

# Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1–2

The first two chapters of the Bible deal directly and extensively with human sexuality. Not only is human sexuality presented as a basic fact of creation; an elucidation of the nature and theology of sexuality receives central, climactic placement in the Genesis creation accounts. Within the cosmic scope of the creation narratives, the disproportionate amount of space devoted to the subject of sexuality also underscores its special significance in the theology of the HB.<sup>1</sup> As noted in the introduction, above, a central premise of this book builds upon a growing consensus within biblical scholarship that Genesis 1–3 provides the interpretive foundation for the rest of Scripture. Deborah Sawyer represents this consensus assessment: “In the opening chapters of Genesis the triangular relationship of God/man/woman is set in place to explain and inform subsequent narrative and legislation as it unfolds. The reader has the necessary framework to read the codes and recognise proper and improper behaviour.”<sup>2</sup>

In particular, the profound portrayal of God’s original design for human sexuality at the beginning of the canon constitutes the foundation for the rest of the

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<sup>1</sup>Phyllis A. Bird, “Genesis 1–3 as a Source for a Contemporary Theology of Sexuality,” *ExAud* 3 (1987): 31–44; repr. in *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 155–73. Bird correctly assesses the significance of extensive material on sexuality in these chapters: “While the topic of sexuality represents an exceedingly narrow focus within the universe-encompassing question of creation, it is given disproportionate attention in the primary Old Testament texts. By reason of this placement and prominence, the biblical interpreter is directed to consider the meaning and end of human sexuality in the context of theological reflection on creation” (p. 156).

<sup>2</sup>Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender, and the Bible* (Biblical Limits; London: Routledge, 2002), 29. I disagree with Sawyer, however, in her contention (*ibid.*) that this “foundational account” only provides the “set sexual/familial/social/political boundaries” as a “necessary counterpart or antithesis to the Bible’s central thesis—the *unbounded* power of God.” I do not subscribe to her self-described postmodern approach in which “biblical texts will be subject to deconstruction, and understood in the light of their own socio-political contexts, texts that infer a counter-culture, in relation to both the boundaries of their time and those of the Bible itself” (p. 2). Instead of “inconsistencies that posit alternative stances” (p. 1) in Scripture, I have found a basic consistency throughout the biblical witness, albeit with room for development and different emphases.

biblical narrative and discourse on human sexuality and encapsulates the fundamental principles of a theology of sexuality. As pointed out later in this chapter, Gen 2:24 makes explicit that God's original design for sexuality and marriage in the relationship between Adam and Eve is set forth as a pattern for all future sexual relationships. The paradigmatic nature of Gen 1–3 for sexuality has been widely recognized, particularly in the context of marriage. For example, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman argue cogently that the first three chapters of the Bible are like a "North Star" to guide in marriage relationships, providing "God's design" for marriage, and constituting "the ground floor of the Bible" for understanding "the foundational perspectives" and the "Creation foundations" for marriage. "Genesis 1–3 establishes crucial principles that are to shape our marriages. This story tells us all we ultimately need to know about marriage."<sup>3</sup> J. Andrew Dearman expresses a similar conviction: "The two accounts of creation (Gen. 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–3:24) are foundational to the understanding of marriage in the Old Testament. . . . Virtually all aspects of Israelite marriage reflected elsewhere in the Old Testament find their etiological counterpart in the creation accounts."<sup>4</sup>

The multifaceted theology of human sexuality that emerges from my examination of the Genesis creation passages will be organized under ten major subheadings. Within each subheading I first focus upon the summary account of creation (Gen 1:1–2:4a) where applicable and then give attention to the complementary and more detailed narrative (2:4b–25).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman III, *Intimate Allies: Rediscovering God's Design for Marriage and Becoming Soul Mates for Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1995), 13–14.

<sup>4</sup>J. Andrew Dearman, "Marriage in the Old Testament," in *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality: Listening to Scripture* (ed. Robert L. Brawley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 54. On the whole issue of a canonical approach to biblical interpretation, see Craig G. Bartholomew et al., eds., *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

<sup>5</sup>Regardless of one's position regarding presumed preliterary sources underlying the received text of the Pentateuch, canonically it can be affirmed that the final redactor placed these chapters at the beginning of the Torah and the whole HB, and this theology of sexuality focuses upon the final canonical form of the text.

Evidence presented by seminal scholarly studies leads me to the conclusion that Gen 1–2 does not represent separate and disparate sources as argued by proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis. See esp. Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 5; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1978); William Shea, "Literary Structural Parallels between Genesis 1 and 2," *Origins* 16 (1989): 49–68. For evidence supporting the unity and/or Mosaic authorship of Genesis (and the Pentateuch as a whole), see, e.g., Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (rev. ed.; Chicago: Moody, 1994), 89–189 (esp. 113–26); Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), passim; idem, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (trans. Israel Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 1:7–20, 84–100; Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 495–541; Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); I. M. Kikawada and A. Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1–11* (Nashville:

## Sexuality as a Creation Order

In Gen 1:26–28 “the high point and goal has been reached toward which all of God’s creativity from v. 1 on was directed.”<sup>6</sup> Here in lofty grandeur is portrayed the creation of humankind (*hā’ādām*):

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

Discussion among theologians over this passage throughout the centuries has mainly focused on the meaning of human creation in the “image of God” and until recently has almost entirely ignored the further affirmation that humankind

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Abingdon, 1985); Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1968), 112–35; John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 1–79; Herbert M. Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 51–78.

I find that Gen 1–2, instead of comprising multiple sources, provides a unified dual perspective on creation—and the God of creation. Genesis 1:1–2:4a gives the picture of an all-powerful, transcendent God (Elohim) and a cosmic view of creation. In Gen 2:4b–25 God is further presented as the personal, caring covenant God (Yahweh Elohim), and creation is described in terms of man and his intimate, personal needs. From this unique dual perspective of infinite/personal God and cosmic/man-centered creation emerges a balanced and enriched presentation of the divine design for human sexuality.

<sup>6</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 57. Similarly, Marsha M. Wilfong, “Human Creation in Canonical Context: Genesis 1:26–31 and Beyond,” in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 47, argues that “humankind is, in fact the lynchpin that holds creation together.” Bruce A. Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. Wayne A. Grudem; Foundations for the Family Series; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002), 72, points to seven key internal textual indicators that the creation of “man” (his translation of *hā’ādām*, which I would prefer to translate “humankind”) was “the pinnacle of God’s creative work”: (1) only after God creates “man” does God say creation is “very good” (Gen 1:31); (2) the creation of “man” is introduced differently than all other creation with the personal divine deliberative statement “Let us . . .” (1:26); (3) the one God uses the plural “us” as God creates (sg.) “man,” who is plural (“male and female”); (4) the phrase “image of God” is used three times in the creation narrative (1:26–27) and only with reference to the creation of “man”; (5) the special term *bārā*’, “create,” is used three times (1:27) with reference to the creation of “man”; (6) “man” (as male and female) is given rulership over the other created beings on earth (1:26, 28), indicating “man’s” higher authority and priority; and (7) only the creation of “man” as male and female is expanded and further developed in the creation account of Gen 2.

is created male and female.<sup>7</sup> In harmony with the concerns of this study, I focus in particular upon the neglected statement—“male and female he created them”—without ignoring the question of the *imago Dei* and the wider context of the chapter.

In the clause concerning humankind’s creation as male and female (1:27c), note, first of all, that sexual differentiation is presented as a creation by God and not part of the inherent nature of divinity itself. This emphasis upon the creation of sexual distinction appears to form a subtle but strong polemic against the divinization of sex so common in the thought of Israel’s neighbors. Throughout the mythology of the ancient Near East, the sexual activities of the gods form a dominant motif.<sup>8</sup> The fertility myth was of special importance, particularly in Mesopotamia and Palestine. Chapter 3, below, focuses in more detail upon the Canaanite fertility cults, but here note already that in the ANE myths creation was often celebrated as resulting from the union of male and female deities: “Copulation and procreation were mythically regarded as a divine event. Consequently the religious atmosphere was as good as saturated with mythical sexual conceptions.”<sup>9</sup> In contrast to this view of creation as divine procreation, there is a radical separation of sexuality and divinity in the Genesis accounts of origins. God stands “absolutely beyond the polarity of sex.”<sup>10</sup> The sexual distinctions are presented as a creation by God, not part of the divine realm.

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<sup>7</sup>Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study of Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 19.

<sup>8</sup>Raymond F. Collins, “The Bible and Sexuality,” *BTB* 7 (1977): 149–51, conveniently summarizes the major aspects of sexuality (fertility, love-passion, destructive capacity, sacred marriage) in the ANE myths.

<sup>9</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1962–1965), 1:28. Concrete examples from the ANE literature are provided in ch. 3, below.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:27–28. At least one modern OT scholar, Johannes C. de Moor, proposes that Gen 1:27 presents a bisexuality in God, as in the many ANE creator-god myths where “bisexuality was seen as a sure sign of exalted divinity, a quality reserved for the highest divine beings who transcended the all too human limitations of split gender” (“The Duality in God and Man: Gen 1:26–27,” in *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel: Papers Read at the Tenth Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en België, Held at Oxford, 1997* [ed. Johannes C. de Moor; *OtSt* 40; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998], 124). This claim is critiqued by Edward Noort, “The Creation of Man and Woman in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions,” in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. Gerard P. Luttikhuisen; Themes in Biblical Narrative 3; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 8–9. Noort insightfully points out how throughout Gen 1 the biblical narrator provides a polemic against the ANE creation myths with their creation by sexual procreation of the gods: e.g., the female Tiamat of the Akkadian myth becomes simply “the deep” in Gen 1; the fertile earth of the ANE myths is “only an instrument in the hands of Elohim”; the astral sun and moon gods of the ancient Near East simply “serve as a clock for the (cultic) calendar” and “every connection with an astral religion . . . is cut off here.” Noort concludes, “If this overall tendency in the Priestly account of creation [i.e., Gen 1] is correct, then it is unthinkable that the Priestly writer should take over the bisexuality of some gods for a characterisation of Elohim as de Moor suggested” (p. 9).

The accounts of creation in Gen 1 and Gen 2 both assign sexuality to the creation order and not to the divine realm. But whereas Gen 1 does not indicate the precise manner in which God created, Gen 2 removes any possible lingering thoughts that creation occurred by divine procreation. This second chapter of Scripture sets forth in detail God's personal labor of love, forming (*yāšar*) man from the dust of the ground and "building" (*bānā*) woman from one of man's ribs.

## A Heterosexual Human Duality and Marital Form

A second facet of human sexual theology emerging from Gen 1–2 is that God created the bipolarity of the sexes from the beginning. The popular idea that 1:27 presents *hā'ādām* as an ideal androgynous (or hermaphroditic) being later split into two sexes cannot be sustained from the text of Gen 1.<sup>11</sup> "The plural in v. 27 ('he created them') is intentionally contrasted with the singular ('him') and prevents one from assuming the creation of an originally androgynous man."<sup>12</sup> This is confirmed in the following verse (1:28), where God blessed *them* and commanded *them* to be fruitful and multiply; only a heterosexual couple, not a bisexual creature, could fulfill this command. Further confirmation of an original duality of the sexes and not an androgynous creature is the parallel passage of 5:2, where the plural "them/they" is again employed: "Male and female he created *them*, and he blessed *them* and named *them* 'Humankind' when *they* were created."

The sexual distinction between male and female is fundamental to what it means to be human. To be human is to live as a sexual person. "We cannot say man without having to say male or female and also male and female. Man exists

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<sup>11</sup>The androgynous interpretation of *hā'ādām* in Gen 1:27 is found already in the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi and is still represented by a number of modern commentators. See, e.g., Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 125; de Moor, "The Duality in God and Man," 112–25; and Pinchas Stolper, "The Man-Woman Dynamic of HA-ADAM: A Jewish Paradigm of Marriage," *Tradition* 27 (1992): 35. For discussion (with bibliography) of the pagan origin of this idea in Plato, and of its inroads into the church via Gregory of Nyssa and others, see Werner Neuer, *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective* (trans. G. Wenham; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 62–63 and accompanying notes. See below for proponents of the androgynous interpretation of *hā'ādām* in Gen 2.

<sup>12</sup>Von Rad, *Genesis*, 60. See also the arguments presented against the androgynous interpretation of Gen 1:27 by Noort, "The Creation of Man and Woman," 5–8. Noort (p. 7) suggests that the parallel of Gen 6:19 is instructive, where "male and female" means one pair, and thus the well-known explanation that the same expression in Gen 1:27b "means the first pair of mankind, one male and one female, is to be preferred." He also shows (7–8) how this conclusion is supported by the parallel use of the pronoun shift from singular ("it" = humankind) to plural ("them" = the first male and female) in Gen 5:1–2 as in Gen 1:27. Cf. Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2004), 111–13.

in this differentiation, in this duality.”<sup>13</sup> Whether or not one agrees with Barth that “this is the only structural differentiation in which he [the human being] exists,”<sup>14</sup> the sexual distinction is certainly presented in Gen 1 as a basic component in the original creation of humankind.<sup>15</sup> In Gen 1 “heterosexuality is at once proclaimed to be the order of creation.”<sup>16</sup>

Regarding Gen 2, a number of more recent studies have revived an older theory that the original *hāʾādām* described in this chapter was androgynous, one creature incorporating two sexes, or “a sexually undifferentiated earth creature.”<sup>17</sup> But such a hypothesis is not supported by the text. According to 2:7–8, 15–16, what God creates before woman is called *hāʾādām*, “the man,” better translated as “the human.”<sup>18</sup> After the creation of woman, this creature is denoted by the same term (vv. 22–23). Nothing has changed in the makeup of “the human” during his sleep except the loss of a rib. There is no hint in the text of an originally bisexual or sexually undifferentiated being split into two different sexes. The androgynous interpretation suggests that human beings are not intrinsically sexual, a view that contradicts the anthropology of Gen 1–2. According to the biblical text, *hāʾādām*, “the human” formed before woman, was not originally androgynous but was “created in anticipation of the future.”<sup>19</sup> He was created

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<sup>13</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; trans. J. W. Edwards et al.; 5 vols. in 13; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–1969), 3/2:236.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>But as already indicated, this does not reflect gender distinctions of male and female back onto the nature of God; God is presented in Scripture as above the polarity of sex.

<sup>16</sup>Samuel H. Dresner, “Homosexuality and the Order of Creation,” *Judaism* 40 (1991): 309.

