "so that people should slay one another [ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάξουσιν]." This need not mean, however, that the slayers killed each other reciprocally, as if locked in mortal combat where fighters die in each other's arms, but simply that some in more advantageous position killed others who were in less advantageous position.¹³ Likewise, "Bear one another's burdens [ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε]" (Gal 6:2) does not have to mean that everyone should exchange burdens with everyone else, but that "some who are more able should help bear the burdens of others who are less able."¹⁴ There are more passages of this sort,¹⁵ each requiring analysis and thus interpretation on a case-by-case basis. I would argue, then, that Ephesians 5:21 falls into the latter category—especially if, as has been shown, the submission is not reciprocal but follows an ordered pattern between the two sexes that God created in his image.

Third, the flow of Paul's argument as expressed in the Greek text does not permit the egalitarian interpretation. Ephesians 5:21 ("being subject to one another in the fear of Christ") introduces programmatically the notion of "submission" in the letter, and this concept is further unpacked and expanded in the household code of 5:22–6:9. The "general heading" (as Lincoln calls Ephesians 5:21)¹⁶ is closely connected to what follows

8. Ibid., 41–42.

9. So Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 365.

10. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 401–5.

11. See Peter Kriewaldt, "1 Corinthians 14:33b–38, 1 Timothy 2:11–14, and the Ordination of Women," in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, ed. Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless, 3rd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 2012), 66.

12. Padgett, *As Christ Submits*, 41, where Rom 1:12; 15:5; Gal 5:13, 17, 26 are cited in defense of his claim.

13. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 403.

14. Ibid. (emphases in original).

15. Ibid. lists 1 Cor 11:33; Luke 2:15; 21:1 (in error for 12:1); and 24:32.

16. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365.

immediately in 5:22, where the relationship between wives and their own husbands begins. There is no verb in the latter passage,¹⁷ so accurate readers of the Greek may naturally carry forward the idea of “submit” from the present middle participle ὑποτασσόμενοι (5:21) that begins the period. Indeed, some variants consisting of a second or third person imperative — “ye women submit [ὑποτάσσεσθε] to your own husbands as to the Lord”¹⁸ or “let the women submit [ὑποταστέσθωσαν] to their own husbands as to the Lord”¹⁹ — have had long and ample attestation in the textual apparatus as preceding footnotes demonstrate. Such additions, however, produce a wordiness that violates “the succinct style of the author’s admonitions”²⁰ and are unnecessary in any case. In Ephesians 5:24 where the verb ὑποτάσσεται does indeed occur (“as the church submits [ὑποτάσσεται] to Christ”) Paul adds the clause, “so also the wives [submit] to their husbands in everything” (οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί). Again, Paul does not have to add the verb “submit” in the second clause to clarify what he means. The adverbial phrase οὕτως καὶ (“so also in the same way”) in 5:24 indicates that, in the succinct style of the author, the ὑποτάσσεται of the church submitting to Christ is supposed to be applied to the wives submitting to their husbands — “in everything” (ἐν παντί), Paul adds. The issue here is not so much substance as style: Paul, like all other writers of Greek and Latin, never adds a superfluous word (here the appropriate form of the verb ὑποτάσσω) to clarify his thinking — even though, to be sure, many writers of English do to make their points clearly. Paul, however, cannot be subject to English style: he thinks and writes in Greek, an accommodation to which any acceptable interpretation of the passage must pay heed. An unworthy argument (that Padgett does not actually make) would be that because the verb ὑποτάσσω is not actually paired with “women” in Ephesians 5:21, 22, and 24, Paul could not be thinking of wives submitting to their husbands in the overall passage. But that he does have such submission in mind is clear enough from the context, as has been shown; and he makes the point about wives submitting to their husbands explicitly elsewhere:

“Wives, submit to your husbands [ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν], as is fitting in the Lord” (Col 3:18) and “... to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands [ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν],

so that the word of God may not be reviled” (Tit 2:5). That this was not so much a Pauline teaching as an early Christian one is suggested by the presence of recognizably the same admonition outside the Pauline corpus:

For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands [ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν], as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. (1 Pet 3:5–6)

Paul, like all other writers of Greek and Latin, never adds a superfluous word to clarify his thinking.

Preceding arguments should scupper the possibility that Paul was establishing any type of reciprocal submission in Ephesians 5:21. Instead, it is as though Paul were saying in the household code of which Ephesians 5:21 marks the beginning, “Submit to one another, and what I mean is, wives submit to your husbands, children to your parents, and slaves to your masters.”²¹ Another worthy interpreter has written, “Let each of you subordinate himself or herself to the one he or she should be subordinate to.”²² So Padgett’s arguments do not hold up very well when subjected to exegetical scrutiny. However, traditional exegesis of the sort demonstrated thus far no longer holds much traction in the hyperegalitarian and gender-bending world of which we are a part. It is not enough to show that interpreters such as Padgett are wrong and misleading; the greater part of valor is to identify where our sin-darkened culture gets it wrong so that the biblical thinking, of which Paul’s teaching is a part, may yet inform the church and so animate — or even heal — the relationship that can exist between a man and a woman in Christ. Just this — and not more stultifying orthodoxy — is needed in the Lutheran church at present.

