

COVENANT RENEWAL

Genesis 1:26-28

Matthew 28:18-20

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A COVENANTAL VIEW OF MALE/FEMALE ROLES

The unisexual trend in our society has caused much confusion about the roles of man and woman. At the top of the list producing the confusion are some serious ~~theological problems. Several years ago, the neo-evangelical~~ world was delighted, or at least horrified, at Paul Jewett's

Jewett developed Barth's insight that Adam and Eve **relationally** imaged God. His conclusion is that since male and female **together** are the image of God (Gen. 1:26ff.), God created functional "equality" among men and women. It is not surprising that many "feminists" have used Jewett's thesis against Bible believing Christians. Nevertheless, the problem with Jewett's premises and conclusions is **presuppositional**.

First, although I agree with Barth's basic insight, we must realize a oneness and manyness to the imaging of God. Man and woman together **do** image God in a corporate sense. But man in his singularity also images God. Adam as a man is said to be the image of God (Gen. 1:26ff.). Jewett pushes Barth's insight to the point where the oneness image of God is obliterated. Theologically, an over-emphasis on the corporate imaging of God would break down the Biblical rationale for **male representation in the persons of Adam and Christ**. Practically speaking, the single individual, like the Apostle Paul, would be left wondering how he, as an individual, is unique in reflecting the image of God. When we push on Jewett's position, we find that the Biblical man does not want to attempt to put the one against the many, even if to make a point.

Second, Jewett assumes that equality in being – man and woman are of equal worth in terms of their essence – rules out **functional** subordination. Thus, the traditional roles of headship in the husband (Eph. 5:22ff.), and submission in the woman (Eph. 5:22) are unjustifiable. But we see that Jesus, as the Son of God, submitted to the Father. Economically, he submitted even though ontologically, He is God.

In a recent interview, Jewett was asked how he reconciled Paul's statement that women are not to exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11ff.), on the one hand, with the fact that the Bible also teaches equality in Christ between the sexes, on the other. Jewett's response was that Paul was wrong! When a sexual model for coping with role problems violates the integrity of Scripture, I think one needs to reconsider his understanding of the roles.

Jewett pushes his position so far that he hints at bi-sexuality within the Godhead and man. I know, however, that Jewett denies hi-sexuality in both categories. And, even though some have gone too far with his position, he cannot be entirely responsible.

Nevertheless, the whole question of hi-sexuality is an issue in our society. Teenage idols are appealing to our youth culture on the basis of hi-sexuality. Perhaps this problem is one of the few aspects of the "1984" culture that

Orwell was right about. But when God's **transcendent** Word is rejected, man defines roles relatively on the basis of function. And, in a high-tech society where men and ~~women can do the same things, the traditional view of roles~~ has been devastated.

My main problem, however, with extending the Jewett model into hi-sexuality into the Godhead is the premise of the "analogy of being" (**analogia entis**). In other words, God and man end up having the same "essence." Yet, continuity in "being" between God and man does not exist. God is Spirit and man is dust (Gen. 2:8). God is not sexual in a physical sense because He does not have a body. Sexuality in man is symbolic of **ethical and covenantal** realities in God. For example, humanity has certain roles in an analogous way to the Godhead. But there is no **analogia entis** (analogy of being),

One other factor contributing to the confusion of the roles of man and woman centers around recent reaction to the "Victorian Ideal." In the last century, the woman was viewed as a dainty bird in a cage. Her purpose was to live in this cage, a surreal world, and be a pet to the husband. In the words of Ann Douglas, the Victorian interpretation of woman has led to a basic "feminization of America."¹ Women in the 20th century are reacting to this model, and leaving the home to work at men's jobs. Men, in turn are leaving work to take on more domestic responsibility.

How has the Church dealt with the attack on traditional roles? Unfortunately, the Church has reacted to the reaction, and all too often argued for either a basic "Victorian (Fundamentalist) or feminist (Liberal) Ideal." But we must ask, "Is either the Victorian or the feminist model of womanhood **Biblical**?" Do we, as people committed to the Bible, have another model?