<sup>17</sup>Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 80. Other modern proponents of this view include, e.g., Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 112–14; Sam Dragga, “Genesis 2–3: A Story of Liberation,” *JSOT* 55 (1992): 3–4; Mary Phil Korsak, “Genesis: A New Look,” in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 2; Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1993), 39–52; Azila Talit Reisenberger, “The Creation of Adam as Hermaphrodite and Its Implications for Feminist Theology,” *Judaism* 42 (1993): 447–52; Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 76–81; United Church of Christ, *Human Sexuality: A Preliminary Study of the United Church of Christ* (New York: United Church, 1977), 57; and Ellen Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1–11* (BIS 6; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 13–31.

<sup>18</sup>As the next section of this chapter will argue, the word *hāʾādām* does not mean “man” in the sense of male gender but “human.” It is true that the first specimen of humanity was of male gender, but this is not the meaning of the term *hāʾādām*.

<sup>19</sup>K&D, 1:55. For further argumentation against the view espoused by Trible and others of an originally androgynous earth creature, see esp. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 111–13; Richard S. Hess, “Splitting the Adam: The Usage of *ʾādām* in Genesis I–V,” in *Studies in the Pentateuch* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 41; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 1–15; Susan Lanser, “(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Inferring Genesis 2–3,” *Semeia* 41 (1988): 69–72; and Beverly J. Stratton, *Out of Eden: Reading, Rhetoric, and Ideology in Genesis 2–3* (JSOTSup 208; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 102–4.

with those sexual drives toward union with his counterpart. This becomes apparent in the first human's encounter with the animals, which dramatically pointed up his need of "a helper as his partner" (vv. 18, 20). Such a need is satisfied when he is introduced to woman and he fully realizes his sexuality vis-à-vis his sexual complement. The fact that no sexual companion was found for the man among the animals indicates, among other things, that according to the divine design, human sexual activity is to take place not with animals as sexual partners (bestiality) but only between *human* partners.

According to the description of Gen 2, God arranged for the first marriage, and the divinely-designed marital form involved a heterosexual couple, a "man" and a "woman" (2:22–23). Based upon the experience of the first couple in Eden, Gen 2:24 presents a succinct theology of marriage, the details of which will be explored further in the section on sexuality as relationship. But here note the reference to "a man [ʾîš] . . . and . . . his wife [ʾištô]" in regard to the marriage relationship. The phrase "man and his wife" indicates a *heterosexual* marriage relationship of a man and woman as the Edenic model for all time. Thus the intrinsic human duality of male and female and the heterosexual marital form involving a sexual union of a man and woman (not man with man, or human with animal) constitute the divine paradigm for humanity from the beginning.

## A Monogamous Marital Form

As a third facet of sexual theology found in Gen 1–2, it may be affirmed that the marital form presented by God as paradigmatic for humans from the beginning is a *monogamous* one. In the narrator's description of the first marriage (Gen 2:18–23), the usage of singular nouns and pronouns throughout is significant: God determined to make for "the man" a "helper as his partner" (v. 18); in the process of naming the animals "the man" did not find "a helper as his partner" (v. 20); God took "one of his [the man's] ribs" and fashioned "a woman" and brought "her" to "the man" (vv. 21–22); beholding what God had fashioned, "the man" exclaimed, "this one" shall be called "woman," for out of "man" "this one" was taken (v. 23). Unmistakably this language denotes a marriage between one man and one woman. In 2:24, mentioned above, the phrase "a man [ʾîš] . . . and . . . his wife [ʾištô]," with both nouns in the singular, clearly implies that the sexual relationship envisioned is monogamous, to be shared between two marriage partners.<sup>20</sup> "Genesis 2:24 is dealing with monogamy: it only mentions explicitly

<sup>20</sup>The LXX translation makes the latter point explicit: "they *two* shall become one flesh." Many modern scholars likewise recognize the implication of monogamy from this passage. Note, e.g., Walter Vogels, "Man and Woman—Their Dignity, Mutuality, and Fidelity in Marriage: A Biblical Perspective (Gen 1–3)," *BiBh* 23 (1997): 223–24: "The text [Gen 2:24] certainly proposes a monogamous relationship. . . . The text with or without the 'two' proposes monogamy as the ideal relationship between husband and wife." Cf. William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 42.

one man and one woman who become one flesh. . . . It refers only to monogamy.”<sup>21</sup> According to the creation account, the divine design for marital form is monogamy.

## Equality of the Sexes without Hierarchy

A fourth facet of the theology of human sexuality in Gen 1–2 stems from the equal pairing of male *and* female in parallel with *hā’ādām* in 1:27: “So God created humankind [*hā’ādām*] in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female He created them.” Although indeed the terms “male” and “female” connote sexual (biological) differences, there is no hint of ontological superiority/inferiority or functional leadership/submission between male and female.<sup>22</sup> To the contrary, both are explicitly presented as “equally immediate to the Creator and His act.”<sup>23</sup> In the wider context of this passage (1:26, 28), both the man and the woman are blessed. Both are to share alike in the responsibility of procreation, to “fill the earth.” Both are to subdue the earth. Both are given the same comanagerial dominion over God’s nonhuman creation. “Both have been commanded equally and without distinction to take dominion, not one over the other, but both together over the rest of God’s creation for the glory of the Creator.”<sup>24</sup> Helen Schüngel-Strauman sharpens the implication of 1:26–28: “This statement *explicitly* excludes men’s rule over women! Oddly enough, this has not been noticed before. An analysis of the wording of Gen. 1:26–28 results in precisely this, however: man and woman rule over the rest of creation, and this implies only too clearly that one gender may not claim power over the other.”<sup>25</sup> The fundamental equality of man and woman is unhesitatingly proclaimed in the first chapter of the Bible.

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<sup>21</sup>Neuer, *Man and Woman*, 68.

<sup>22</sup>I use the term “leadership” rather than “headship” throughout this book, since the meaning of the term “head” (especially as found in the Pauline writings) has become a matter of dispute in the current debate of the status of the sexes in Scripture (see the afterword). Further support for this use of terms is found especially from Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, introduction to *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 15–16 (and the entire book).

<sup>23</sup>Helmut Thielicke, *The Ethics of Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 7.

<sup>24</sup>Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *The Feminist Bogeywoman: Questions and Answers about Evangelical Feminism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 27. Cf. Noort, “The Creation of Man and Woman,” 9: “Gen 1:27 aims at the credo that the separation in male and female belongs to creation from the beginning. There is no priority. Neither male or female have a dominant position here.”

<sup>25</sup>Helen Schüngel-Straumann, “On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered,” in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 2; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 75. Allender and Longman, *Intimate Allies*, 20, succinctly state this profound implication for the equality of the sexes: “Both male and female are in essence and status undifferentiated; each is equally and fully the image of God.”

David J. A. Clines seeks to counter this conclusion by contending that the reference to “male and female” in 1:27 implies nothing about equality of the sexes but only indicates that there are two kinds of human being just as other creatures are made “according to their kind.”<sup>26</sup> But Richard Hess incisively critiques Clines’s claim: “Clines fails to demonstrate that male and female are ever understood as the *kinds* (*mîn*) used of different species in Genesis 1:21 and 24. Nowhere in Genesis is *ʿādām* so described; rather other references to *ʿādām* connote the species as a whole. There is nothing in this chapter to suggest anything other than equality of male and female created together in the image of God.”<sup>27</sup>

Some proponents of male leadership as a creation ordinance agree to an ontological equality between the sexes but find a functional leadership role implied in 1:26, where God identifies male and female as *ʿādām*, which is translated “man” in some translations. “God cuts right across the grain of our peculiar sensitivities when He names the human race, both man and woman, ‘man.’ . . . God’s naming of the race ‘man’ whispers male headship.”<sup>28</sup> What Orlund and others who employ this argument fail to recognize is that the word *ʿādām* never means “man” (in the sense or implication of male gender) in Scripture. The problem is a modern language translation issue, not an aspect of the Hebrew text. The word *ʿādām* is a generic term meaning “human person” or “humanity.”<sup>29</sup> Aside

<sup>26</sup>David J. A. Clines, “What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Irredeemably Androcentric Orientations in Genesis 1–3,” in *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* (ed. David J. A. Clines; Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1990), 25–48.

<sup>27</sup>Richard S. Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence: Genesis 1–3,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 82.

<sup>28</sup>Raymond C. Orlund Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 97–98. Cf. Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity,” 84: “We should resist the movement today in Bible translation that would customarily render instances of *ʿādām* with the fully non-gender-specific term ‘human being.’ . . . This misses the God-intended implication conveyed by the masculine generic ‘man,’ viz., that woman possesses her common human nature only through the prior nature of the man.” So also Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 34–36.

<sup>29</sup>See *DCH* 1:123–29, which defines *ʿādām* as “human being, humanity, people, individual person, humans” but avoids the term “man” except for reference to the first human, Adam. Cf. the discussion and bibliography in Victor P. Hamilton, “*ʿādām*,” *NIDOTTE* 1:262–66; and Vogels, “Man and Woman,” 216–18. See also the recent debate between James Barr and David J. A. Clines over the semantic nuance of this term. James Barr argues that *ʿādām* “is essentially a male term” (“One Man, or All Humanity?” in *Recycling Biblical Figures: Papers Read at a NOSTER Colloquium in Amsterdam, 12–13 May 1997* [ed. Athalya Brenner and J. W. van Hentern; Leiden: Deo, 1999; repr. as “Adam: Single Man, or All Humanity,” in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* (ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 3–12], 3–21, quote at 18). David J. A. Clines responds with an incisive and persuasive critique, “אדם, the Hebrew for ‘Human, Humanity’: A Response to James Barr,” *VT* 53 (2003): 297–310. Clines examines Barr’s evidence and finds it wanting. He concludes that “the traditional view that אדם means

from Gen 1–3, where it refers to the first human person, Adam, this term is never in the whole HB used to designate a “man” in the sense of male (as opposed to female). The use of *ʿādām* does not whisper male headship as a creation ordinance.

The one major question that has dominated the scholarly discussion of sexuality in Gen 2 concerns the relative status of the sexes. The “traditional” view—held by the vast majority of Christian commentators and theologians before the twentieth century—has held that according to Gen 2, woman was created by nature inferior to man and thus women as a class or race are not competent and must be excluded from leadership or exercising authority in the home, church, or society.<sup>30</sup> Many modern scholars—both proponents of male leadership as a creation ordinance and liberal feminists—now acknowledge that Gen 1 emphasizes equality on the ontological, personal, and spiritual level but at the same time maintain that Gen 2 emphasizes hierarchy or leadership/submission on the functional or societal level regarding male-female relationships.<sup>31</sup> Does Gen 2 affirm a fully egalitarian view of the relationship between the sexes, or does it support a

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‘humanity, without distinction of gender’ is to be upheld. . . . I deny that in any place [in the HB] אָדָם means ‘a man’ in the sense of a male, and affirm that the term is ungendered” (pp. 309–10). I am convinced by Clines’s assessment of the evidence.

<sup>30</sup> See esp. Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002), 145–55, for numerous examples throughout church history illustrating this dominant view since shortly after NT times, including citations from Tertullian, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, the early Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, William Gouge and Robert Bolton (Puritans), Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Hodge, and Adam Clarke. See also John A. Phillips, *Eve: The History of an Idea* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), passim; and Kristen E. Kvam, Linda S. Schearing, and Valarie H. Ziegler, eds., *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), passim.

<sup>31</sup> This view, making a clear distinction between Gen 1 and 2, was popular among “first wave” feminists of the late nineteenth century; see, e.g., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman’s Bible* (New York: European, 1895; repr., Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 20–21. It is also a common view among contemporary liberal feminists, who regard Gen 1 as egalitarian and Gen 2 as hierarchical: e.g., Anne Gardner, “Genesis 2:4b–3: A Mythological Paradigm of Sexual Equality or of the Religious History of Pre-exilic Israel?” *SJT* 43 (1990): 1–18. Many evangelicals also emphasize the difference between ontological equality in Gen 1 and functional hierarchy in Gen 2. See, e.g., Ronald B. Allen and Beverly Allen, *Liberated Traditionalism: Men and Women in Balance* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1985), 89–117; Mary A. Kassian, *Women, Creation, and the Fall* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1990), 13–20; Susan T. Foh, “A Male Leadership View: The Head of the Woman Is the Man,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views* (ed. Bonnidel Clouse and Robert G. Clouse; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1989), 72–73; George W. Knight III, “The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Male and Female with Special Attention to the Teaching/Ruling Functions in the Church,” *JETS* 18 (1975): 83–84; idem, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 7–9; Richard N. Longenecker, “Authority, Hierarchy, and Leadership Patterns in the Bible,” in *Women, Authority, and the Bible* (ed. Alvera Mickelsen; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986), 66–67; and Aubrey Malphurs, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: Understanding Masculinity and Femininity from God’s Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 21–62.

hierarchical ranking in which man is in some way superior to, or in leadership over, the woman at creation?<sup>32</sup>

As already noted, down through the centuries the preponderance of commentators on Gen 2 have espoused the hierarchical interpretation, with notable exceptions such as the later Martin Luther,<sup>33</sup> and a number of modern scholarly studies have reaffirmed some form of hierarchy between the sexes. Liberal-critical scholarship often finds in Gen 2 a chauvinistic or androcentric presentation of the man as superior and the woman as inferior, with the former dominating or even subjugating the latter.<sup>34</sup> Many evangelical scholars, breaking from the

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<sup>32</sup>There are other options. One is to find the woman superior to the man in these opening chapters of the Bible. For an example of one who comes to this conclusion by reading the text in light of psychoanalytic theory, see P. E. Jongmsa-Tieleman, “The Creation of Eve and the Ambivalence between the Sexes,” in *God, Biblical Stories, and Psychoanalytic Understanding* (ed. Rainer Kessler and Patrick Vendermeersch; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 97–113. Another popular psychoanalytic (Freudian) reading of these chapters maintains that Adam and Eve were both in a “relationship of infantile dependency” (Sawyer, *God, Gender, and the Bible*, 26), while yet another argues that Adam and Eve and the Deity in Gen 1–2 form “the first (among many) dysfunctional families depicted in the Hebrew Bible” (Ilona N. Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo: Sexuality and Family in the Hebrew Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000], 10). Such approaches lie outside the focus and method of this interpretive project as described in the introduction.