GOD CREATED THEM MALE AND FEMALE

Today feminism diminishes some differences between men and women. Another view sees sexual difference as a result of the fall into sin. Our prevailing culture, noticing that women can do most things as well as, or even better than, men can, has begun to insist that there be no essential differences recognized between the sexes. Equal pay for equal work, say the pundits — and, increasingly, our laws. The goal now is to make

17. Literally, “the wives to their own husbands as to the Lord [αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ]” (Eph 5:22, my translation of the Greek text as it stands).

18. γυναῖκες ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς . . . D F G itd, g txt. Later variants keeping the 2 plural imperative ὑποτάσσεσθε (“submit ye!”) transpose the verb so that it occurs later in the sentence, thus: γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὑποτάσσεσθε ὡς . . . 075 0150 424* 1852 1912 2200 Byz [K L] *Lect* itf syr^h geo slav Chrysostom (emphases added).

19. γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὑποταστέσθωσαν ὡς . . . N A I P (Ψ ὑποταστέσθωσαν after γυναῖκες) 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424c 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1881 1962 2127 2464 l 596 l 895 l 1178 itar, b, g v. r., mon, o vg syrpal (copsa, bo) arm eth Origengr lem, lat Basil Theodorelat lem; Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Ambrose Jeromelem Pelagius Augustine.

20. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 541.

21. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 403.

22. Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1980), 76.

as many allowances (or even more?) for single women supporting children born out of wedlock as for husbands supporting wives and children in the traditional manner. Equality, tolerance, and respect for diversity are the order of the day. By this standard, one way of ordering the sexes is just as good as any other—including now the claim that gender is nothing more than a social construct and does not matter at all (unisexual-ity). Out of this confusion emerges homosexuality in all its glory. Not only is homosexuality a willful and prideful rejection of God's creative complementarity of male and female (sin),²³ it is a deliberate blurring together and artful mixing of things that God intended should be discrete, well-ordered, and operable within divinely instituted bounds. Now men take the place of women, and women, men. The most perceptive scholars have suggested that militant homosexuality comes out of a culture that deifies the Cartesian ego: my "right" to define who "I am," even if my self-perception is flatly at odds with nature and reality—to say nothing about family, faith, or heritage.²⁴

Homosexuality comes out of a culture that deifies the Cartesian ego: my "right" to define who "I am."

It was partly to prevent such perversion that God created plants and animals in the sea, in the sky, and on the earth "according to their kinds" (Gen 1:11–12, 21, 24–25),²⁵ and the complementarity between man and woman is "a fundamental principle in Judaism, in other religions, in some non-religious intellectual traditions, and in the organization of society."²⁶ In ancient Israel there were severe laws against bestiality (Ex 22:19; Lev 18:23; 20:15; Deut 27:21), homosexuality in all its forms (Lev 18:22; 20:13), and even cross-dressing (Deut 22:5). Anyone who infringed the first two laws was subject to death; any woman who wore men's clothes, or man wearing women's clothes, was under God's detestation. Later, long hair was not considered appropriate for men: "Having long hair is not appropriate for males, but for voluptuous women. Guard the youthful beauty of a well-formed boy; for many rage for sexual intercourse with a male" (Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sentences*, 212–14).²⁷ Paul supposed that nature herself taught that it was "a disgrace" for a man to have long hair at worship: ἀτιμία αὐτῷ ἐστὶν (1 Cor 11:14). Why

should Paul care about a matter that seems trivial, or even incidental, to most Americans nowadays, regardless of governing ideology? Here is Lockwood's attempt at an answer:

Paul's appeal to nature's teaching with respect to hair lengths probably means that (despite variations across the centuries and cultures) human beings generally have an instinctive sense that long hair makes a more glorious and fitting adornment on a woman than it does on a man, and that, conversely, short or closely cropped hair (not to mention baldness!) is more acceptable and "natural" for a man than for a woman. Normally—though with numerous exceptions—this instinctive sense of what accords with the created order has been reflected in hairstyles through the ages.²⁸

The greater distinction out of which these lesser distinctions come is the created difference between man and woman: "male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). This creative act preceded the fall into sin and, though inevitably affected by it, distinctions between men and women remain part of God's good creation.²⁹ So-called headship is based in part on 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ [παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστίν], the head of a wife is her husband [κεφαλὴ . . . γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ], and the head of Christ is God [κεφαλὴ . . . τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὁ θεός]." The imagery here cannot be dismissed;³⁰ thus, the increasingly insistent demand for a pervasive unisexuality—which holds, for example, that distinctive differences between man and woman are irrelevant—is contrary to creation and should not be tolerated in the church. Sexual differentiation should matter for Christians who, in their interhuman relationships—above all, that obtaining between husband and wife in holy matrimony—reflect unseen relationships that are operative between the diverse persons of the Trinity. Weinrich's thinking is most remarkable here: humanity is "essentially binary,"³¹ "exists in twos,"³² and is therefore apprehensible "in two consubstantial forms."³³ Feminism disrupts this complementarity by insisting that all

28. Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 377.