Representative Language

The Apostle Paul acknowledges distinct **covenantal** male/female roles. He argues that male and female **covenantally** represent Christ and His Bride. He says,

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands

1. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of America* (New York: Knopf, 1977). The author's premise is that America views the woman as dainty and weak because of the influence of the Victorian Era. Imagery which comes out of this period has dominated for the last 150 years. The "feminization" process has affected other areas. One of the places this conception of weakness appears is in the clergy. She points out that during the Puritan Era at the beginning of America, clergymen were viewed as strong and adventurous. Most clergy, for example, were avid hunters (pp. 80ff.). Furthermore, in the Church, theology has been replaced with sentimentality and emotionalism (pp. 121 ff.). Thus, the Victorian model has destroyed the concept of strength in men, women, and the Church.

in everything (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Paul says nothing about inherent ability: intelligence, physical strength and so forth. He doesn't assign roles on the basis of the woman's being able to do what the man can do. For that matter, he is not talking about occupation or profession. He is describing roles.

The Apostle bases the notion of set roles on a fundamental **covenantal** or representative principle. God deals with man through **covenantal** representatives. Adam is all of humanities' representative and Christ is the church's **covenantal** head (Romans 5:12ff.). In the case of the two Adams, their role is priestly. They mediated grace to the world.

Since God builds the representative principle into the warp and woof of creation, man must interact with his fellow man on a similar basis of representation. In Deuteronomy, Moses commands the people to choose leaders to **represent** them, since everyone can't rule (Deut. 1:9ff.). In the New Testament, the principle continues when deacons have to be selected to serve; they end up representing the Apostles (Acts 6:1ff.).

And, not only are the roles covenantal, but the attendant responsibilities are too. Paul tells a woman to submit because she represents the bride of Christ. The man is to nourish his wife because he **covenantally represents** the Lord. **Failure** to comply with these created roles keeps certain basic truths about God's relationship to man from being witnessed. Breakdown in covenantal representation erodes the message of the sacraments themselves.

Sacramental and Symbolic Language

The very beginning chapters of Genesis present us with two kinds of language, sacramental and symbolic. What God says is sacramental and what man says is of a symbolic character since he is an "image" (Gen. 1:26). Respectively, these types of communication correspond to and form a foundation for the roles of man and woman. To be more specific, let us begin with a more detailed explanation. What is **sacramental** language?

Sacramental Language

Sacramental language is God's **Word**. By the word **sacrament** we mean two things. One, we mean fiat. Fiat is the Latin word for "let there be," used to translate that phrase in the *Vulgate*.² In Genesis, God's statement, "Let there be," brings the created world into existence. We could say the world is brought about by fiat command. God's Word automatically materializes whatever is called into existence. When God speaks, His command is accomplished. In other words, sacramental language establishes whatever is being spoken. Given this definition, therefore, the Bible determines what is the only truly sacramental language.

Two, sacramental language sustains what has been established. God did this by creating a world that could support the creation. But the world was not intended to run by itself. As the world had been established by His Word, it could only be sustained by the same. So, God continued to communicate to man. This communication is also the written Word of God. Therefore, sacramental language establishes and sustains.

Symbolic Language

Symbolic language is the language of humanity. Man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:28). His purpose is basically symbolic and his language bears this out. One, man's language is imitative. Whatever humanity says can only be a copy of what God has already said, even though

human language can distort what **God** has said, and become a "cheap" imitation. Two, humanity's communication is responsorial. It is designed to answer back to God what He has created and said. Therefore, **sacramental** language actually brings something about, and **symbolic** language images what has been created.

What does the sacramental/symbolic model have to do with the basic roles of man and woman? Everything. When we read about the creation of man and woman and their union, the language between them follows the sacramental/symbolic pattern. Just after God creates Eve from Adam's rib, Adam gives the name "woman" to the female (Gen. 2:23). Then, Moses adds editorially that a "man shall leave his father and mother." Notice that the male takes on the basic sacramental role. He is the one who establishes the marriage through communication. And he is the one who sustains the marriage through the unique communication which results from his leaving and cleaving (Gen. 2:24).