<sup>33</sup>Martin Luther, as a young monk preaching through the book of Genesis in 1523, still presented the traditional patristic and medieval view. His early view is summarized by Mickey Leland Mattox, “*Defender of the Most Holy Matriarchs*: Martin Luther’s Interpretation of the Women of Genesis in the “*Enarrationes in Genesim*,” 1535–45 (SMRT 92; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 252–53: “He accepted without hesitation the traditional notion that Eve was created for submission to her husband, and interpreted Adam’s naming of her as a reflection of her derivation from and dependence upon him. He considered the ‘weak little woman’ her husband’s inferior intellectually, and faulted her in a condescending and even insulting way for the weaknesses that left her vulnerable to the devil’s attack.” The elder Luther’s interpretation, however, was radically different. Mattox (p. 253) summarizes: “Eve had become a ‘heroic woman,’ and excellent philosopher, and played an equal role in the estate of the home and ruled over the creation in equal partnership with her husband before the fall. . . . In his stress on the ways in which Eve was her husband’s equal before the fall, Luther’s speculations went beyond those of any of his patristic and medieval predecessors examined here.” Only in one area did the elder Luther still see the pre-fall Adam as taking the lead: “Adam alone was entrusted with the duty of preaching” (ibid.). See Mattox’s full discussion of Luther’s views on this subject (with references and citations), pp. 29–33, 67–108. Cf. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1–5* (trans. George V. Schick; vol. 1 of *Works*; ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), e.g., 117–18, 136–40, 200–203, passim; Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 15–31.

<sup>34</sup>For a bibliography and overview of writers since the latter part of the nineteenth century who regard Gen 2 (and much of the rest of Scripture) as male chauvinist propaganda, see Mary A. Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1992), passim; Eileen Schuller, “Feminism and Biblical Hermeneutics: Gen 1–3 as a Test Case,” in *Gender, Genre, and Religion: Feminist Reflections* (ed. Morny Joy and Eva K. Neumaier-Dargyay; Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995), 31–46. For specific proponents of this perspective regarding Gen 2, see, e.g., Clines, “What Does Eve Do to Help?” 25–48; Dana Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible’s First Story*

traditional Christian view that God made women inferior to men,<sup>35</sup> see in Gen 2 an equality of spiritual and moral worth between the sexes, but at the same time they argue for functional distinctions that include a male leadership role and a female submissive-helper role as creation ordinances.<sup>36</sup> The main elements of the narrative in Gen 2 that are presented to support a creation order involving a hier-

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(Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 25–30; Gardner, “Genesis 2:4b–3”; David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Structural Analysis in the Hebrew Bible* (2 vols.; JSOTSup 39; Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1986), 2:17–43; and Lisbeth Mikaelsson, “Sexual Polarity: An Aspect of the Ideological Structure in the Paradise Narrative, Genesis 2:4–3:24,” *Temenos* 16 (1980): 84–91.

<sup>35</sup> Evangelicals arguing for a “complementarian” (= hierarchical) interpretation of Gen 1–2 often claim that they are upholding what they call the “traditional” or “historic” Christian interpretation of the functional subordination of women and that this is grounded in the “historic” view of eternal functional subordination of the Son to the Father within the Trinity. A strong critique of this claim is set forth by Giles, *Trinity and Subordinationism*. Giles argues incisively that complementarians are not really upholding the traditional Christian view on women that has been propounded since shortly after NT times (with its interpretation that “God has made women ‘inferior’ to men, more prone to sin and incapable of leadership” [p. 8]), and he demonstrates that “historical orthodoxy rejects absolutely the eternal subordination of the Son. The Son is not subordinated to the Father either in being or function” (110).

<sup>36</sup> Major modern representatives of the hierarchical, or (their preferred self-designation) “complementarian,” position who have set forth substantial arguments from Gen 2 (as well as some from Gen 1), include, e.g., Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1987), 31, 71–79; idem, “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” in *Prove All Things: A Response to “Women in Ministry”* (ed. Mercedes H. Dyer; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 2000), 65–110; Kassian, *Woman, Creation, and the Fall*, 13–20; Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in the Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1980), 23–28; Jack Cottrell, *Gender Roles and the Bible: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption. A Critique of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1994), 63–106; Thomas Finley, “The Relationship of Woman and Man in the Old Testament,” in *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective* (ed. Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof; Chicago: Moody, 2001), 49–58; Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 61–62; W. Robert Godfrey, “Headship and the Bible,” in *Does Christianity Teach Male Headship? The Equal-Regard Marriage and Its Critics* (ed. David Blankenhorn, Don S. Browning, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 84–85; Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 30–42, 102–30; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 206–14; Malphurs, *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 21–62; Neuer, *Man and Woman*, 69–78; John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991), 66, 81, 87; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 200–210; Michael F. Stitzinger, “Genesis 1–3 and the Male/Female Role Relationship,” *GTJ* 2 (1981): 23–44; Clarence J. Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Amsterdam: Judels & Brinkman, 1968), 10–19, 28–31; Jerome T. Walsh, “Genesis 2:4b–3:24: A Synchronic Approach,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 161–77 (esp. 174); and Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity,” 81–92.

archical ranking of the sexes may be summarized as follows: (1) man is created first and woman last (vv. 7, 22), the first is superior (so liberal-critical scholars) or head/leader (so evangelical hierarchicalists), and the last is inferior or subordinate; (2) man, not woman, is spoken to by God and does the speaking (vv. 16–17, 23); (3) woman is formed for the sake of man, to be his “partner” or assistant to cure man’s loneliness (vv. 18–20); (4) woman is created from man’s rib (vv. 21–22), which implies a derivative and subordinate position or role, and indicates her dependence upon him for life; and (5) the man names the woman (v. 23), which indicates his authority or leadership over her. Do these points in fact substantiate a hierarchical relationship (whether ontological or functional) between the sexes? Let us look at each point in turn.

First, because man is created first and then woman, it has been asserted that “by this the priority and superiority of the man, and the dependence of the woman upon the man, are established as an ordinance of divine creation.”<sup>37</sup> Evangelical hierarchicalists today avoid the word “superiority” for man but argue instead for male leadership from this order of creation. But a careful examination of the literary structure of Gen 2 reveals that such a conclusion about hierarchy does not follow from the fact of man’s prior creation. Hebrew literature often makes use of an *inclusio* device in which the points of central concern to a unit are placed at the beginning and end of the unit.<sup>38</sup> This is the case in Gen 2. The entire account is cast in the form of an *inclusio* or “ring construction”<sup>39</sup> in which the creation of man at the beginning of the narrative and the creation of woman at the end of the narrative correspond to each other in importance. The narrator underscores their equality of importance by employing precisely the same number of words (in Hebrew) for the description of the creation of the man as for the creation of woman. “The writer has counted his words and been careful to match the lengths of his descriptions exactly.”<sup>40</sup> The movement in Gen 2 is not from superior to inferior or from leadership to submission but from incompleteness to completeness. Woman is created as the climax, the culmination of the story, and as Adam’s full equal.<sup>41</sup> “The movement of the story beautifully progresses from the utter loneliness of Adam, through the presence of useful living creatures that only accentuate the loneliness by

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<sup>37</sup>K&D, 1:56.

<sup>38</sup>For discussion of this construction, see esp. James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 9–10; cf. Mitchel Dahood, *Psalms* (3 vols.; AB 16–17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1965–1970), 1:5; and Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *JAAR* 41, no. 1 (1973): 36.

<sup>39</sup>Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” 9.

<sup>40</sup>Trevor Dennis, *Sarah Laughed: Women’s Voices in the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 13. Genesis 2:7 and 2:21b–22 contain sixteen Hebrew words describing the creation of man and woman respectively.

<sup>41</sup>This is recognized already by John L. McKenzie, “The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2–3,” *TS* 15 (1954): 559: “The creation of woman is the climax toward which the whole preceding narrative tends. . . . The narrative treats woman as an equal and a partner of man. This feature does not appear in any ancient Near Eastern story.”

their incapacity to be his companions, to the ecstasy of delight in discovering the companionship of an equal [Gen 2:23 cited].<sup>42</sup>

That reference to man first and then to woman does not thereby imply a patriarchal understanding of male leadership over woman is further supported by comparison with the account of the first marriage in the Akkadian parallel account, the Atrahasis Epic, the extant copy of which is from the seventeenth century B.C.E. Although it is generally recognized that in the patriarchal society of ancient Mesopotamia the subservience of the wife to the husband exceeded that of ancient Israel,<sup>43</sup> it is the woman who is mentioned first, and the man second, in the description of the first marriage and elsewhere throughout the epic where both genders are mentioned.<sup>44</sup> “This indicates that the *sequence* of man’s and woman’s creation has no significance for implications of the society’s view of or assumptions regarding hierarchy.”<sup>45</sup>

A second argument concerns the man’s priority in speaking and being spoken to in the narrative. It has been claimed that the man’s leadership over his wife before the fall is revealed in that God addresses the man, not the woman, and also that the man does the speaking in the narrative of Gen 2, not the woman. Such a claim, however, fails to take into account the movement of the narrative from incompleteness to completeness and climax, as has been pointed out above. As part of the process of bringing the man to realize his “hunger for wholeness,” that he is alone and like the other creatures needs a partner, God indeed speaks to him, warning him not to eat of the forbidden tree.<sup>46</sup> As soon as God created a human being, such information was crucial for that being to avoid transgression and to be a free moral agent with the power of choice. But the divine impartation of such knowledge to the man before the woman was created does not thereby reveal the leadership of the man over his partner. “Clearly the man needed to know the rules of the game during the interval before the woman’s arrival. . . . This need not imply any superiority on his part; only that he needed to hear the command as soon as he was present in Eden.”<sup>47</sup> Likewise, only the man speaking (not the woman) in Gen 2 does not reveal his pre-fall leadership over the woman any more than only Eve speaking (and not Adam) outside the Garden (Gen 4) reveals Eve’s leadership over Adam after the fall.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Mary Corona, “Woman in Creation Story,” *Jeev* 21 (1991): 98–99.

<sup>43</sup>See ch. 6, below; and esp. Sophie Lafont, *Femmes, droit, et justice dans l’antiquité orientale: Contributions à l’étude du droit pénal au Proche-Orient ancien* (OBO 165; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), *passim*.

<sup>44</sup>Bernard F. Batto, “The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in *Atrahasis*,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 627.

<sup>45</sup>Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence,” 85–86.

<sup>46</sup>The phrase “hunger for wholeness” was coined by Sakae Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980), 19.

<sup>47</sup>Joy Elasky Fleming, *Man and Woman in Biblical Unity: Theology from Genesis 2–3* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1993), 6.

<sup>48</sup>As the afterword will argue, the interpretation of Gen 2 set forth here does not contradict Paul’s reference to this passage in 1 Tim 2:13.

If a hierarchy of the sexes is not implied in the *order* of their creation or the *priority* of speech, is such indicated by the *purpose* of woman's creation, as is suggested in a third major argument for the hierarchical interpretation? Genesis 2:18 records the Lord's deliberation: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him *ʿezer kěnegdô* [KJV: 'a help meet for him'; RSV: 'a helper fit for him'; NASB: 'a helper suitable to him']." The Hebrew words *ʿezer kěnegdô* have often been taken to imply the inferiority or subordinate status of woman. For example, John Calvin understood from this phrase that woman was a "kind of appendage" and a "lesser helpmeet" for man.<sup>49</sup> More recently Clines argues that the Hebrew word *ʿezer* refers to someone in a subordinate position.<sup>50</sup> But this is not the meaning conveyed by the Hebrew.

The masculine noun *ʿezer* is usually translated as "help" or "helper" in English. This is a misleading translation, however, because the English word "helper" tends to suggest one who is an assistant, a subordinate, an inferior, whereas the Hebrew *ʿezer* carries no such connotation. In fact, of the twenty-one occurrences of *ʿezer* in the HB, sixteen employ *ʿezer* to describe a *superordinate*—God himself as the "helper" of Israel.<sup>51</sup> The other three occurrences outside Gen 2 denote military allies.<sup>52</sup> Never in Scripture does the word refer to a subordinate helper (unless Gen 2 is seen as an exception to the consistent usage elsewhere). The word *ʿezer* is a relational term, describing a beneficial relationship, but in itself does not specify position or rank, whether of superiority or of inferiority.<sup>53</sup> The specific position intended must be gleaned from the immediate context. In Gen 2, where God brings the parade of animals but Adam finds no fitting companion, the "help" intended is clearly "real companionship that can be given only by an equal."<sup>54</sup> This "help" or benefaction is indeed "for the man" (v. 18) in the sense that she "would bring benefit to Adam,"<sup>55</sup> but this does not imply a hierarchy of roles. The benefit brought to the man is that at last he has an egalitarian partner, a soul mate.

<sup>49</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 217–18.

<sup>50</sup> Clines, "What Does Eve Do to Help?" passim.

<sup>51</sup> Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Ps 20:3 (ET 20:2); 33:20; 70:6 (ET 70:5); 89:20 (ET 89:19); 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos 13:9.

<sup>52</sup> Isa 30:5; Ezek 12:14; Dan 11:34.

<sup>53</sup> Contra, e.g., C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 2006), 107, who claims: "A 'help(er)' is one who takes a subordinate role (which is why it is so startling to read of God being the 'help' of his faithful ones, as in Deut. 33:7 and Ps. 33:20)." R. David Freedman argues that the Hebrew word *ʿezer* etymologically derives from the merger of two Semitic roots, *ʿzr*, "to save, rescue," and *gzr*, "to be strong," and in Gen 2 has reference to the latter: woman is created, like the man, "a power (or strength) superior to the animals" ("Woman, a Power Equal to Man," *BAR* 9, no. 1 [1983]: 56–58). Even if Freedman's etymological suggestion is not accepted, the context of Scripture is the final determiner of meaning: an examination of all the other OT passages employing the Hebrew term *ʿezer*, commonly translated "help(er)," do not present the "helper" in a subordinate role.

<sup>54</sup> Corona, "Woman in Creation Story," 99.

<sup>55</sup> Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 118.