29. "In rooting these prohibitions [against women speaking authoritatively at worship] in the circumstances of creation rather than in the circumstances of the fall, Paul shows that he does not consider these restrictions to be the product of the curse and presumably, therefore, to be phased out by redemption. And by citing creation rather than cultural circumstances as his basis for the prohibitions, Paul makes it clear that cultural issues do not provide the reason for his advice. His reason for the prohibitions of verse 12 [1 Tim 2:12] is the created role relationship of man and woman, and we may justly conclude that these prohibitions are applicable until the return of Christ" (Kriewaldt, "1 Corinthians 14:33b–38," 53). My comments in this section are based in part upon my review of the first edition of *Women Pastors?* in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008): 377–80.

30. So David P. Scaer, "May Women be Ordained as Pastors?" in *Women Pastors?*, 315.

31. William Weinrich, "It Is Not Given to Women to Teach": a *Lex* in Search of a *Ratio*," in *Women Pastors?*, 471.

32. *Ibid.*, 476, n. 22.

33. *Ibid.*, 478. Consider also Bernheim's insight ("Homosexual Marriage," 49): "Masculine" and 'feminine,' 'male' and 'female,' are relational terms.

23. Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 157, 169, 283, 286, 367, etc.

24. So James Kalb, "Sex and the Religion of Me," *First Things*, no. 248 (December 2014): 39–43.

25. Gagnon, *Homosexual Practice*, 136.

26. Gilles Bernheim, "Homosexual Marriage, Parenting, and Adoption," *First Things*, no. 231 (March 2013): 41.

27. In Gagnon, *Homosexual Practice*, 171. This source may have come from Alexandria ca. 50 BC–AD 100 (so Gagnon, 161).

human persons must be interchangeable; but God intended that there should be a kind of *harmonia generum* (“harmony of the genders”) as each diverse Christian submits to the demands of vocation which, in turn, cannot be divorced from sexuality. The point is that man and woman were created to be *different* from one another, and so the possibility exists that there should be *different* roles between the sexes, at home and in church.³⁴ Only at the resurrection on the Last Day shall the differences between man and woman be done away with completely.³⁵

Therefore, as a negative example, the rush to ordain theologically articulate women into the pastoral ministry has resulted, sadly, in a diminution of the service that women could do legitimately in the church and has had negative impact also on hearth and home: “[T]he ordination of women contradicts the spiritual vocation of men as husbands and fathers and empties marriage and family life of much of their spiritual significance.”³⁶ Moreover, as has become well-known, the ordination of women in many churches has prepared the way for the ordination of homosexuals.³⁷ Of course, as many proponents of women’s ordination insist, the ordination of women and the ordination of homosexuals represent two separate categories: “These issues are not of the same order.”³⁸ Nevertheless, the pattern of argumentation for both illicit ordinations follows similar trajectories: first, the appeal to Galatians 3:28 (“no male and female”); and, second, the idea that the biblical writers were conditioned by their time and culture, so that “what a text meant” then is not necessarily the same as “what it means” for us today.³⁹ In taking the second point first, it should be pointed out that the argument against meaning often runs counter to Christianity itself, which holds that the word of God is sufficient for believers in every time and place—including our own (2 Tim 3:16–17). Being a Christian involves some sense that texts from hoary antiquity have ultimate meaning for one now, regardless of what one may happen to experience at the moment or with respect to the structures of this world which, in its present form, is pass-

ing away (1 Cor 7:31; cf. 2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 2:17; Rev 21:1). Second, the problem with Galatians 3:28 being used to justify women’s or homosexual ordination is that one’s standing before God through faith in Christ Jesus in no wise abolishes relationships of the created order that are meant to last until the world ends. Consider Paul’s somewhat ironical questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29: “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?” The grammatical form of these questions requires the answer no.⁴⁰ Thus, “all are equal before God,” as Galatians 3:28 clearly teaches, but “equality hardly suggests interchangeability.”⁴¹ Others point out that equality before God through faith in Christ Jesus does not erase created sexual distinctions between male and female: “[T]he gender distinction is a fact since the creation of mankind.”⁴² So in the life of the redeemed here below sexuality matters quite a lot, particularly in those relationships we share at home and in the church.

The ordination of women in many churches has prepared the way for the ordination of homosexuals.

And the place above all others wherein the God-pleasing relationship between man and woman may occur is man-woman marriage—which Christians should think of as much more than an otherwise indifferent outlet between two consenting adults of whatever sexual persuasion to gratify sexual lusts and trumpet self-expression. No, among the redeemed there should be the sense that this particular man was created for this particular woman by God the Father for the sake of the highest relationship that can possibly exist between two human beings this side of heaven. Children may actually arise from this union, thus imitating on a lesser scale that creative act whereby the triune God brought the entire universe into being (Gen 1:27–28; 2:24). So every groom may say of his wife (and not just on his wedding day): “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23); and every bride may call her husband “lord”—regardless of his imperfections—even as

Masculine is masculine only insofar as it is oriented toward the feminine—and, through the feminine, toward the child; and this holds true for every instance of paternity, carnal or spiritual. The feminine is feminine only as oriented toward the masculine; and, through the man, toward the child—in every case, then, toward the maternal, whether carnal or spiritual.” See also the discussion about “male nature” and “female nature” in Christos P. Tsekrekos, “The Eschatological Character of Christian Marriage,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 58 (2014): 308, n. 5.