Parenthetically, I am not saying that the man is a sacrament, but only that the man's role is a **picture** of the real sacrament, God and His Word. Nevertheless, we see the Biblical rationale why the man should be the one who serves the sacraments. Women should never be priests, and/or serve the sacraments. Hence, only men are to be deacons, presbyters, and bishops.

The first woman, on the other hand, is conspicuously silent after creation. That is, she is verbally silent until the fall, but the body language is obvious. The only way to describe what she does is with the word "responds." She answers back to man by co-operating with and following him. Her role, therefore, is **symbolic** in that it images what the man had initiated.

The point is that the roles of man and woman represent a basic language **pattern** of the universe which reflects the relationship of God to man. That is, man's function stands for the role of God, and woman's represents the role of humanity.

So, the primary purpose of marriage is to portray the relationship between God and man. When communication between God and man is fleshed out in the roles of marriage, man becomes the initiator, woman the responder, and together they image the relationship between God and man. Therefore, let us now observe the sacramental/symbolic pattern throughout the Bible and begin to understand better the practical ramifications.

Biblical Examples

One, the Serpent's temptation of Eve (Gen. 3) **re-enforces** what we are saying, except the roles are reversed. When the Serpent seduces the woman, he gets her to communicate for the family. For the first time, the woman communicates outside the home. Notice that the woman takes the (forbidden fruit) to the man. In other words, she serves the sacrament. This time, man is conspicuously silent, and the sacramental/symbolic distinction is born out negatively.

Two, after God judges all parties involved in the fall of man, something else happens to show that the roles have been put back into original function: Adam renames the woman (Gen. 3:20). By renaming her, he takes on the basic communicative role. The name given to woman was "Eve" which means "mother of all living." At the fall, Eve had moved out of her assigned role and not properly imaged humanity. She had attempted to take on the male's role. In her new name, we see that she takes back the role of representing humanity. She, more than the male, symbolizes man.

Three, moving to the New Testament, we see the same designations. When Paul comes to a discussion of the role of man and woman, he (along with Peter) begins his dis-

² The Latin translation of the Bible

cussion of roles with the woman. Should we conclude that the roles of man and woman are reversed in the New Testament?

Our model clarifies. Paul begins with the woman because she represents the Church. His concerns in the second half of his letter to the Ephesians, were commands that would cause the Ephesians to act like God's Bride. In the first half of the book, Paul explained what God, the Groom of the Church, had done. Since the second half is "hortatory" in character, Paul is concentrating on the Church, the Bride of God. So, we would expect Paul to begin with the woman in his discussion of marriage roles (Eph. 5:22ff.).

Finally, we should point out that these role distinctions are born out in a practical way. A man tends to **engross** (to stand outside and observe), whereas, a woman tends to **encompass** (to stand within and embrace). Watch the difference between the man's and the woman's response to a hurl child. The man talks to the child and asks if it's all right. The woman, however, picks up the child and cuddles. Hand a baby to a man. He'll hold the baby out in front of himself, perpendicular to the ground. He may even begin to extend the perpendicularity by tossing the baby up and down in the air. Women almost never do this. The woman takes a baby up into her arms. A woman gives toys to a child, and a man gives himself in play. In each difference, the man "engrosses" and the woman "encompasses." This is just another way of saying the man communicates or initiates, and the woman reflects or responds by cuddling and protecting.

Also, the engrossing pattern in men is that they are generally more preoccupied with the woman's appearance than is the woman with her own looks. In most marriages where the woman has some **sort** of cosmetic surgery, it is due to the man's desire that the woman remain attractive. He may not have directly commented, but most of the time it is what he does not say about the beauty of the wife that lets her know she's fading in appearance. Why is the man this way? Ephesians says, "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her that she might . . . have no spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:25-27). This says that man's glory is wrapped up in the woman's appearance. A beautiful woman says a lot about the man. So, there's nothing wrong with a man's concern about the woman's beauty. Of course, it has to be kept in perspective. Women grow old and the character of their beauty changes. Nevertheless, the man takes a removed position, stands back, and **engrosses**.