Genesis 2:18 and 20 confirm this equality of ranking with the expression that adjoins <sup>ע</sup>*ezer*, namely, *kěnegdô*. The word *neged* conveys the idea of “in front of,” “opposite,” or “counterpart,” and so a literal translation of *kěnegdô* is “like his counterpart.” Used with <sup>ע</sup>*ezer*, this prepositional phrase indicates no less than equality without hierarchy: Eve is Adam’s “benefactor/helper,” one who in position and status is “*corresponding to him*, i.e., equal and adequate to himself.”<sup>56</sup> Eve is “a power equal to man”;<sup>57</sup> she is Adam’s “soul-mate,”<sup>58</sup> his equal partner both ontologically and functionally. We will return to the implications of this interpretation for the theology of sexuality, but here it can be affirmed that the phrase <sup>ע</sup>*ezer kěnegdô* in no way implies a male leadership or female submission as part of the creation order.

As a fourth indication of male superiority/leadership and female subordination/submission in Gen 2, it has been argued that since woman came out of man, since she was formed from man’s rib, she has a derivative existence, a dependent and subordinate status. That her existence was in some way “derived” from Adam cannot be denied. But derivation does not imply subordination. The text indicates this in several ways. Note, for example, that Adam also was “derived”—from the ground (v. 7)—but certainly one is not to conclude that the ground was his superior or leader.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, as the first woman was derived from man, every subsequent man comes from woman, and so there is an expression of integration, not subordination, indicated here.

Also, woman is not Adam’s rib. It was the raw material, not woman herself, that was taken out of man, just as the raw material of man was “taken” (3:19, 23) out of the ground.<sup>60</sup> In contrast with man, who was merely “formed” or molded (*yšr*) from the clay (Gen 2:7), woman was, according to the Hebrew original term, *bnh* of v. 22, “[architecturally] built” (not just “made,” as blandly translated by English versions such as the NRSV and the NIV). The verb *bnh*, “to build,” used in the creation account only regarding the formation of Eve, “suggests an aesthetic intent and connotes also the idea of reliability and permanence.”<sup>61</sup> To clinch the

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<sup>56</sup>BDB 617. So also Noort, “The Creation of Man and Woman,” 12–13, who examines the phrase <sup>ע</sup>*ezer kěnegdô* and concludes that it “means here mutual stimulation, helping each other as equals” (p. 13).

<sup>57</sup>Freedman, “Woman,” 56–58. Freedman notes that in later Mishnaic Hebrew *kěneged* clearly means “equal,” and in light of various lines of biblical philological evidence, he forcefully argues that the phrase <sup>ע</sup>*ezer kěnegdô* here should be translated “a power equal to him.”

<sup>58</sup>Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:128.

<sup>59</sup>Cf. Judy L. Brown, *Women Ministers according to Scripture* (Minneapolis: Christians for Biblical Equality, 1996), 19: “If Adam is better than Eve by virtue of supplying a bone, then the ground is better than Adam by virtue of supplying the dust. The dust and bone were simply raw materials in the hands of the true source of life, the one from whom both Adam and Eve were given their existence.”

<sup>60</sup>Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 101.

<sup>61</sup>Samuel Terrien, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Womanhood,” in *Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality* (ed. Ruth T. Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III; New York: Seabury, 1976), 18; cf. idem, *Till the Heart Sings: A Biblical Theology of Manhood and*

point, the text explicitly indicates that the man was asleep while God created woman. Man had no active part in the creation of woman that might allow him to claim to be her superior or head.<sup>62</sup>

The very symbolism of the rib points to equality and not hierarchy. The word *šēlā*<sup>c</sup> can mean either “side” or “rib.” Since *šēlā*<sup>c</sup> occurs in the plural in v. 21 and God is said to take “one of” them, the reference in this verse is probably to a rib from Adam’s side.<sup>63</sup> By “building” Eve from one of Adam’s ribs from his side, God appears to be indicating the “mutual relationship,”<sup>64</sup> the “singleness of life”<sup>65</sup> in which man and woman are joined. The rib “means solidarity and equality.”<sup>66</sup> Created from Adam’s “rib,” Eve was formed to stand by his side as an equal. Peter Lombard was not off the mark when he said, “Eve was not taken from the feet of Adam to be his slave, nor from his head to be his ruler, but from his side to be his beloved partner.”<sup>67</sup> This interpretation appears to be further confirmed by the man’s poetic exclamation when he sees the woman for the first time (v. 23): “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The phrase “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” indicates that the person described is as close as one’s own body. It denotes physical oneness and “a commonality of concern, loyalty and responsibility.”<sup>68</sup> Much regarding the theology of sexuality can be deduced from this expression, as will become apparent below, but the expression certainly does not lead to the notion of woman’s subordination or submission to man.

The last major argument used to support a hierarchical view of the sexes in Gen 2 is that in man’s naming of woman (v. 23) is implied man’s authority over

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*Womanhood* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 12: “The use of the verb ‘to build’ for the woman implies an intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of her body, the equilibrium of her forms, and the volumes and proportions of her figure.”

<sup>62</sup> As the afterword will clarify, Paul’s argument that “man was not made from woman, but woman from man” (1 Cor 11:8), does not contradict the interpretation set forth here.

<sup>63</sup> BDB 854; *HALOT* 1030.

<sup>64</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), 230.

<sup>65</sup> Collins, “The Bible and Sexuality,” 153. It may be that the Sumerian language retains the memory of the close relationship between “rib” and “life,” for the same Sumerian sign TI signifies both “life” and “rib.” See Samuel N. Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), 146. This is not to say, however, that the detail of the rib in Gen 2 has its origin in Sumerian mythology. The story of creation in Gen 2 and the Sumerian myth in which the pun between “lady of the rib” and “lady who makes life” appears (“Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” translated by Samuel Noah Kramer [*ANET* 37–41]) have virtually nothing in common.

<sup>66</sup> Tribble, “Depatriarchalizing,” 37. Cf. Mary Phil Korsak, “Hebrew Word Patterns Retained in English in Genesis 2:4b–3:24,” *ACEBT* 15 (1996): 16: “‘Side’ expresses man/woman equality.”

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Stuart B. Babbage, *Christianity and Sex* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1963), 10. A similar statement is attributed to other writers as well, including the earlier church fathers.

<sup>68</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gen 2:23a),” *CBQ* 32 (1970): 540. For biblical examples of this usage, see esp. Gen 29:14; Judg 9:2–3; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:13 (ET 19:12); cf. Job 2:5; Ps 102:6 (ET 102:5). Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 13, points out that these texts refer to “a psychic bond of covenant loyalty.”

her, as his naming the animals implied his authority over the animals.<sup>69</sup> This conclusion is predicated upon the commonly repeated thesis that assigning names in Scripture signifies authority over the one named, but this widely held scholarly assumption has been recently effectively challenged.<sup>70</sup> George Ramsey shows from the OT data of naming that “if the act of naming signifies anything about the name-giver, it is the quality of *discernment*” and not the exercise of authority or control. Even if the man does name the woman in 2:23, “the exclamation in Gen 2:23 is a cry of discovery, of recognition [cf. Jacob’s cry in 28:16–17, before bestowing the name Bethel], rather than a prescription of what this creature built from his rib shall be. An essence which God had already fashioned is recognized by the man and celebrated in the naming.”<sup>71</sup> That superiority or exercise of leadership authority is not intended here is confirmed from the immediate context, the preceding lines: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” This clause, as already noted, clearly connotes mutuality and equality, not subordination.<sup>72</sup> The second part of 2:23 also confirms this interpretation: the arrangement in Hebrew is chiasmic, with the words for “woman” and “man” placed

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<sup>69</sup> See, e.g., Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 206–9.

<sup>70</sup> Biblical examples usually cited in support of the oriental view of naming as the demonstration of one’s exercise of a sovereign right over a person include such passages as 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:17; Dan 1:7. Cf. R. Abba, “Name,” *IDB* 3:502. George W. Ramsey, “Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 24–35, has challenged this thesis. Examining the major texts where it is claimed that bestowal of a name indicates control or authority over the person named, Ramsey shows that “instead of thinking of name-giving as a *determiner* of an entity’s essence, the Hebrews regarded naming as commonly *determined* by circumstances. The naming *results from* events which have occurred” (p. 34). The non-Israelite kings’ changing of individual’s names cannot be normative for Hebrew thinking (and these do not have the typical naming formula/terminology). Very significant is the fact that Hagar names God (Gen 16:13) by using the typical naming formula. Certainly this does not imply her control/domination over divinity. Again, in 26:17–21 Isaac names the wells even as he relinquishes authority over them. In Gen 2, when the man names the animals, here again “it is more appropriate to understand this as an act of his *discerning* something about these creatures—an essence which had already been established by God” (pp. 34–35). For a similar assessment of the evidence, see also Rick R. Marrs, “In the Beginning: Male and Female (Gen 1–3),” in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Carroll D. Osburn; 2 vols.; Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995), 2:17–18; and Carol A. Newsom, “Common Ground: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 2–3,” in *The Earth Story in Genesis* (ed. Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 66.

<sup>71</sup> Ramsey, “Name-Giving,” 34. For further discussion, see *ibid.*, 32–34.

<sup>72</sup> The same point is reaffirmed in Gen 3, where this equality/mutuality is described as recently broken. “By reversing the negatives in God’s curse of Adam and Eve, we come to the lost positives of the Garden—and the world as God meant it to be. . . . Reading backwards [from 3:16], we can detect the earlier mutuality between the man and woman, a harmonious relationship expressed by Genesis 2:23. . . . The harmony of the relationship is evident even without the philological argument that the Hebrew words designating Eve as Adam’s ‘helper as his partner’ (Genesis 2:18) does not imply subordination” (Mary Joan Winn Leith, “Back to the Garden,” *BR* 18, no. 2 [2002]: 10, 46).

in parallel in the center,<sup>73</sup> “suggesting a corresponding and equal relationship to one another.”<sup>74</sup>

Regarding the naming of the animals, the man is not exercising his authority over them but classifying them,<sup>75</sup> and in the immediate context of man’s being “alone” and this being “not good” (v. 18), God’s bringing of the animals to the man for him to name further implies that the man is entering into a delightful companionship with the animals, only to ultimately discover that such companionship is inadequate to satisfy his quest for complete reciprocity and mutuality.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, it appears most probable that Adam does not name the woman before the fall at all. The designation ʾiṣṣâ occurs in the narrative before Adam ever meets her (2:22). She is already called “woman” by the narrator even before the man sees her. Jacques Doukhan has shown that 2:23 contains a pairing of “divine passives,” indicating that the designation “woman” comes from God, not man. Just as, in the past, woman was “taken from the man” by God, an action with which the man had nothing to do (he had been put into a “deep sleep”), so in the future she “shall be called Woman,” a designation originating in God and not man. Doukhan also indicates how the literary structure of the Genesis creation story confirms this interpretation.<sup>77</sup>

The wordplay in v. 23 between ʾiṣ (“man”) and ʾiṣṣâ (“wo-man”) and the explanation that the woman was taken out of man are not given to buttress a hierarchical ranking of the sexes but rather to underscore man’s joyous recognition of his second self.<sup>78</sup> In fact, the word ʾiṣ first appears in this verse; the man becomes

<sup>73</sup>J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (2d ed.; BS 12; Sheffield, Eng.: JSOT Press, 1991), 37.

<sup>74</sup>Hess, “Equality with and without Innocence,” 88.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>76</sup>Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven’t Heard* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001), 26.

<sup>77</sup>Doukhan, *Literary Structure*, 47, points to “the use of the passive (*niphāl*, *pual*) which conveys the idea of an intervention from outside, hence God, who is still the only ‘other’ (for the biblical usage of the passive as referring to God, see Lev 13:7; Luke 5:20).” For further discussion of the divine passive in Scripture, see Hans K. La Rondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism: A Dogmatic-Ethical Study of Biblical Perfection and Phenomenal Perfectionism* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1975), 127–28; and von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:247–48, 261–62. For other lines of evidence disaffirming man’s authoritative naming of woman in 2:23 in contrast to his authoritative naming of the animals in 2:19–20, see esp. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 99–100; Gerhard Hasel, “Equality from the Start: Woman in the Creation Story,” *Spectrum* 7, no. 2 (1975): 23–24; and Fleming, *Man and Woman*, 14–15.

<sup>78</sup>As already noted in the introduction, there is no general consensus among scholars on the etymology of these words. The suggestion by some etymologists that ʾiṣ has the root idea of “strength” and ʾiṣṣâ the idea of a “weaker” sex could imply that the man was to be the protector-provider for the woman, but this does not connote leadership on the part of the man and submission on the part of the woman. Witness the famous and important people with stronger bodyguards, who are their protectors but certainly do not possess authority or leadership over them. Clearly the intention of the Genesis account in linking this word pair by (popular but inspired) etymology is to emphasize the mutual communion and commonality of the man and the woman.

aware of his own identity as he discerns the identity of  $\text{ʔiṣṣā}$ . In his ecstatic poetic utterance, the man is not determining who the woman is—any more than he is determining who he himself is—but delighting in his recognition of what God has done. He is saying yes to God in recognizing his own sexual nature and welcoming woman as the equal counterpart to his sexuality.<sup>79</sup> After the fall Adam did give his wife a name (Eve), but even there it is more probable that he is discerning what she already was by the promise of God, “mother of all living” (3:20), and not exercising authority over her.<sup>80</sup>

In short, none of the arguments advanced from Gen 2 to support a hierarchical relationship between the sexes can stand the test of close scrutiny. In light of the foregoing discussion, I concur with a host of other commentators and scholarly studies—both liberal-critical and evangelical—in their conclusion that Gen 2, like Gen 1, contains no statement of dominance, subordination, or leadership/submission in the relationship of the sexes.<sup>81</sup> The man and the woman before

<sup>79</sup> See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/2:291; Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 100.

<sup>80</sup> See Francis Landy, “Mishneh Torah: A Response to Myself and Phyllis Tribble,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs* (ed. Athalya Brenner; FCB 1; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 261–62; cf. Ramsey, “Name-Giving,” 35, n. 38, who points out that in 3:20 the narrator makes clear that Adam is not trying to determine Eve’s destiny (i.e., exercise authority over her) or he would have said, “She will be the mother of all living.” Instead the narrator reports again what Adam discerns already to be true: “she was [*hāyṯā*] the mother of all living.”