34. So Bo Giertz, “Twenty-three Theses on the Holy Scriptures, the Woman, and the Office of the Ministry,” in *Women Pastors?*, 256.

35. Bertril Gärtner, “*Didaskalos*: The Office, Man and Woman in the New Testament,” in *Women Pastors?*, 23; Scaer, “May Women be Ordained?” 314, n. 33; 320, n. 43.

36. John W. Kleinig, “The Ordination of Women and the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity,” in *Women Pastors?*, 300.

37. John T. Pless, “The Ordination of Women and Ecclesial Endorsement of Homosexuality: Are They Related?” in *Women Pastors?*, 231–45.

38. Craig R. Koester, “The Bible and Sexual Boundaries,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 7 (1993): 388. Similar cases are made by R. T. France (“From Romans to the Real World: Biblical Principles and Cultural Change in Relation to Homosexuality and the Ministry of Women,” in *Romans and the People of God*, ed. Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 234–53) and Gagnon (*Homosexual Practice*, 441–43).

39. See Pless, “The Ordination of Women,” 241 notes 38, 40–41 concerning scholars taking this position.

40. Μη πάντες ἀπόστολοι; μη πάντες προφῆται; μη πάντες διδάσκαλοι; μη πάντες δυνάμεις; (1 Cor 12:29). The negative particle μή in a question requires the answer no (H. W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1920], §2651; James W. Voelz, *Fundamental Greek Grammar*, 4th ed. [St. Louis: Concordia, 2014], 261).

41. Scaer, “May Women Be Ordained?” 323.

42. Tsekrekos, “Eschatological Character of Christian Marriage,” 308. See also Charles A. Gieschen, “Ordained Proclaimers or Quiet Learners? Women in Worship in Light of 1 Timothy 2,” in *Women Pastors?*, 87; Giertz, “Twenty-three Theses,” 255; Peter Brunner, “The Ministry and the Ministry of Women,” in *Women Pastors?*, 276–77; Weinrich, “It is not Given to Women,” 476–77.

Sarah called her Abraham “lord” long ago (1 Pet 3:6).⁴³ Such respect on Sarah’s part required faith since she was twice passed off to kings as Abraham’s “sister,” even though both accounts make much of the fact that she was in fact Abraham’s “wife” (Gen 12:18–20; 20:3, 11–13). So Abraham was not a perfect husband, and yet—despite manifest failings and foibles—Sarah respected him and submitted to him in faith. The example of Sarah’s obedience would be an appropriate encouragement to the wives to whom Peter was writing in the early church, for Sarah became the mother of all God’s people in the Old Testament (Isa 51:2; see also Gal 4:22–26).⁴⁴

THE “GREAT MYSTERY” BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

So far I have painted a bleak picture of what can only be described as an assault on marriage posed by such disparate forces as feminism, secularism, a gender-bending culture, and now a radicalized homosexual agenda. I shall conclude the article more favorably by mining St. John Chrysostom’s Homily 20, which was that Greek church father’s homiletical exposition of the household code of which Ephesians 5:21 constitutes the first verse.⁴⁵ Although himself a monk, Chrysostom (AD 354–407) had a profound understanding of the needs of those married persons who comprised the Christian congregations of both Antioch and later Constantinople, and this more than a thousand years before Martin Luther appeared.⁴⁶ Unlike Augustine, Chrysostom supposed that God instituted marriage primarily to promote the holiness of the husband and wife, and only secondarily to produce legitimate issue (children). It was Chrysostom’s understanding that in marriage God begins to restore the unity of mankind—and the cosmos as a whole—that has been broken by sin. Thus marriage is both a great mystery in itself and represents a greater mystery, the unity of redeemed mankind in Christ: “This mystery is profound [τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν],” Paul writes in response to the already ancient Scripture that the two shall “become one flesh” (Gen 2:24; see also Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7–8; 1 Cor 6:16), “and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church [ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν]” (Eph 5:32).

As was true of Paul earlier, so Chrysostom did not aim at overthrowing the outward structures of society, but rather to commend those aspects even of the fallen world that are conducive of stability and the outward peace necessary for the Christian life to exist. Slavery was one such structure (Eph 6:5–9; Col

3:22–4:1; 1 Tim 6:1–2), as are temporal authority (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Tim 2:1–2) and marriage (Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19; see also 1 Pet 3:1–7). Christian teaching did not strive to subvert these worldly institutions, but rather perhaps to mitigate their harshness or transform them from within.⁴⁷ While Paul and Chrysostom do not suggest any change in the outward forms of men and women’s relationships, they expect spouses of both sexes to be transfigured by love.