The woman, on the other hand, **touches**. She wants the man to hold her when she's upset. But he wants to talk about it. She goes to the store and picks up the fruit to see if its ripe. The man, however, will go more by looks.

Implications

What's the real benefit of the basic sacramental/symbolic model. First, it properly defines the essential differences **between** man and woman. Listen to people in the Church talk about the basic differences between man and

and the woman is irrational. That's just not true. Watch a man at a football game. He'll be quite emotional. Most men have trouble controlling their tempers. This doesn't sound like it fits the basic **rational/irrational** distinction.

Second, the sacramental/symbolic model explains why man and woman can do the same kinds of things. The man's role was created to represent Christ, and the woman's role was established to represent the Bride of Christ. In other words, the woman is not secondary to man. What the woman represents, humanity, is secondary to God. Thus, their respective roles do not have anything to

do with innate ability. The fact of the matter is, the woman is generally all-around stronger than the man. Her weakness is in the fact that she represents humanity that is weaker than God.

The basic sacramental/symbolic characteristics criss-cross in man and woman. Man was created primarily to be an initiator, and secondarily a responder. Woman, however, was created to be a responder primarily, and a communicator secondarily. Both can do the same kinds of things. This criss-cross effect clarifies why women are sometimes found in the Bible doing what men should be doing. Deborah judged, and other women were prophetesses. Functionally, women can serve in the gaps which the men leave, and men can serve in the gaps that women leave.

Third, the sacramental/symbolic model not only clarifies why men and women can do the same kinds of things, but why a woman's replacement of the man was always temporary in the Bible. Whenever God calls up a woman to do what a man should be doing, like in the case of Deborah (Jud. 4-5), it could only last a short time. God made man according to the **sacramental** model. God built this into his being. Consequently, man returns to his created role through redemption. So, Deborah attempted to hand the sacramental responsibility to Barak. Even though he failed, however, the next Judge after Deborah was Gideon (Jud. 6ff.), and it would be a long time before **Is-rael** ever had a female leader again.

Why? God told the woman at the fall, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). From the contrast in this verse, the "desire" of the fallen woman is to rule. She will attempt to take up a sacramental role. Yet, God made the man to function sacramentally, and the woman symbolically. So, the woman will be ruled by the man. God guarantees it.

There is more. Since function does not determine essence, a woman could do diaconal activities, for example, without becoming a deacon.

In other words, there is not a category of women deacons, only deaconesses (1 Tim. 3:11). Very simply put, women who do deacon functions are deaconesses, not deacons. Women who do prophetic functions are not prophets, but prophetesses (Since a priest is a guard, and the woman is a that which is guarded, there are no "priestesses" in Scripture). Again, we have to understand the essential created differences between man and woman. When a woman leads, she does so from **within** the bride. When a man leads, he does so **outside** of the bride. As ~~we noted earlier, the man takes~~ an engrossment position and the woman an encompassing position. A clergyman should be a member of synod (presbytery) which is outside of the congregation. A woman might be temporarily called upon to lead the congregation, as in some cases on the mission field, but she should never be a member of Presbytery.

Therefore, the sacramental/symbolic model is foundational to any understanding of the roles of man and woman. The man has a sacramental role, and the woman, a symbolic function. This leads us to three practical appli-

Application

First, the man carries somewhat of a tension within him because he not only represents what he **is** (a human), but what he is **not** (the Divine Husband). Thus, he stands alongside of the female as part of the bride. This is often a problem for the man because in his essence, he is a human being just like the woman. But also in his essence, he is male. Thus, both of these aspects are bound up in man. This tension expresses itself in an ambivalence. It is much easier for a man to see life from a woman's point

of view than it is for a woman to see life from the man's. Consequently, a woman often thinks her husband does not understand what she is going through. As a matter of fact, he might.