<sup>81</sup> At least fifty major scholarly studies come to this conclusion. The more important analyses of Gen 2 (as well as of Gen 1 and of the various hierarchicalist arguments for male leadership) include Bal, *Lethal Love*, 112–19; Lyn M. Bechtel, “Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b–3:24,” in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 111–14; Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 96–103; Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 21–37; Phyllis A. Bird, “Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts,” in *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition* (ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen; Oslo: Solum, 1991), 11–31; idem, “‘Bone of My Bone and Flesh of My Flesh’”; Brown, *Women Ministers according to Scripture*, 17–34; Corona, “Woman in Creation Story,” 95–106; Dennis, *Sarah Laughed*, 8–18; Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women’s Roles* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1984), 11–17; Fleming, *Man and Woman*, 3–17; Stanley Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1995), 160–65; Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, 121–39; Mary Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ: The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Debate about Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 84–117; Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 152–83; Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 33–40, 50, 120–28; (the elder) Luther, *Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1–5*, 138, 200–203; Marrs, “In the Beginning,” 11–12, 18–22, 31–32; Alvera Mickelsen, “An Egalitarian View: There Is Neither Male nor Female in Christ,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views* (ed. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1989), 181–87; John H. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 15–18; Ramsey, “Name-Giving,” 24–35; J. Alberto Soggin, “The Equality of Humankind from the Perspective of the Creations Stories in Genesis 1:26–30

the fall are presented as fully equal in rank, with no hint of an ontological or functional hierarchy, no leadership/submission relationship between husband and wife.

Conspicuously absent in Genesis 1–2 is any reference to divine prescriptions for man to exercise authority over woman. Due to the importance of its implications, had such an authority structure been part of the creation design, it would have received clear definition along with the two other authority mandates [God’s sovereignty over humans, and human’s dominion over all the earth]. The total absence of such a commission indicates that it was not a part of God’s intent. Only God was in authority over Adam and Eve. Neither of them had the right to usurp divine prerogatives by assuming authority over each other. Any teaching that inserts an authority structure between Adam and Eve in God’s creation design is to be firmly rejected since it is not founded on the biblical text.<sup>82</sup>

This affirmation of the full equality and mutuality of man and woman in the Gen 2 account of creation is all the more important when seen in contrast with the other ANE creation accounts, which contain no separate narration of the creation of woman. The Genesis creation narratives not only give a detailed account of origins but at the same time appear to serve as a direct polemic against the mythological creation stories of the ancient Near East.<sup>83</sup> By its special, lengthy, separate account of the creation of woman in Gen 2, the Bible, with its high valuation of woman on an equal par with man, is unique in ANE literature.

## Sexuality and Wholeness

A fifth facet of sexual theology in Gen 1–2 integrates the discussion of “male and female” with the *imago Dei*. In Gen 1:27 the generic term for humankind (*hā’ādām*) includes both male and female. The “man and the woman together make man [human].”<sup>84</sup> The wholistic picture of humankind is complete only

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and 2:9, 15, 18–24,” *JNSL* 23 (1997): 21–33; Ada Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 20–29; Lee Anna Starr, *The Bible Status of Woman* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1926; repr., New York: Garland, 1987), 17–26; Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman*, 75–78; Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 7–17; Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 72–105; idem, “Depatriarchalizing,” 35–40; Ruth A. Tucker, *Women in the Maze: Questions and Answers on Biblical Equality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992), 33–42; Vogels, “Man and Woman,” 205–27; idem, “It Is Not Good That the ‘Mensch’ Should Be Alone; I Will Make Him/Her a Helper Fit for Him/Her,” *EgT* 9 (1978): 9–35; and Erich Zenger, “Die Erschaffung des Menschen als Mann und Frau: Eine Lesehilfe für die sogenannte Paradies- und Sündenfallgeschichte Gen 2,4b–3,24,” *BK* 58 (2003): 14.

<sup>82</sup> Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 41.

<sup>83</sup> For an overview, see esp. Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *EvQ* 46 (1974): 81–102; cf. Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:7–177, passim; and Noort, “The Creation of Man and Woman,” 8–10.

<sup>84</sup> Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (4 vols. in 2; London: Oxford University Press, 1926–1940; repr., Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 1:61–62.

when both male and female are viewed together. Both man and woman are made in the image of God, after God's likeness (v. 26). Such a description points to both the individuality and the complementarity of the sexes.<sup>85</sup>

My purpose is not to enter into an extended discussion of the meaning of the *imago Dei*.<sup>86</sup> But it may be noted that the Hebrew words *šelem*, "image," and *dēmūt*, "likeness," although possessing overlapping semantic ranges, in the juxtaposition of v. 26 appear to emphasize respectively the concrete and abstract aspects of the human being<sup>87</sup> and together indicate that the person as a whole—in both physical/bodily and spiritual/mental components—is created in God's image. Von Rad insightfully concludes regarding 1:26, "One will do well to split the physical from the spiritual as little as possible: the whole man is created in God's image."<sup>88</sup>

Genesis 2 presents an amplification of the twofold meaning of sexual wholeness set forth in Gen 1. First, 2:7 (like 1:26) articulates a wholistic view of humans. According to the understanding of anthropology set forth in this verse, a human being does not *have* a soul, he/she *is* a soul. A human is a living being, a psychophysical unity.<sup>89</sup> There is no room in such a view for a Platonic/Philonian dichotomy of body and soul. Excluded is the dualistic notion of the ascetics that the body is evil and therefore all expressions of body pleasures—including sexual

<sup>85</sup>This is not to suggest that a single (unmarried) person is less than fully human. Adam and Eve individually were each made in the image of God. And humankind as a whole (corporately) represents the image of God. At the same time, the text also underscores the wholistic understanding of the *imago Dei* that includes both male and female.

<sup>86</sup>The literature on this subject is voluminous. For a survey of views, see esp. Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (3 vols.; BKAT 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 1:203–14; cf. G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 67–118; David J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynBul* 19 (1968): 53–103; Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Image of God," *BSac* 129 (1972): 235–45; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); and Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26–28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* (Conjectanea Biblica; Old Testament Series 26; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1988).

<sup>87</sup>See BDB 198, 854; Norman W. Porteous, "Image of God," *IDB* 2:684–85; von Rad, *Genesis*, 57–58. Cf. the summary by Rashkow, *Taboo or Not Taboo*, 61: "God says that his intention is to make Adam both 'in our image' (that is, physically similar, whatever that may mean), and 'in our likeness' (having the same abstract characteristics)." Regarding the aspect of outward ("physical" or "bodily") resemblance, which most scholars resist finding in this passage, see also David M. Carr, *The Erotic Word: Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 17–26, who counters with solid biblical data the common notion "that Genesis 1 must be talking about something else—anything else—than actual physical resemblance between God and humans" (p. 18).

<sup>88</sup>Von Rad, *Genesis*, 58. For other evidence supporting the wholistic view of what it means to be created in God's image, see also W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (CHANE 15; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 117–76 (esp. 166); and Neuer, *Man and Woman*, 65–67 (with references to other scholars).

<sup>89</sup>Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1974), 10: "Man does not *have* *n[epes̄]*, he *is* *n[epes̄]*, he lives as *n[epes̄]*." So William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1979), 85: "Human beings live as souls; they do not 'possess' souls."

expressions—are contaminated. The wholistic view of humanness presented in 2:7 means that human sexuality cannot be compartmentalized into “the things of the body” versus “the things of the spirit/soul.” The human being is a sexual creature, and his/her sexuality is manifested in every aspect of human existence. This wholistic view of sexuality means that the “one flesh” experience of husband and wife (2:24) involves not only the sex act but also a oneness—a wholeness—in all the physical, sensual, social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of life. This wholistic concept of the “one flesh” relationship between husband and wife implies that it is not sufficient to only seek physical compatibility in marriage; equally important is harmony between marriage partners in matters of religious faith.

The meaning of wholeness is also amplified in Gen 2 regarding the differentiation between the sexes. Whereas from Gen 1 it was possible to conclude in a general way that both male and female are equally needed to make up the image of God, Gen 2 indicates more precisely that in “creative complementariness”<sup>90</sup> God designed male and female to participate in this wholeness. The Gen 2 creation story opens with the creation of man. But creation is not finished. The man is alone, he is incomplete. And this is “not good” (v. 18).<sup>91</sup> Man needs an *‘ezer kənegdô*—a helper/benefactor who is opposite him, his counterpart. Thus begins man’s quest to satisfy his God-instilled “hunger for wholeness.”<sup>92</sup> The Lord God brings the animals to the man for him to name (identify), so that he may realize that such hunger is not satisfied by his animal companions. He also evidently recognizes that the animals and birds all have mates but he himself does not.<sup>93</sup> Thus the flow of the narrative leads to the climactic creation of woman, the sexual being God has “built” or “aesthetically designed” (the literal meaning of *bnh* in v. 22) to be alongside him as his complement. “The woman brings out of the man and to the man the totality of existence. She comes as if he had cried out, ‘Help! Help!’”<sup>94</sup> Adam in effect exclaims at his first sight of Eve, “At last, I’m

<sup>90</sup>Terrien, “Theology of Womanhood,” 18.

<sup>91</sup>This is the only thing in Gen 1–2 that is described as “not good.” At the same time, there seems to be a difference of nuance between the Hebrew expressions for “not good” (*lō’ tōb*) and for “evil” (*ra’*). See Alexandru Breja, “A Biblical Approach to Transcultural Analysis” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Atlanta, November 21, 2003), 1–19. Breja provides evidence, by means of exegesis of several passages (including the references in Gen 1–2), that throughout the HB something described as “not good” is not “evil,” only less than ideal.

<sup>92</sup>Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex*, 19.

<sup>93</sup>Some critical commentators argue that 2:18–24 describes a series of unsuccessful divine attempts to make an adequate partner for the man. This view is totally out of harmony with the concept of God presented in Gen 1–2, and contrary to the explicit reason given in the text (v. 19): God brings the creatures to Adam to see what he would name them, not to unsuccessfully attempt to provide him a counterpart. See Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:127–28, who presents seven different arguments refuting this critical interpretation. He rightly concludes (p. 128), “It would seem that the text intends to tell us only that the Lord God wished to engender in the heart of man a desire for a helper who should correspond to him exactly.”

<sup>94</sup>Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 11.

whole! Here's the complement of myself!" He recognizes, and the narrative instructs us, that "man is whole only in his *complementarity* with another being who is like himself."<sup>95</sup>

Adam and Eve, in their egalitarian complementarity, were to have no interests independent of each other, and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting.<sup>96</sup> They were bone of each other's bone, flesh of each other's flesh, equal in being and rank, and at the same time they were individuals with differences. "Oneness does not level life to sameness; it allows for distinctions without opposition or hierarchy."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality," 153 (italics added).

<sup>96</sup> Some may find the juxtaposition of terms "egalitarian complementarity" to be an oxymoron. But I am unwilling to surrender the word "complementarian" to those who use it to describe male leadership and female submission roles as a creation ordinance. The biblical view of egalitarian husband-wife role relations is just as "complementarian"—recognizing differences between the sexes in general and between individual marriage partners but without positing a creation leadership/submission role relationship between man and woman. The definition of complementarity provided by Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Gender Complementarity in the Hebrew Bible," in *Theological and Hermeneutical Studies* (vol. 1 of *Reading the Hebrew Bible for a New Millennium: Form, Concept, and Theological Perspective*; ed. Deborah Ellens et al.; SAC; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 268, is most useful: "The term 'complementarity' . . . implies an idea of the relationship of two distinct parties who share mutual needs, interdependence, and respect. This term is to be distinguished from the connotation of a hierarchical relationship of two parties where one is subordinate to the other. Rather, it is used to include the ideas of mutuality, balance, and equality, while maintaining the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each party rather than homogeneity." For recent further support and elaboration of the terminology of "complementarity without hierarchy," see esp. Pierce and Groothuis, introduction to *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 16–17 (and the entire book). For a popularized elaboration of this concept, see, e.g., H. Dale Burke, *Different by Design: God's Master Plan for Harmony between Men and Women in Marriage* (Chicago: Moody, 2000), 19–51.

<sup>97</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 110. Some have called attention to the different modes of creation between the man and the woman—the man's creation out of the ground and the woman's creation out of man—and suggest this may be intimately related to unique differences between the sexes. It is proposed that a man tends to have "an immediate relationship to the world of things" whereas "the woman is primarily directed to the world of persons" (Neuer, *Man and Woman*, 70). It is further pointed out that in Gen 3 the judgments upon Adam and Eve confirm this pattern: Adam's "judgment" involved his work, whereas Eve's involved relationships. This is seen to imply that the man tends to have a physical and internal makeup to protect and provide through his practical, diligent work whereas the woman tends to have a physical and internal makeup to shape, soften, refine, and nurture relationships (Allender and Longman, *Intimate Allies*, 150). These and other differences between males and females (beyond obvious biological functions) are also seen to be supported by recent anthropological research (see esp. Grenz with Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 158–60). On the other hand, the divine mandate in Gen 1–2 for both male and female to join in the work of procreation, subduing, having dominion, and tending the garden (1:28; 2:15), reveals that the sexes are not one-dimensional; both sexes are equally directed to the world of things and the world of relationships. These data lead Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddess: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Free Press/Maxwell Macmillan, 1992), to conclude

Although the text of Gen 1–2 implies complementarity between the sexes, it presents no stereotypical roles that constitute the “essence” of manhood and womanhood respectively. Both sexes are made in the image of God; both are given the command to be fruitful and multiply; both are commanded to fill the earth and subdue it; both are commanded to have dominion over all the other creatures (1:27–28). They are equal partners corresponding to each other, with full reciprocity and mutuality and without hierarchy (2:18). Any attempt to distill the essence of the “roles” of man and woman respectively from the opening chapters of Genesis are going beyond the revelation of the text.<sup>98</sup> Complementary wholeness without hierarchy is the portrait of sexuality in Gen 1–2.

Closely connected with egalitarian, complementary wholeness is the concept of wholeness in personal relationship. The juxtaposition of male and female in 1:26 intimates what will become explicit in Gen 2: the full meaning of human existence is not in male or female in isolation but in their mutual communion. The notion of male-female fellowship in Gen 1 has been particularly emphasized by Karl Barth, who maintains that the “I-Thou” relationship of male and female is the essence of the *imago Dei*. For Barth, 1:27b is the exposition of v. 27a. Mankind in fellowship as male and female is what it means to be in the image of God.<sup>99</sup>

Barth’s exclusive identification of the sexual distinction with the image of God is too restrictive, but what he asserts is certainly a crucial aspect of the overall picture. The sexual differentiation of male and female (v. 27c) is not identical to the image of God (v. 26a–b), as Barth maintains, but the two are brought into so close connection that they should not be separated, as has been done for

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that these passages (as well as the rest of the Bible) present a “gender-free” or “gender-blind” concept of humanity. Certainly, gender roles are not hard-and-fast prescribed stereotypes in the creation narratives. Although differences are acknowledged, the emphasis of the stories is on a shared equality of nature and status and responsibility. Since the biblical text in Gen 1–2 differentiates between the sexes (male and female) but does not specify certain role relations that belong exclusively to the male and others that are exclusively the domain of the female, it seems inappropriate to go beyond the biblical evidence at this point and seek to clarify if and to what extent there are gender-specific role relations in addition to the obvious biological differences. For a critique (both from Scripture and the social sciences) of the attempt to establish fixed roles for men and women from Gen 1–2 and the rest of Scripture, see esp. Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace: Love, Work, and Parenting in a Changing World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990); and idem, *My Brother’s Keeper: What the Social Sciences Do (and Don’t) Tell Us about Masculinity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002). What can be stated with certainty is that in these opening chapters of the Bible there is no gender status differentiation that gives the man the leadership authority over woman.