With respect to egalitarianism between the spouses, which our society—and even most Christians nowadays—simply assume as self-evident, Paul taught that Christian wives enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom and equality with their husbands—for example, in sexual matters. And so one finds a considerable symmetry and even fairness in 1 Corinthians 7, for example, where Paul tells both spouses that they should fulfill their “conjugal rights” to one another (τὴν ὀφειλὴν, 7:3), that the wife does not “have authority” (ἐξουσιάζει) over her own body but rather her husband does, and vice-versa (7:4), and so the two ought not to “deprive one another” (μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους) of the sexual act, but only by consent (ἐκ συμφώνου) and for a time (πρὸς καιρὸν), that there might be leisure for prayer—but then to come together again “so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (7:5). Paul’s way of phrasing matters indicates that he was as aware of possible tensions between Christian husbands and wives in Corinth in the mid-50s AD, as Chrysostom was aware of husband-wife relations in the late fourth and early fifth centuries.⁴⁸ So there is some justification for supposing that Paul was for mutual submission between the sexes with respect to the sexual act, and even that he could have supported an egalitarian agenda.⁴⁹ According to this view, there was an original parity between men and women during the early Pauline period,⁵⁰ but over time emerged a gradual hardening in the church so that the roles of women became more restricted—probably to avoid provoking controversy over and against the prevailing patriarchal society. Such reasoning has caused many scholars to suggest that Paul really did not write the letters wherein the more restrictive views on women seem represented;⁵¹ thus Paul could not have written the so-called Deutero-Paulines (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1–2 Timothy, Titus) in the opinion of so many nowa-

43. Sarah laughed when Yahweh announced that she was to have a child (Gen 18:10), yet even amid her derision she called Abraham “lord” (ὁ δὲ κύριός μου πρεσβύτερος = “and my lord is too old,” Gen 18:12). So Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1964), 185.

44. Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 141–42.

45. St. John Chrysostom, “Homily 20: On Ephesians 5:22–33,” in *On Marriage and Family Life*, trans. Catharine P. Roth and David Anderson, Popular Patristic Series (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1986), 43–64. The Greek text is available in John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 20 (PG 62:135–50).

46. See Pless, “The Ordination of Women,” 235–40 for a summary of Luther’s view of marriage as the Christian’s “arena of faith and love.”

47. So Catharine P. Roth, introduction to *On Marriage*, by Chrysostom, 10–11.

48. For the dating of 1 Corinthians to early AD 55 see Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 14–15. For the dating of Chrysostom’s life and ministry see S. L. Greenslade, “Chrysostom, John,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 234; and Roth, introduction to *On Marriage*, 7–8.

49. Ibid., 10 n. 18, cites Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), 261–66, in support of this position.

50. Roth, introduction to *On Marriage*, 10, mentions the women missionaries and patronesses of churches listed in Romans 16, for example, Phoebe (1–2), Priscilla (3), Mary (6), Tryphena and Tryphosa (12), Persis (12), the mother of Rufus (13), Julia (15), Nereus’s sister (15), and Junia (Ἰουνία, 6) whose name is disputed (it may be the masculine form Ἰουνιάς –ā, m; see BDAG, 480).

51. See David G. Horrell, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul*, 2nd ed. (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 129–35. See also my review of this book in *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008): 376–77.

days, but continuators expanded upon Paul's authentic ideas by adapting them to suit an emerging male hierarchy within the congregations.⁵² Thus, it has been argued, Paul himself need not necessarily have been quite the male chauvinist he has been made out to be, but perhaps was more in favor of egalitarianism (if not women's liberation) than traditionally supposed. Indeed, the project undertaken by many New Testament critics nowadays is to empower women to read "against the grain" of the patriarchal rhetoric of the Bible so as simultaneously to destroy other overarching and interlocking systems of oppression: racism, poverty, heterosexism, and colonialism.⁵³ In this view, the household codes should be read as "ideologies of masculinity" that were originally meant "to reinforce paternity, male control of household dependents, and male control of women's sexual experience."⁵⁴ But now Christian families ought to give priority to the imaginative possibilities of God's liberating, healing love over the broken realities of our lives and the world: "As such, the Ephesians code serves as an ongoing invitation to critique and resist any form of exploitative power in contemporary as well as ancient empire."⁵⁵

The preceding paragraph provides an adequate understanding of where New Testament criticism proceeds in these matters, and also what confessional Lutheran pastors and New Testament scholars are up against. Regardless of such theories, however, it seemed clear—to Chrysostom, at any rate—that Paul was the author of all the letters traditionally assigned to him;⁵⁶ and so I shall side with Chrysostom against the modern critics and permit Paul to maintain, on the one hand, that husband and wife are fundamentally united in God's sight because, as Chrysostom notes, while Eve was made from Adam's side in the Garden of Eden, every male human being proceeds from woman at birth—granting to both the man and the woman at creation, and in life, a profound interdependency.⁵⁷ Thus, reasons Chrysostom, the woman cannot be a fundamentally different creature than man, but both spouses need the other for the procreation of the species and the type of communion that is possible between a man and a woman in holy marriage. In making these points near the beginning of Homily 20, Chrysostom cites Jesus (Matt 19:4) to the effect that God made man in his image as male and female:

Just as the branches of a tree proceed from a single trunk,
He made the one man Adam to be the origin of all man-

kind, both male and female, and made it impossible for men and women to be self-sufficient. Later, He forbade men to marry their sisters or daughters, so that our love would not be limited to members of our families, and withdrawn from the rest of the human race. All of this is implied in Christ's words: "He who made them from the beginning made them male and female."⁵⁸

***"The wife is a second authority.
She should not demand equality."***

On the other hand, with respect to roles played out within the marital estate itself, husbands and wives are quite different. The offensive *ordo*, as everyone knows, is that wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord, and husbands love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:22, 25; see also Col 3:18–19; 1 Pet 3:1, 7). I believe, then, that Chrysostom would have condemned—and roundly so—the notion of mutual reciprocity that so many insist is essential for successful marriages nowadays. Hear Chrysostom on his own terms:

The wife is a second authority. She should not demand equality [τὴν ἰσοτιμίαν], for she is subject to the head [ὑπὸ γὰρ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἔστι]; neither should the husband belittle her subjection, for she is the body. If the head despises the body, it will itself die. Rather, let the husband counterbalance her obedience with his love. Let the hands, the feet, and all the rest of the body's parts be dedicated to the service of the head; but let the head provide for the body, for the head is responsible for all the members. Nothing can be better than a union like this, but I know that some will say, "How can there be love where there is fear?" Most especially there, I say: she who fears, also loves [ἡ γὰρ φοβουμένη καὶ ἀγαπᾷ], and she who loves her husband respects him because he is her head. Also, she loves him because he is a part of her body, since the head is a member of the body as well. Paul places the head in authority and the body in obedience for the sake of peace. Where there is equal authority, there never is peace. A household cannot be a democracy, ruled by everyone, but the authority must necessarily rest in one person. The same is true for the Church: when men are led by the Spirit of Christ, then there is peace.⁵⁹

Within marriage there is a unity between husband and wife—two equal parties, as all agree. Chrysostom says that in

52. So Horrell, *Study of Paul*, 126–35. Indeed, some version of this view is reflected as a matter of undisputed fact in most recent studies including, for example, Warren Carter, *Seven Events that Shaped the New Testament World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 119–20; and Elna Mouton, "Reimagining Ancient Household Ethos?" *Neotestamentica* 48 (2014): 167–68.

53. For an example, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 7; and her *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 10.

54. Mouton, "Reimagining Ancient Household Ethos?" 168.

55. *Ibid.*, 181.

56. As admitted by Roth, introduction to *On Marriage*, 16.

57. On this point in particular see Tsekrekos, "Eschatological Character of Christian Marriage," 309.

58. Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 20 [PG 62:135]; "Homily 20," 44 (Matt 19:4, citing Gen 1:27).

59. Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 20 [PG 62:140–41]; "Homily 20," 53–54.

marriage the two bodies are really one body: “[T]he Christian couple forms a common human body,”⁶⁰ in that the husband is the head and the wife is the body. And yet within this unity the two spouses serve quite distinct roles in the marital relationship and there can be no interchangeability. Here wife must obey husband, considering obedience to him to be part of her duty to the Lord, even if she is not inclined to obedience for her husband’s sake. Likewise, the husband — as he hopes to receive his wife’s obedience — must treat his wife with loving care, kindness, and husbandly solicitude. Then she will respond willingly to his attentions as a free person, and not fearfully as a slave. So

The husband’s duty is greater than the wife’s, as love is stronger than fear, and the initiative for love begins with him.

while true that wives are supposed to submit to their own husbands “as to the Lord” (ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, Eph 5:22) — a phrase, by the way, that applies as much to slaves respecting their masters as wives submitting to their husbands⁶¹ — the husband’s duty is greater than the wife’s, as love is stronger than fear, and the initiative for love begins with him. Nor are married persons ever excused from duty on account of the other spouse’s delinquencies; thus, a wife is supposed to keep submitting to her husband even though he may not love her properly, and a husband must continue loving a disrespectful and insubordinate wife. Nevertheless, the husband’s duty is correspondingly greater than the wife’s because, in Chrysostom’s view, the husband embodies Christ and so exemplifies here on earth all those qualities Paul describes so glowingly of Christ giving himself over for the church in the household code of Ephesians 5:25–29 — sanctifying, cleansing, nourishing, and feeding. As such, the husband must persist in loving his wife, whatever her faults and whatever the consequences, because Christ loved the church and died for her even before he had purified her.

Chrysostom singles out the men of his congregation and asks them, somewhat ironically,

Do you want your wife to be obedient to you, as the Church is to Christ? Then be responsible for the same providential care of her, as Christ is for the Church. And even if it becomes necessary for you to give your life for her, yes, and even to endure and undergo suffering of any

kind, do not refuse. Even though you undergo all this, you will never have done anything equal to what Christ has done. You are sacrificing yourself for someone to whom you are already joined, but He offered Himself up for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way, then, as He honored her by putting at His feet [περὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ] one who turned her back on Him, who hated, rejected, and disdained Him, as He accomplished this not with threats, or violence, or terror, or anything else like that, but through His untiring love; so also you should behave toward your wife. Even if you see her belittling you, or despising and mocking you, still you will be able to subject her to yourself, through affection, kindness, and your great regard for her [τῇ πολλῇ περὶ αὐτὴν προνοίᾳ, τῇ ἀγάπῃ, τῇ φιλίᾳ]. There is no influence more powerful than the bond of love, especially for husband and wife [οὐδὲν γὰρ τούτων τυραννικώτερον τῶν δεσμῶν, καὶ μάλιστα ἀνδρὶ καὶ γυναικί]. A servant can be taught submission through fear; but even he, if provoked too much, will soon seek his escape. But one’s partner for life, the mother of one’s children, the source of one’s every joy, should never be fettered with fear and threats [φόβῳ καὶ ἀπειλαῖς], but with love and patience [ἀγάπῃ καὶ διαθέσει]. What kind of marriage can there be when the wife is afraid of her husband? What sort of satisfaction could a husband himself have, if he lives with his wife as if she were a slave, and not with a woman by her own free will? Suffer anything for her sake, but never disgrace her, for Christ never did this with the Church.⁶²