Second the sacramental/symbolic principle resolves the polygamy (having more than one wife) issue. What's the issue? The issue is "how could God bless a polygamist relationship?" Furthermore, how could He apparently not condemn it? We find in the case of David and Solomon that God blessed them even though they were both involved in polygamy. In their cases, however, the **Messianic line** comes through Bathsheba, a woman with whom David committed polygamy, which explains primarily why God tolerated the practice; He wanted to protect the Seed in a time of moral breakdown. So God neither overtly condemns, except in the case of kings (Deuteronomy 17:17), or condones. It simply happens, is never allowed, and mostly has serious extenuating consequences.

There are always negative consequences to polygamy, proving a fundamental ethical violation. Why? We must remember that the King of Israel had a **sacramental** role. He represented God. Thus, when the king committed polygamy, he pictured God's having more than one bride. Such an act broke down the monogamous base of the relationship, which was to exist between God and His people. Two brides symbolized that God was in covenant with two people. God attacks this kind of reasoning through Moses when He says, "They have made me jealous with what is not God; They have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (Deut. 32:21).

Jealousy is the basis of God's monogamous commitment to His people. Two wives, or two husbands for that matter (which is what idolatry symbolized), provoke God to wrath. Abraham brought trouble to his house for attempting to produce seed through another woman (Gen. 16). Essentially, he took Hagar as a pseudo "wife." Sarah became jealous for Isaac and cast out Hagar. Having a second wife led to a second son, and God could have only one true son. In this account, therefore, we see that there can only be one true bride, one true son, and one true people of God. Accordingly, when a King or a patriarch entered polygamous relationships, disaster followed.

The house of David is a clear example. David had many wives, the result of which was many sons. Those sons fought continually over the throne. Eventually, the favorite wife, Bathsheba, prevailed on David for Solomon. But Solomon still ended up fighting with other sons.

In the case of Solomon, his marriages to foreign wives

were political, not sensual. Nevertheless, Solomon was to bring them into the bride, not create "many foreign wives." Solomon was a type of Christ in that he included all the nations of the earth into covenant with Israel. This is precisely what happened in the New Covenant. Every tribe, nation, and tongue are brought in (Rev. 5:9).

When Solomon absorbed the religions of the foreign wives he reversed the imagery. He misrepresented God in that Solomon created the image of a Unitarian God with many wives. And, Solomon misrepresented the bride, since he was also part of the bride, chasing after other gods.

After Solomon, we find that his sons continued to fight. Thus, every time we find polygamy, even though God's Sovereignty eventually overcomes, the polygamous marriage brings destruction and trouble to the people of God.

The other times we find polygamy in the Old Testament are rare. So, we must not think that God tolerated polygamy on any large scale. Moreover, there is another important distinction to be made. God worked around the polygamy of Kings or Patriarchs, but He never tolerated polygamy among the people. This was the case in the time of the reconstruction of Israel. God commanded Ezra to lead the people out of their polygamous relationships. The people were to be the bride of God. Their role was to symbolize God's voice to them, or answer back in faithfulness. So, polygamy broke down their symbolic role.

Three, the sacramental/symbolic model means that the family tends to become what the father is. A very effective Christian family counselor once told me that most of the problems in any marriage can be resolved by getting the man to do and act the right way. He was right because the man communicates a certain attitude and general life-style. The woman and the rest of the family mirror this back. We see this pattern in the lives of several characters in Scripture as negative traits of the father were communicated to the family.

Therefore, the home becomes what the father communicates. A father should ask himself, "what mood and tone am I communicating to the home?" Is the father moody, energetic, nervous, to name a few? If he is, then more than likely the home will be moody, energetic, or nervous.

On the other hand, redemption is greater than sin. We see in the case of Abigail (II Sam. 25), that although her husband was a foolish and belligerent man, she redeemed the home. She prevented the sinful behavior which her husband was communicating. She offered true bread to David. So, a wife can overcome even an unbelieving husband's sinful tendencies through redemption by living out the grace conveyed in the true sacrament of Christ.