<sup>98</sup> Contra a main focus of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, represented esp. by Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*; John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991); and Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, eds., *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective* (Chicago: Moody, 2001).

<sup>99</sup> Barth’s discussion of this point extends through major portions of his *Church Dogmatics*, 3/1–3. See the helpful summary of his argument in Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 33–48.

centuries. The synthetic parallelism of v. 27c, immediately following the synonymous parallelism of v. 27a–b, indicates that the *mode* of human existence in the divine image is that of male and female together.<sup>100</sup>

The aspect of personal relationship between the male and female is further highlighted by the analogy of God's own differentiation and relationship in contemplating the creation of humanity. It is hardly coincidental that only once in the creation account of Genesis—only in 1:26—does God speak of the divinity in the plural: “Let *us* make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness.” There have been many attempts to account for this use of the plural, but the explanation that appears most consonant with both the immediate context and the analogy of Scripture identifies this usage as a plural of fullness. The “let us” as a plural of fullness “supposes that there is within the divine Being the distinction of personalities” and expresses “an intra-divine deliberation among ‘persons’ within the divine Being.”<sup>101</sup>

The juxtaposition of the plurality of the divine “let us” in v. 26 with the plurality of the “them” (male and female) in vv. 26–28 is not without significance. A correspondence or analogy is intended “between this mark of the divine being, namely, that it includes an I and a Thou, and the being of man, male and female.”<sup>102</sup> The statement of this correspondence “preserves with exceeding care the otherness of God,”<sup>103</sup> precluding any notion of the bisexuality of God, and yet at the same time underscores the profound importance of the personal relationship and mutuality of communion in human existence as male and female. Just as there takes place in the divine being a deliberating over man's creation, “the differentiation and relationship, the loving coexistence and co-operation, the I and Thou,”<sup>104</sup> so the same are to be found in the product of God's crowning<sup>105</sup> creative work, human beings. “The image of God is primarily a relational concept. Ultimately we do not reflect God's image on our own but in relationship.

<sup>100</sup> See the argumentation for this point in Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 45; cf. Willem A. M. Beuken, “The Human Person in the Vision of Genesis 1–3: A Synthesis of Contemporary Insights,” *LS 24* (1999): 6–9.

<sup>101</sup> See Gerhard Hasel, “The Meaning of ‘Let Us’ in Gen 1:26,” *AUSS 13* (1975): 58–66, quote at 64. Cf. Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC 1; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1967), 52. Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness*, 20, among many other scholars, also acknowledges that 1:26 involves a “true plural” and “other divine beings,” but he interprets these as lesser gods who are God's attendants in God's heavenly court.

<sup>102</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/1:196.

<sup>103</sup> Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 21.

<sup>104</sup> Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/1:196.

<sup>105</sup> With von Rad, *Genesis*, 57, and Wilfong, “Human Creation in Canonical Context,” 47, I stress that the creation of humans is the “highpoint and goal” (von Rad) and “lynchpin” (Wilfong) of creation week, and not the Sabbath, even though the Sabbath comes last in the creation week. As elaborated below, the Sabbath is God's holy gift to humanity in order that they might experience intimate divine-human relationship; humans are not made in order to keep the Sabbath. As Jesus put it, “The sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Thus the *imago Dei* is not primarily what we are as individuals. Rather, it is present among humans in relationship. In a word, the image of God is found in human community.”<sup>106</sup>

Genesis 1 not only indicates God’s intention for an I-Thou relationship between male and female made in His image but also begins to fill in the picture of what is involved in that wholistic relationship. Together, in intimate fellowship and relationship with each other and with God, man and woman are to procreate: “Be fruitful and multiply” and “fill the earth” (1:28). Together in relationship they are also to be the creative shapers of the new creation (1:28): “fill the earth and *subdue* [*kābaš*] it”—not by exploitation but by “shaping the creation into a higher order of beauty and usefulness”<sup>107</sup> (as will become more explicit in 2:15). Man and woman in fellowship together are also to be “co-managers” of God’s creation (1:28): they are to “have dominion over” (*rādā*) the animal kingdom, again not by exploitation but by judiciously representing God’s sovereignty in the earth (as implicit in their vegetarian diet, free from the slaughter of animals, Gen 1:29).<sup>108</sup> Adam and Eve are not slaves to do the menial work of the gods, as in the ANE stories,<sup>109</sup> but coregents, the king and queen of their earthly dominion. Finally, the Sabbath (2:1–3), given by God at the climax of the creation week, reveals a “palace in time” in which the human family may join together in spiritual fellowship and communion with their Maker.<sup>110</sup>

If Gen 1 provides a melodic statement that human sexuality is for wholistic fellowship in personal relationship, Gen 2 orchestrates this melody with a volume of double forte, and the narrative harmony portrays added richness and beauty in the relational symphony of the sexes.

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<sup>106</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, “Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships,” *JETS* 41 (1998): 620.

<sup>107</sup> Allender and Longman, *Intimate Allies*, 80. For a sensitive discussion of the implications of this principle of creative shaping for the marriage relationship, see *ibid.*, 73–125.

The connection between God’s creative work and that of humanity is also underscored by the use of the key word *tôlēdôt*. The term means literally “begettings” or “bringings-forth” (from the verb *yālad* “to bring forth, beget”) and implies not only that Genesis is a history/account of beginnings but that in its use throughout the book of Genesis to structure the entire book, it links the creative “begettings” of the heavens and earth by God to the creative work of humans. For further elaboration, see esp. Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness*, 169, 174–76. Garr (175) summarizes: “God is *creator maior*; human-kind is *creator minor*.”

<sup>108</sup> See Cassuto, *Genesis*, 1:58, for a paraphrase of Gen 1:29–30: “You are permitted to make use of the living creatures and their service, you are allowed to exercise power over them so that they may promote your subsistence; but you may not treat the life-force within them contemptuously and slay them in order to eat their flesh; your proper diet shall be vegetable food.”

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 41–42, for further discussion of this point, comparing the biblical creation narrative with the *Enuma elish* and the Atrahasis Epic.

<sup>110</sup> See Richard M. Davidson, *A Love Song for the Sabbath* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1988), 27–32; Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 12–24.

According to Gen 2, the creation of Eve takes place in the context of loneliness. The keynote is struck in v. 18: “It is not good that the man should be alone.” Man is a social being; sexuality is for sociality, for relationship, companionship, partnership. In principle this passage may be seen to affirm the various mutual social relationships that should take place between the sexes (as is also true with the “image of God” passage in Gen 1). Singleness, although not God’s original ideal, does not prevent an individual from experiencing socialization, including healthy relationship/companionship between both sexes. God provides for those who are single and who are lonely.<sup>111</sup> But more specifically, the Genesis account links the concept of sociality to the marriage relationship. This is apparent from v. 24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (NKJV).<sup>112</sup> The introductory “Therefore”

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<sup>111</sup>As noted above, God’s pronouncement that man’s being alone was “not good” does not mean that singleness is evil but only that it is not the ideal. From an evangelical Christian perspective, see World Commission on Human Sexuality, “An Affirmation of God’s Gift of Sexuality,” October 1997, in *God’s Good Gift of Sexuality: A Seventh-day Adventist Curriculum Framework for Sexual Education* (Silver Spring, Md.: Department of Family Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002), 6: “Though the creation story establishes marriage as God’s primary answer to aloneness (Gen 2:24), in the broader sense aloneness is dispelled through connection with God and fellow human beings in mutually satisfying relationships. . . . All human beings were created for life in community, where persons whose differences would otherwise separate them are bound together as one in Jesus Christ. . . . While some, by choice or circumstance, are single, they may experience wholeness as individuals, connect with others through family and friends, and bring glory to God as single men and women.” See ch. 7, below, for further treatment (with bibliography) of an OT theology of singleness.

<sup>112</sup>The majority of biblical commentators throughout the centuries have taken this verse as referring to the institution of marriage. Notable exceptions to this traditional view include Hermann Gunkel in his ground-breaking form-critical commentary, *Genesis* (HKAT, Abteilung 1, no. 1; 3d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 13, 41, who saw 2:24 as an etiology, explaining the mutual sexual attraction of the male and the female as the longing of the two, who had originally been one (androgynous), to become one again. Another exception is Westermann, *Genesis*, 1:232, who argues that 2:18–24 is referring to “personal community between man and woman in the broadest sense” and “is not concerned with the foundation of any sort of institution, but with the primeval event,” and thus “is not talking about marriage as an institution for the begetting of descendants, but of the community of man and woman as such.” As pointed out below, however, language of formal covenant implies a marriage covenant, and the “Therefore” implies the setting of a pattern for future marriage relationships. A recent study by Batto (“The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in *Atrahasis*,” 621–31) argues forcefully, “This debate over the question whether the author of Gen 2:18–25 envisions the institution of marriage or not can now be settled in the affirmative on the basis of comparative evidence, hitherto overlooked, from the Mesopotamian myth of *Atrahasis*” (p. 623). Batto reviews the now widely recognized evidence that although there are significant differences between the Gen 2 account and the *Atrahasis* Epic, nonetheless the basic structural flows of the two accounts are in parallel. He then shows how, in the structurally parallel equivalent to Gen 2:18–24 in the *Atrahasis* Epic, there is reference to *uṣurāt niši* “regulations for humankind” specifically focusing upon the institution of marriage. Thus, Batto, concludes, the narrator of 2:18–24 “surely intended v. 24 as the equivalent of *uṣurāt niši* in *Atrahasis*, that is, as a universal law regulating the normative behavior of the sexes

(*ʿal-kēn*) indicates that the relationship of Adam and Eve is upheld as the pattern for all future human sexual relationships.<sup>113</sup> Several significant insights into the nature of the divine ideal for sexual relationships emerge from this verse and constitute separate facets of a theology of human sexuality, to be taken up below in turn.

## Sexuality and Exclusivity

A sixth facet of a theology of sexuality, the paradigm for marriage in Gen 2:24 highlights the element of *exclusivity*. The first of three actions described in this verse is that man *leaves* (*ʿāzab*). The verb *ʿāzab* is a forceful term. It means, literally, “to abandon, forsake,” and is employed frequently to describe Israel’s forsaking of Yahweh for false gods.<sup>114</sup> The leaving of 2:24 indicates the necessity of absolute freedom from outside interferences in the sexual relationship. Barth has pointed out that in a very real sense Gen 2 represents the “Old Testament Magna Charta of humanity,” as Adam was allowed to freely and exuberantly recognize and affirm the woman as his partner.<sup>115</sup> Just as this freedom was essential in the garden, so it is crucial in all succeeding sexual relationships.

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within a community of marriage” (629), and as in the Atrahasis Epic, the Gen 2 narrator is “positing that the institution of marriage is grounded in the very design of creation itself” (631).

<sup>113</sup>See Robert B. Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?” *JBL* 105 (1986): 97–98, for evidence that this is not just an etiological insertion to explain the common prevailing legal custom. Lawton points out, as I will expand further below, that it was not the normal custom for the man to leave his father and mother, but rather for the woman. Therefore the Hebrew imperfect *yāʿāzāb* in this context is best taken not as a frequentative imperfect “he [typically] leaves” (as in, e.g., NJPS, NRSV, and RSV) but as a potential imperfect “he shall [= should] leave” (as in, e.g., ESV, JPS, KJV, NASB, and NKJV). The verse thus expresses “a description of divine intention rather than of habitually observed fact” (p. 98). For other examples of this usage of the potential imperfect in the HB, see Gen 2:17; 3:14; Exod 20:3–17; 21:12; and Num 15:14. Angelo Tosato, “On Genesis 2:24,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 389–409, provides further evidence that this verse, by means of its introductory *ʿal-kēn* (“therefore”), “speaks of marriage in a normative way” (404). Tosato points out that elsewhere in Scripture there are numerous examples of what he calls “juridical etiologies” (405). The use of the initial *ʿal-kēn* in Gen 2:24 to link a previous action with the divine norm finds a striking parallel in the fourth commandment of Exod 20:11: God rested from his work on the seventh day, and therefore (*ʿal-kēn*) he commands that the sabbath continue to be observed. For other examples, see Exod 13:15; Lev 17:11, 12; Num 18:24; and Deut 5:15; 15:11, 15. See also Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 24: “The first couple provide the blueprint for normative citizenship in the theocracy proposed in the Bible’s first story.” Likewise, Nahum Sarna recognizes that the divine mandate is implicit in 2:24 since “fundamental aspects of the marital relationship are traced to God’s original creative act and seen as part of the ordained natural order” (Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 23). Cf. Marrs, “In the Beginning,” 22.

<sup>114</sup>See Deut 28:20; Judg 10:13; 2 Chr 34:25; Isa 1:4; and many other passages.

<sup>115</sup>Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3/2:291.

What is particularly striking in v. 24 is that it is the *man* who is to leave. It was a matter of course in the patriarchal society at the time Gen 2 was penned that the wife left her mother and father.<sup>116</sup> But for the husband to “leave” was revolutionary.<sup>117</sup> In effect, the force of this statement is that both are to leave—to cut loose from the ties that would encroach upon the independence and freedom of the relationship. This leaving implies not only the outward break to establish a new home but also the inward leaving—the psychological break away from dependence upon parents. It means “starting a whole new relationship in which the core loyalty is not to parents’ priorities, traditions, or influence but to an entirely new family that must set its own course, form, and purpose.”<sup>118</sup>

This leaving also implies the exclusiveness of the relationship: husband and wife, and no other interfering party, are bone of each other’s bones, flesh of each other’s flesh. This exclusivity in the marriage relationship is ultimately rooted in the monotheistic nature of God. Just as the one God (Yahweh Elohim) created the whole of humanity for fellowship with himself, so the man and the woman made in God’s image were to be exclusively devoted to each other in marriage. The polytheistic pantheon of the ANE pagan religions, on the other hand, engaged in promiscuous sex among themselves, and it is thus not surprising that the civilizations embracing these religions had no standard of monogamous exclusivity within marriage.