Interestingly, in this passage, Chrysostom describes the husband’s management of the wife — if one may speak in such terms — as a kind of wearing her down by kindness, as a kind of “breaking” her by love and esteem, as comes through clearly in the original Greek; thus Christ subjects the church “to his feet” (περὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ), as husbands place wives at their feet (ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας . . . τοὺς σοὺς); there is nothing “more tyrannical” than the “bonds” (τυραννικώτερον τῶν δεσμῶν) which exist between a husband and his wife; and just as slaves are taught submission through “fear and threats” (φόβῳ καὶ ἀπειλαῖς), so wives learn to submit through the husband’s “love and patience” (ἀγάπῃ καὶ διαθέσει). Such touches reveal that men of Chrysostom’s age were as used to throwing their weight around in their households by browbeating wives, children, slaves, and assorted underlings with threats and violence as they were in Paul’s day: “Masters, do the same to them [the slaves], and stop your threatening [ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν], knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him” (Eph 6:9; see also Col 4:1). Another passage that establishes the point is Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger [μὴ παροργίζετε τὰ τέκνα ὑμῶν], but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the

60. Tsekrekos, “Eschatological Character of Christian Marriage,” 319.

61. Compare ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ (“as is fitting in the Lord,” Col 3:18; of wives vis-à-vis their husbands) and ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ (“as to the Lord,” Eph 6:7; Col 3:23; of slaves vis-à-vis their masters).

62. Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 20 [PG 62:137]; “Homily 20,” 46–47.

Lord” (see also Col 3:21).⁶³ Chrysostom, like Paul before him, was reacting to the sorry state of most domestic arrangements throughout the Roman period and offering to both men and women a different life, a better alternative, in Christ Jesus.⁶⁴ Indeed, it has been recognized that marriage practices among the early Christians “would be one of the most important vehicles for communicating the essence of the church and for negotiating life with neighbors.”⁶⁵ Chrysostom’s preaching—as well as St. Paul’s *Haustafeln* before that—demonstrates an awareness of allowing Christ’s light to shine among pagan neighbors through the (on the whole) stable, peaceable, and joyful marriages of Christian spouses.

So whenever it might be necessary to admonish a wife, Chrysostom says, always begin by telling her how much you love her:

Nothing will persuade her so well to admit the wisdom of your words as her assurance that you are speaking to her with sincere affection. Tell her that you are convinced that money is not important, that only thieves thirst for it constantly, that you love her more than gold; and indeed an intelligent, discreet, and pious young woman is worth more than all the money in the world. Tell her that you love her more than your own life, because this present life is nothing, and that your only hope is that the two of you pass through this life in such a way that in the world to come you will be united in perfect love. Say to her, “Our time here is brief and fleeting, but if we are pleasing to God, we can exchange this life for the Kingdom to come. Then we will be perfectly one both with Christ and each other, and our pleasure will know no bounds. I value your love above all things, and nothing would be so bitter or painful to me as our being at odds with each other. Even if I lose everything, any affliction is tolerable if you will be true to me.” Show her that you value her company, and prefer being at home to being out. Esteem her in the presence of your friends and children. Praise and show admiration for her good acts; and if she ever does anything foolish, advise her patiently. Pray together at home and go to Church; when you come back home, let each ask the other the meaning of the readings and the prayers. If you are overtaken by poverty, remember Peter and Paul, who were more honored than kings or rich men, though they spent their lives in hunger and thirst. Remind one another that nothing in life is to be feared, except offending God. If your marriage is like this, your perfection will rival the holiest of monks.⁶⁶

From Chrysostom we learn that although the man and woman were made by God to be more or less equal beings at creation, there are quite different roles between wives and husbands in the marital relationship—wives submitting, husbands loving—and there should be no fudging with respect to the created order. Of the two duties described, Chrysostom places more emphasis on the husband loving his wife than on the wife submitting to her husband, for out of the husband’s love and devotion comes the wife’s realization that she is loved and cared for, so that she willingly submits to her husband—indeed, “in everything” (ἐν παντί, Eph 5:24).⁶⁷ The husband, then, takes the part of Christ who “gave” (παρέδωκεν)—and, indeed, still “gives”—himself for the church: purifying her, washing her by means of water with the word, presenting for himself

Whenever it might be necessary to admonish a wife, Chrysostom says, always begin by telling her how much you love her.

a “glorious church” (ἐδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), one not having “spot or wrinkle or any such thing” (Eph 5:26–27). In the public ministry of baptizing, teaching, preaching, and proclaiming the gospel to sinners, our Lord Jesus Christ presents before himself his glorious and radiant bride, the church—not some cheap strumpet. Such loving condescension on the part of Christ for the sake of his church is “a great mystery,” Paul says, and what he seems to mean is that humble Christian marriage reveals here below what is taking place between “Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32), both here below and in the heavenly places. In the relationship between a Christian husband and his wife there is a kind of movement between the two persons—a dance, if you will—that reflects the deep and marvelous relationship between God the Father and Christ the Son. A consistent portrayal of Jesus is that he submits to the Father in all things and will on the Last Day “be subjected [ὑποταγῆσεται] to him who put all things in subjection under him [τῷ ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα], that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). A quite analogous relationship exists, then, between a husband and

63. See Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 406 on this point.

64. For the shocking state of violence in many Roman households see especially Richard P. Saller, “Corporal Punishment, Authority, and Obedience in the Roman Household,” in *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 144–65.

65. Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 126.

66. Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 20 [PG 62:146–47]; “Homily 20,” 61–62.

67. The point requires emphasis on account of recent attempts of feminist scholars to insist upon the limitations of this part of the contract, “namely that the wife is only supposed to be subject to the husband ‘as the church is subject to Christ,’ that is, ‘in an utterly non-coercive voluntary manner,’” (Virginia R. Mollenkott, “Emancipative Elements in Ephesians 5:21–33: Why Feminist Scholarship Has [Often] Left Them Unmentioned, and Why They Should Be Emphasized,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff [Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003], 46); also Mouton, “Reimagining Ancient Household Ethos?” 179.

wife in Christian marriage. In the man's loving his wife and the wife's submitting to her husband there is reflected—usually in very humble circumstances, and always in a manner at least partially obstructed by sin—the relationship that goes on everlastingly between God the Father and Christ the Son in the Holy Trinity.

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates, first, that Ephesians 5:21 does *not* support mutual submission in the way that Padgett and many egalitarian interpreters of the pertinent scriptural passages have suggested; second, that God's creating man (*ha-Adam*; τὸν ἄνθρωπον, Gen 1:27) in his image at the beginning as male and female was hardly some incidental detail in a creation myth far removed from our own reality—but that, on the contrary, sexuality matters quite a lot in one's life here below, both at home and at church, in the relationships that routinely transpire between human beings; and third, that in the greatest relationship that can possibly take place between human beings this side of heaven—namely, in Christian marriage—the goings-on between a man and a woman mirror, however imperfectly, our Lord Jesus Christ's love for his sin-impaired bride, the church, and his giving himself over for her in all the myriad and marvelous ways that he does. Seemingly high-minded statements that husbands should “submit” to their wives out of “self-sacrificial love and voluntary self-submission” and wives should “return the same”⁶⁸ should be avoided, in my opinion, not only because such comments reduce Christ to the level of a “standard and moral exemplar,”⁶⁹ as we have seen, but also because this sort of drivel flattens the distinctions between man and woman that were instituted so gloriously at creation: “male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27).

So let Christian men be men, I say, and let Christian women be women in the ways that were instituted by the Lord God at creation, are revealed in God's word, and have been applied and unpacked in such sermons as John Chrysostom produced for the church and for us, so many years later. If there were ever a time for the church to be submissively faithful to her Lord in such matters, that time is now, with so much sexual confusion in our culture and absolutely no signs of improvement. Nothing less than human society is at stake in the current crisis, and the church has the potential of being of genuine service to her contemporaries in ways great and small—such as, for example, in influencing girls to aspire to marriage and motherhood, and young men to “play Christ” to the former by respecting, honoring, and putting them first. Far from acquiescing to the sexual confusion of contemporary society, the “radiant” bride of Christ (ἐνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, Eph 5:27), should let her light shine brightly before others and not be intimidated by the cultural forces that are attempting to reconfigure humanity in destructive, and even demonic, ways. Through the church, indeed, the light of

Christ shines brightly in the world, and we have the promise that the darkness cannot overcome it (John 1:5; see also 1 John 1:5–7). Many, perhaps even most, will scoff at the traditional

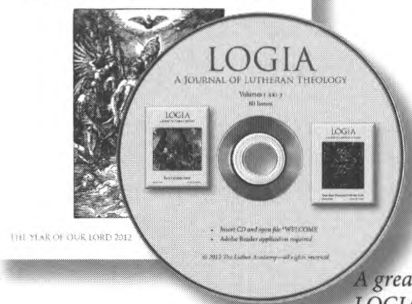
The goings-on between a man and a woman mirror, however imperfectly, our Lord Jesus Christ's love for his sin-impaired bride, the church.

scholarship represented in this article, but God's word promises not to return “empty” (Is 55:10). Thus, some (perhaps only a very few!) will hearken to God in these matters, seek out the spouse that the Lord intends, sire children thereby, then raise their young God-pleasingly in Lutheran homes and congregations. The next generation, then—and subsequent generations thereafter—shall call God “blessed” (Ps 145:4; see also 22:30) and these shall constitute the church whom their Lord will not abandon to the end of the age (Mt 28:20). **LOGIA**

Want to get 20 YEARS of LOGIA in one place?

LOGIA ON CD
A JOURNAL OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY

\$50



A great way to update your LOGIA library, or to pass this awesome resource on to a friend, your pastor, or a seminarian.

- 80 issues
- PDF format in color
- Bookmarks, links, and search capabilities

www.logia.org • customerservice@logia.org

68. So Padgett, *As Christ Submits*, 41–42.

69. *Ibid.*, 46; compare pages 37 and 45.