## Sexuality and Permanence

A seventh facet of a theology of sexuality, the Edenic paradigm for marriage in Gen 2:24 underscores the aspect of *permanence*. The second of three actions

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<sup>116</sup>Some have seen behind this passage a hint of a matriarchal social structure, but the evidence is insufficient to substantiate such an hypothesis. For modern proponents of matriarchal trends within (and behind) the biblical tradition, see, e.g., Jacques B. Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives* (ed. Nancy Vyhmeister; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), 32, 41; Savina J. Teubal, *Hagar the Egyptian: The Lost Tradition of the Matriarchs* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), passim; and Gerda Weiler, *Das Matriarchat im alten Israel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989). For further discussion, bibliographies, and negative assessments of alleged evidence for this theory, see, e.g., Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, 127; and Hennie J. Marsman, *Women in Ugarit and Israel: Their Social and Religious Position in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 101–2.

<sup>117</sup>“In the ancient Near East and most other cultures, patriarchal lineage prevailed in such a way that the primary bond of solidarity was the duty of a man toward his ancestors in general and to his progenitors in particular. To honor one’s father and mother was the most sacred obligation of social responsibility (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16). By dramatic contrast, [the author of Gen 2]. . . scandalously upsets, even shockingly reverses, this deep-rooted principle of tribal morality. Against the cultures of his environment, [the Hebrew author]. . . declares unambiguously that man’s first loyalty is to his woman” (Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 14–15).

<sup>118</sup>Allender and Longman, *Intimate Allies*, 218.

described in this verse is that man *clings* (*dābaq*). The Hebrew verb *dābaq* is another robust term, signifying strong personal attachment. The original imagery of the word is that of sticking, clinging, remaining physically close, as skin to flesh and flesh to bone. It is often used in the OT as a technical covenant term for the permanent bond of Israel to the Lord.<sup>119</sup> Applied to the relationship between the sexes in 2:24, it seems to clearly indicate a covenant context, that is, a marriage covenant.

The term “clings” parallels the “oath of solidarity” and language of “covenant partnership” expressed by Adam concerning Eve in the previous verse. When Adam spoke of Eve (2:23a), “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” he was expressing marriage covenant vows.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, “the third person reference [‘this’] in Gen 2:23, with God’s presence asserted in the immediate context, implies that Adam was addressing his affirmation not to Eve, nor, presumably to himself but to God as witness.”<sup>121</sup> Adam’s statement addressed to God regarding Eve was “a solemn affirmation of his marital commitment, an elliptical way of saying something like, ‘I hereby invite you, God, to hold me accountable to treat this woman as part of my own body.’”<sup>122</sup> Moreover, God’s presentation of the woman to the man implies that God was the officiant at the solemn covenant-making ceremony—the first garden wedding! And “therefore” (*‘al-kēn*), the narrator states, as it was with Adam, so the divine intent for every husband and wife is that their marriage be formalized with a clinging—mutual commitment expressed in a formal covenant ceremony.

But more is involved in clinging than a formal covenant. The word *dābaq* also emphasizes the inward attitudinal dimensions of the covenant bond. It “implies a devotion and an unshakable faith between humans; it connotes a permanent attraction which transcends genital union, to which, nonetheless it gives meaning.”<sup>123</sup> The word “clings” in 2:24 encapsulates the nuances of Adam’s covenant vows in the previous verse. The phrase “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” not only affirms the existence of a covenant but expresses “the entire range of intermediate possibilities from the extreme of frailty [flesh] to power [bones]. . . . [It is] a formula of abiding loyalty for every changing circumstance.”<sup>124</sup> It is the

<sup>119</sup> See, e.g., Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:5 (ET 13:4); Josh 22:5; 23:8; 2 Sam 20:3; 2 Kgs 18:6.

<sup>120</sup> For further discussion of the covenant language used by Adam, see Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone,” 535. Cf. John S. Grabowski, *Sex and Virtue: An Introduction to Sexual Ethics* (Catholic Moral Thought; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 33–38, for an extended treatment of “the wealth of covenant language” contained in Gen 2, including the language used by Adam. For presentation of evidence from both Gen 1 and 2 that marriage is set forth as covenantal, see John K. Tarwater, “The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002), *passim*.

<sup>121</sup> Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (VTSup 52; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 202.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>123</sup> Collins, “The Bible and Sexuality,” 153.

<sup>124</sup> Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone,” 534–35.

equivalent to our modern marriage vow “in sickness or in health, in adversity or prosperity.” When a man clings to a woman in the marriage covenant, he is vowing to remain in covenant relationship, no matter what may come. The marriage covenant is permanent; it is for keeps.

The permanence implied in the cleaving is not, however, one of ontological indissolubility, as some have inferred from this phrase, thereby concluding that the marriage bond can never be dissolved except by death, even in a context of a spouse’s marital unfaithfulness.<sup>125</sup> The covenant connotations of this term must be seen in the light of its covenantal usage elsewhere, such as with Israel’s “clinging” to God in covenant faithfulness. Although it was God’s intention for the covenant bonding to be permanent, it is clear from the history of Israel that this bond was broken by its unfaithfulness to Yahweh.

## Sexuality and Intimacy

An eighth facet of a theology of sexuality, the divine paradigm for all future marriages as set forth in Gen 2:24 stresses the ingredient of *intimacy*. The third of three actions described in this verse is that man and woman “become one flesh” (*wēhāyû lēbāsār ʿeḥād*). Note that this one-flesh union follows the “clinging.” Thus the Edenic blueprint for sexual relationships underscores that the one-flesh union of sexual intercourse belongs within the context of the marriage covenant. The unitive purpose of sexuality is to find fulfillment inside the marital relationship. Furthermore, as already indicated in previous sections of this chapter, the phrase “man and his wife” indicates that the sexual relationship envisioned is a *heterosexual, monogamous* one.

The “one-flesh” relationship centers in the intimacy of sexual union, sexual intercourse.<sup>126</sup> The physical act of coitus is the primary means of establishing the “innermost mystery” of oneness, and in the covenant context of this verse seems to constitute the sign of the marriage covenant.<sup>127</sup> Notice that according to the “therefore” linking 2:24 with the preceding verses, the “one-flesh” union designed

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<sup>125</sup> See the biblical examples assembled by William F. Luck, *Divorce and Remarriage: Recovering the Biblical View* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 8, and further discussion in ch. 9, below.

<sup>126</sup> See esp. the analysis of biblical data supporting this conclusion by Wayne J. H. Stuhlmiller, “‘One Flesh’ in the Old and New Testaments,” *Consensus* 5 (1979): 3–9, and further discussion in ch. 10, below.

<sup>127</sup> Piper, *The Biblical View of Sex and Marriage*, 52–67, explores the possible dimensions of the “inner mystery” of oneness. For biblical evidence suggesting that sexual intercourse constitutes the sign of the marriage covenant here and elsewhere in Scripture (just as other covenants in Scripture have signs), see, e.g., Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant*, 265–79. Cf. Michael Lawrence, “A Theology of Sex,” in *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ* (ed. John Piper and Justin Taylor; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2005), 137–38: “Now if marriage is a covenant, then that covenant must have a sign, something that makes visible the invisible reality of this one-flesh union. . . . The sign of that unique covenant relationship is the physical act of becoming one flesh in sexual intercourse.”

for all marriages in the future was one which Adam and Eve personally experienced in the Garden of Eden before the fall, and thus sexual intercourse was clearly part of their unitive relationship already before fall as well as during their ongoing relationship outside the Garden (4:1).

The “one flesh” experience is not limited to sexual intercourse. The term *bāšār*, “flesh,” in the OT refers not only to one’s physical body but as a term to denote human relationship.<sup>128</sup> By “one flesh” is thus connoted a “sexual concourse and psychological concurrence, in the full sense of the conjunction of bodies and minds, at once through *erōs* and *agapē* . . . a psychic as well as physiological gift of loyalty and exchange,”<sup>129</sup> “the deepest harmonious community that exists between people, which is the unity between husband and wife in all its dimensions, emotional, physical, and spiritual.”<sup>130</sup> It indicates a oneness and intimacy in the total relationship of the whole person of the husband to the whole person of the wife, a harmony and union with each other in all things.

The creation accounts allude to various dimensions of Adam and Eve’s intimacy.<sup>131</sup> I have already pointed out from Gen 1 the sexual intimacy implied by God in the divine command for them to “Be fruitful and multiply,” and the creative work intimacy involved in their subduing and ruling the earth. Genesis 2:15 makes more explicit the bold creativity entailed in subduing the earth: they were to “till” (*‘ābad*) and “keep” (*šāmar*) the garden. These terms literally mean to “serve” and “guard” respectively. Man and woman are entrusted with a responsible stewardship of serving and protecting their environment. These two words used as a pair also make up the expression used in Exodus for the service of the priests and Levites in the sanctuary,<sup>132</sup> and there is abundant intertextual evidence that, canonically, the pre-fall garden of Eden is presented as the original sanctuary on earth in parallel to the later Mosaic sanctuary and Solomonic temple.<sup>133</sup> In the context of the suffusion of sanctuary language in Gen 1–2, this

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<sup>128</sup>See, e.g., Gen 29:14; 37:27; Lev 18:6; 25:49; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:13–14 (ET 19:12–13); 1 Chr 11:1; Isa 40:5. Cf. the discussion of this semantic nuance of the term in N. P. Bratsiotis, “בָּשָׂר *bāšār*,” *TDOT* 2:319, 326–28. Bratsiotis (328) recognizes that in Gen 2:24 the term “one flesh” refers to “the consummation of the marriage” and also “perhaps an attempt to interpret the relationship formula can also be seen here.”

<sup>129</sup>Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 15–16.

<sup>130</sup>Vogels, “Man and Woman,” 223.

<sup>131</sup>J. Howard Clinebell Jr. and Charlotte H. Clinebell, *The Intimate Marriage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 23–40, isolate various kinds of marital intimacy; many of these are intimated in the Genesis accounts of creation.

<sup>132</sup>See, e.g., Num 3:7–8; 18:3–7.

<sup>133</sup>For a summary of seventeen lines of intertextual evidence for this conclusion, see Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *JATS* 11, nos. 1–2 (2000): 108–11. Intertextual indicators include, e.g., key terminological linkages (“to plant,” “in the midst,” God “walking around,” “onyx,” “bdellium,” “light”), thematic parallels (common eastward orientation, three spheres of space in ascending degrees of holiness, river, portrayals of nature), and structural parallels (seven sections concluding with the Sabbath, and the verbal series at the conclusion: “saw the work,” “made/did,” “finished the work,” “blessed”). See also Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 68–103; Gregory K. Beale,

phrase clearly implies a sacerdotal function. Adam and Eve are portrayed as creative coparticipants, spiritual intimates—indeed, priests—in the sacred service of the Eden sanctuary.

Genesis 2:24c does not imply that the one-fleshness is an instantaneously achieved state. The phrase *wēhāyû lēbāšār ʿeḩād* is better rendered “they will *become* [not *be*] one flesh.” “The Hebrew nuance, not usually conveyed in the English translations, indicates that this state of ‘unicarnation’—if one may employ a neologism—results from a process of development that deepens in intensity and strengthens itself with the passage of time instead of dissipating like a straw fire.”<sup>134</sup>

Genesis 2:24 implies intimacy but at the same time probably also implies forbidden degrees of intimacy within the family. A man (as well as the woman) was to *leave* father and mother, not *marry* one of them. The clinging and becoming one flesh was assumed to be with another partner than parents; thus certain blood relationships were tacitly regarded as off-limits for marriage. From the beginning, at least father-daughter and mother-son relationships were apparently considered as forbidden degrees of closeness for marriage, and perhaps this verse also implicitly precluded all intergenerational liaisons (as is tacitly assumed throughout the book of Genesis; see the discussion in ch. 10, below).

The one-flesh experience of marriage includes the deepest kind of intimacy, a total transparency between marriage partners, described in v. 25: “And the man and his wife were both naked, and *were not ashamed* [*before each other* (*hitpaʿel of bôš*)].” (The end of this chapter will discuss the implications of this climactic creation statement on sexuality.)

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*The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 66–80; Eric Bolger, “The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993); William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Homebush, N.S.W., Australia: Lancer, 1985), 35–76; Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 12–13; Meridith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Southampton, Mass.: M. G. Kline, 1989), 31–32, 54–56; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 142–45; S. Dean McBride Jr., “Divine Protocol: Genesis 1:1–2:3 as Prologue to the Pentateuch,” in *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Sibley Towner* (ed. William P. Brown and S. Dean McBride Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2000), 11–15; Donald W. Parry, “Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (ed. Donald W. Parry; Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1994), 126–51; Terje Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature* (CBET 25; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 111–38; and Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in “*I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*”: *Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1–11* (ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura; vol. 4 of *Sources for Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. David W. Baker; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399–404.

<sup>134</sup>Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 15. The *waw* consecutive plus the perfect plus the preposition *lē* implies a process (“become”), not just a state (“be”).

## Sexuality and Procreation

A ninth facet of the theology of human sexuality emerging from Gen 1–2 concerns the reference to procreation. In 1:27 humankind is made in God's image: "in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Humankind is described as "male and female," and it is noteworthy that "this specific reference [to sexuality] pertains not to procreation but to the image of God."<sup>135</sup> It is clear from the next verse (1:28) that one of the primary purposes of sexuality is procreation, as indicated in the words "Be fruitful and multiply." But it is crucial to recognize that human procreativity "is not seen as an emanation or manifestation of his [the man's] creation in God's image." Rather, human procreative ability "is removed from God's image and shifted to a special word of blessing."<sup>136</sup>

This separation of the *imago Dei* and procreation probably serves as a polemic—like so much of the careful wording of the Genesis creation accounts<sup>137</sup>—against the mythological understanding and orgiastic celebration of divine sexual activity.<sup>138</sup> At the same time a profound insight into the theology of human sexuality is provided. Procreation is shown to be part of the divine design for human sexuality—as a special added blessing. This divine blessing/command is to be taken seriously and acted upon freely and responsibly in the power that attends God's blessing.<sup>139</sup> Adam and Eve are given the joyous privilege of procreativity, emulating (to a limited extent) the creative work of God himself and, in a sense, continuing God's creative work.<sup>140</sup>

Still, sexuality cannot be wholly subordinated to the intent to propagate children. Sexual differentiation has meaning apart from the procreative purpose. The procreative blessing is also pronounced upon the birds and fish on the fifth day (v. 22), but only humankind is made in the image of God. Genesis 1 emphasizes that the sexual distinction in humankind is created by God particularly for fellowship, for relationship, between male and female.

<sup>135</sup>Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 5.

<sup>136</sup>Von Rad, *Genesis*, 60–61.

<sup>137</sup>See, e.g., Hasel, "The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," 81–102; Noort, "The Creation of Man and Woman," 8–10.

<sup>138</sup>See Phyllis A. Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them: Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *HTR* 74 (1981): 134. Bird also points out that the very command in itself is a polemic against fertility rituals: "The power of created life to replenish itself is a power given to each species at its creation and therefore is not dependent upon subsequent rites or petitions for its effect" (p. 147).

<sup>139</sup>The Hebrew word for "bless" (*pi'el* of *bāarak*) in Gen 1 implies the power to accomplish the task that God has set forth in the blessing. See Josef Scharbert, "ברך *brk*," *TDOT* 2:306–7; H. Beyer, "εὐλογέω. εὐλογητός. εὐλογία. ἐνευλογέω," *TDNT* 2:755–57.

<sup>140</sup>For further development of this concept of cocreativity mirroring the divine creative work, see esp. Allender and Longman, *Intimate Allies*, 73–87. The uniqueness of the procreative powers of the first human couple should not be overstressed, however, inasmuch as God gives the same blessing, "Be fruitful and multiply," to the fish and fowl (Gen 1:22).

The complete absence of any reference to the propagation of children in Gen 2 highlights the significance of the unitive purpose of sexuality. This omission is not to deny the importance of procreation (as becomes apparent in later chapters of Scripture). But by the “full-stop”<sup>141</sup> after “one flesh” in v. 24, sexuality is given independent meaning and value. It does not need to be justified only as a means to a superior end, that is, procreation. The interpretation given by some that husband and wife become one flesh in the flesh of their children is not warranted by the text. Sexual love in the creation pattern is valued for its own sake.

When viewed against parallel ANE creation stories, this biblical view of marriage also seems to be a polemical corrective to the prevailing ANE perspective represented, for example, by the Atrahasis Epic, which “links marriage and procreation closely as if to suggest that the primary function of marriage is procreation.” For the biblical narrator, by contrast, “the communitarian, affective function of marriage takes precedence over the procreative function of marriage.”<sup>142</sup>

## The Wholesome, Holy Beauty of Sexuality

A final, tenth facet of the theology of human sexuality in Gen 1–2 emerges from God’s personal assessment of his creation. According to 1:31, when “God saw everything that he had made”—including the sexuality of his crowning work of creation—“indeed, it was very good.” The Hebrew expression *ṭōb me’ōd* (“very good”) connotes the quintessence of goodness, wholesomeness, appropriateness, beauty.<sup>143</sup> It is that which is both morally and aesthetically pleasing. The syllogism is straightforward. Sexuality (including the act of sexual intercourse) is part of God’s creation, part of God’s crowning act of creating humans. And God’s creation is very beautiful/good. Therefore, declares the first chapter of Genesis, sex is good and beautiful, yes, very beautiful and good. It is not a mistake, a sinful aberration, a regrettable necessity, a shameful experience, as it has so often been regarded in the history of Christian as well as pagan thought. Rather, human sexuality (as both an ontological state and a relational experience) is divinely inaugurated: it is part of God’s perfect design from the beginning and willed as a fundamental aspect of human existence.

The narrative of Gen 2 highlights the divine initiative and approbation in the relationship of the sexes. After the formation of woman, the Lord God “brought her to the man” (v. 22). The marriage relationship between man and woman is a divine gift to humanity. The Creator, as it were, celebrated the first marriage. Thus the “very good” that is pronounced upon man and his sexuality in Gen 1 is

<sup>141</sup> Walter Trobisch, *I Married You* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 20.

<sup>142</sup> Batto, “The Institution of Marriage in Genesis 2 and in *Atrahasis*,” 631. For further discussion see pp. 621–31, where Batto compares the similarities and differences between the understanding of marriage in Gen 2 and that in the Atrahasis Epic.

<sup>143</sup> For discussion of the aesthetic as well as moral/ethical dimensions of this term, see esp. Andrew Bowling, “טוֹב (*ṭōb*) (be) good, beneficial, pleasant, favorable, happy, right,” *TWOT* 1:345–46.

in Gen 2 concretized in the divine solemnization of the one-flesh union between husband and wife.

What a joyous celebration that first wedding was. As Adam is introduced to his new wife, the passionate delight exudes from Adam's first recorded words. He breaks forth into poetry (and song?). The opening phrase of Adam (*zōʔt happa<sup>c</sup>am*) is difficult to translate from Hebrew into equivalent dynamic English. It means something like "Wow! At last! This is the one!" As we have noted above, the woman has been aesthetically designed and well built (*bānā* v. 22) just for him—she is dazzlingly beautiful—and he cannot contain his enthusiasm and joy. As Adam recognizes who she is, he also recognizes his true self, and his pun on the words *ʔiššā*, "Wo-man," and *ʔiš*, "Man," constitutes, as already pointed out, a statement of covenant loyalty—his wedding vows. But does this play with words also indicate a spirit of light-hearted play in Adam's heart? As he has seen the animals each romping and playing with their mate, so now Adam senses he is finally whole with an intimate partner—in work, in dominion, yes, but also in sexual intimacy and play. The tone of Adam's response to Eve's creation seems to bespeak not only covenant loyalty but sensuous delight, expectancy of adventure, exuberant celebration.

The last lines of Gen 2 confirm this celebrative interpretation. The final word on God's Edenic ideal for sexuality comes in v. 25: "And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed." The Hebrew construction of the last English phrase may be more accurately translated, "they were not ashamed *before one another* [*hitpa<sup>c</sup>el* of *bōš*]."<sup>144</sup> Viewed in contrast with the "utter [shameful] nakedness"<sup>145</sup> mentioned in Gen 3, the intent here is clear: "Shameless sexuality was divinely ordered; shameful sexuality is the result of sin."<sup>146</sup> According to God's original design, sexuality is wholesome, beautiful, and good. It is meant to be experienced between spouses without fear, without inhibitions, without shame and embarrassment. The account of Gen 2 "breathes an atmosphere of unabashed sensuality. There is no puritanical or ascetic disparagement of sexuality. The story contains not the slightest hint of moral or cultic impurity. . . . The coming together of the couple is the healthy fulfilling of the Creator's intention, without shadow or qualification."<sup>147</sup>

This final verse of the creation narratives sets forth the divine approbation upon uninhibited sensuous—yes, erotic—sexuality. Adam and Eve stand before each other, naked and unashamed. They look at each other, delighting in each other's bodies. They are deeply, passionately, romantically, in love.<sup>148</sup> With

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<sup>144</sup>BDB 102; cf. HALOT 117.

<sup>145</sup>See the discussion in ch. 2, below, where I point out that in Gen 3 a different Hebrew for "naked" than that in Gen 2:25 appears, which implies utter and shameful nakedness.

<sup>146</sup>Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality," 154.

<sup>147</sup>Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings*, 16.

<sup>148</sup>See Carr, *The Erotic Word*, 36–48, for elaboration of the erotic passion emphasized in Gen 1–2, which should "impel us to look more broadly at ourselves as passionate beings" (p. 37).

economy of words and delicacy of taste, the narrator paints a scene of human sexuality as God designed it should be.

Just as the one-flesh experience applied to more than the physical union, so the reference to nakedness connotes more than physical nudity.<sup>149</sup> There is implied the ability “to stand in front of each other, stripped and undisguised, without pretensions, without hiding anything, seeing the partner as he or she really is, and showing myself to him or her as I really am—and still not to be ashamed.”<sup>150</sup> “Adam and Eve stood before one another naked, and they felt no shame. They were completely vulnerable in each other’s presence, and they felt no self-consciousness, no guilt, no shame.”<sup>151</sup>

The literary structural placement of the first wedding ceremony and the first married couple’s unashamed sexuality at the climax of the creation account in Gen 2 must be viewed in parallel with the placement of the Sabbath at the climax of the first creation account in 1:1–2:4a. Doukhan has shown how these two creation accounts are in a precise literary structural parallelism of seven sections.<sup>152</sup> The narrator has not accidentally paired the Sabbath and marriage—two institutions continuing in salvation history outside Eden. God actualizes Sabbath holiness by his presence (2:3) and solemnizes the marriage covenant by his presence (2:22–23). By linking these two institutions, the narrator implicitly indicates that the marriage relationship is holy like the Sabbath.<sup>153</sup> The covenant bond between husband and wife is sacred, just as is the sacred covenant relationship between God and humanity represented by the Sabbath. Sexuality is sacred not in the sense of the “sacralization/divinization of sex” practiced in the pagan fertility cults but in that it is hallowed by the divine approbation and presence.<sup>154</sup> Human sexuality is thus a divinely created holy mystery.<sup>155</sup> It is apparent already at the

<sup>149</sup>See Kidner, *Genesis*, 66, who observes that v. 25 indicates “the perfect ease between them.” For a discussion and rejection of the theory that Adam and Eve’s nakedness without shame refers to their lack of consciousness of their sexuality, see ch. 2, below.

<sup>150</sup>Trobisch, *I Married You*, 82–83.

<sup>151</sup>Allender and Longman, *Intimate Allies*, 224. Cf. Burke, *Different by Design*, 48–51, who stresses the “freedom to be transparent with the assurance of acceptance” (p. 48) that is implied in this verse.

<sup>152</sup>Doukhan, *Literary Structure*, 35–80.

<sup>153</sup>For further discussion of these interrelated sections of the creation narratives and the links of covenant and relationship, see *ibid.*, 41–42, 223–27. Note the pattern in later salvation history in which God makes something or someone holy by his presence: the burning bush (Exod 3:2–5), the sanctuary (Exod 25:8; 40:34–38), God’s appearance to Joshua (Josh 5:13–15), etc. So God makes the Sabbath and marriage holy by his special presence.

<sup>154</sup>Neither in the Genesis accounts of creation nor elsewhere in the canonical Scripture, however, is sexuality explicitly characterized by Hebrew words from the root *qds*, “sacred/holy.” Although the holy nature of sexuality and the marriage institution seems implied by the parallelism with the Sabbath, as discussed above, use of the specific root *qds* is avoided, probably to avoid any confusion with the sacralization/divinization of sexuality as practiced in the fertility cults.

<sup>155</sup>For recent studies highlighting the sacred nature of sexuality as God designed it, see Tim Alan Gardner, *Sacred Sex: A Spiritual Celebration of Oneness in Marriage* (Colo-

beginning of the biblical canon that the marriage relationship illustrates the divine-human relationship epitomized by the Sabbath and, by the same token, the divine-human intimacy intended for the Sabbath illuminates the intimacy God intended for marriage.

The intimacy within the sacred *space* of the Eden sanctuary (2:15–25) is the counterpart to the climax of the first creation account (2:1–3), where the man and the woman experience intimacy within sacred *time*—the Sabbath. Sabbath, sanctuary, and marriage intersect in the one-flesh experience of the first couple.<sup>156</sup> The first man and woman, created on the sixth day, united in holy wedlock as the first Sabbath draws near, are clearly intended to unite Sabbath holiness with the holy intimacy of married love. That first Friday night in Eden<sup>157</sup>—the eve of the Shabbat<sup>158</sup>—was their wedding night. The references to “one flesh” and their being naked before each other without shame (vv. 24–25), coming immediately after the garden wedding ceremony and appearing in the narrative structure paralleling the Sabbath in the first creation account, all give further evidence that sexual union and Sabbath are not inimical to each other. God, who hallows that first Sabbath with his presence, at the same time hallows the marriage bed on the Sabbath as Adam and Eve share sexual intimacy with each other.

It is not within the scope of this study to draw out the full range of philosophical and sociological implications that follow from the theology of human sexuality set forth in Gen 1–2. Perhaps it may suffice to repeat again the central clause on sexuality in Gen 1—“male and female he created them”—and then exclaim with Emil Brunner,

That is the immense double statement, of a lapidary simplicity, so simple indeed that we hardly realize that with it a vast world of myth and Gnostic speculation, of cynicism and asceticism, of the deification of sexuality and fear of sex completely disappears.<sup>159</sup>

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rado Springs, Colo.: Waterbrook, 2000); Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality: Recovering Biblical Standards for a Culture in Crisis* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 142–45; and Philip Yancey, “Holy Sex: How It Ravishes Our Souls,” *ChT* 47, no. 10 (2003): 46–51, adapted from *Rumors of Another World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>156</sup>As I will note in later chapters, after sin, as a safeguard against the sacralization and deification of sex in the fertility cults, God forbade Israel from bringing anything related to sexual activity into the sanctuary where the Shechinah glory was manifested. But as Gen 1–2 make clear, sexuality is not per se inimical to holy space or time, except in the context of polemic against fertility cult distortions of God’s original ideal.

<sup>157</sup>The phrase “That first Friday in Eden” is borrowed freely from Alberta Mazat, *That Friday in Eden: Sharing and Enhancing Sexuality in Marriage* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific, 1981). As a licensed clinical social worker and marriage, family, and child counselor and as a wonderful mother-in-law and delightful friend, Mazat has had a profound influence in shaping my positive view of sexuality.

<sup>158</sup>The assumption here is that in Gen 1–2 the Sabbath is presented as beginning at sundown Friday night. See H. R. Stroes, “Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning? Some Biblical Observations,” *VT* 16 (1966): 460–75, for a survey of biblical evidence supporting this conclusion.

<sup>159</sup>Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), 346.

As with the nature of sexuality depicted in Gen 1, so Gen 2 decidedly does not display a “melancholy attitude toward sex”;<sup>160</sup> rather, Gen 2 “gives the relationship between man and woman the dignity of being the greatest miracle and mystery of creation.”<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>Cuthbert A. Simpson, “The Book of Genesis: Introduction and Exegesis,” *IB* 1:485–86.

<sup>161</sup>Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:150.