

that is, the events that constituted creation are events as we know events, and do not, probably cannot, refer to another type of event that does not have the same time-space participation that is had by events that follow from will as we know them. This also indicates that our relationship with God, as personal, is personal in equivalent terms to other relationships: our engagement with God, through Christ, is real and substantially concrete; it is to have effects in our life and is not just an “idea” with no relational or existential consequence within the concrete terms of our world.

The converse, that Barrett would have us entertain, must, I think, undo all this.

But it is not only Barrett who suggests that we need to take Genesis, and the way it frames reality, differently from how we frame the everyday world. Almost every theologian who wants to accommodate the dictates of materialism must do the same thing; perhaps unwittingly, but maybe not.

This comes to the fore in the incoherence of the claim that Genesis 1 tells us a whole bunch of things about the creation, which are implicated in the text, but deny that the text means anything in the terms that it uses, and that its scope is not concordant with the world that it on its face it describes and refers to (I was particularly struck by this line when I received an invoice from my child’s Jewish pre-school; the year was noted as being well into the five thousands). So one wonders at the basis for such an alternative philosophical framework: where does the account touch the real if at every point its content is denied in real terms; but maintained in some other terms whose reference frame is never articulated, nor given any basis in the only world that we have access to, and which is the world of encounter between God and us. That is the creation which provides the setting for covenant between God and us.

Discontinuity between the reference frames necessarily flows from denial of the congruence of the Genesis 1 text with the world it seemingly has in its sights. But the discontinuity is self

refuting, at least at some level, because it cannot make reference to anything that would sustain the discontinuity apart from a view of the world which at the outset denies the biblical world-conception (hardly a commendation for an approach to the Bible) and has more in common with a paganistic removal of the creator from our world of interaction, or with materialist failure to accommodate the non-material in so much of our lives.

So, is the choice then that Barrett and his ilk must entertain an imagined world to mount their criticism of the historicity of Adam and hope they maintain a Christian theology, or reject the Bible in the terms in which it couches itself, and therefore ask as to believe them with no adequate basis for such belief, but in doing so render such a theology un-Christian and counter-biblical.

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The Bible’s high view of women—letter 1

In the article “The Bible’s high view of women rooted in the creation account”, Lita Cosner argues that “God is described in male terms because that best describes how God relates to His creation”. Might I suggest another possible reason for the Bible’s use of male imagery when describing God? Could it be that the *imago Dei* should be understood *literally*, and that the male human form is a closer approximation to the divine form than the female human form? There is much apparent scriptural support for this position (see Exodus 24:9–11, Exodus 33:21–23, Numbers 12:6–8, Psalm 17:15, Ezekiel 1:25–28, Daniel 7:9–14, John 5:37–38 and Revelation 4:2–3). Christians have no problem with the fact that the Lord Jesus has form, but there is a great deal of resistance to the possibility that God *the Father* might *also* have a form or likeness. But if the

Lord Jesus can have a literal form and still retain all the attributes of deity (Colossians 2:9), why could the same not be true of God the Father? It should be noted that the descriptions in Daniel 7:9–14, John 5:37–38 and Revelation 4:2–3, are clearly describing God *the Father*—not God the Son. In fact, there is an intriguing asymmetry in Genesis 1:27 that has been overlooked by most commentators: the fact that God created man is stated *three* times, but the claim that man is made in God’s image is only stated *twice*. Could this be a hint that, although all *three* members of the Godhead participated in man’s creation, only *two* of the members of the Godhead (God the Father and God the Son) actually possess form or likeness?

Despite the apparent scriptural support for a literal understanding of the *imago Dei*, this possibility is usually dismissed due to perceived intellectual and/or theological difficulties. However, these difficulties are more apparent than real. The following are some of the justifications usually given for rejecting a literal understanding of the *imago Dei* (each followed by a brief rebuttal):

1. *God is Spirit, and spirits do not have form.* God is Spirit (John 4:24), but spirits clearly *can* have form. *Our* spirits certainly have form; in fact, our spirits are such detailed replicas of our bodies that they actually have fingers and tongues (Luke 16:24). Hence, this argument is unconvincing.
2. *God the Father cannot have a form, because this would imply that He has flesh and bones and even reproductive organs.* A literal divine form does not necessarily imply these things (*our* spirits do not have flesh and blood), and it seems unthinkable that God would have reproductive organs. I am simply arguing that God the Father has a form which, although gloriously and perhaps indescribably brilliant, is somewhat similar to the male human form. Saying that God the Father has a literal form is *not* equivalent to saying that He has a literal body.

3. *The claim that God the Father has a literal form would imply that He is limited in spatial extent, which would violate the doctrine of his omnipresence.* This reasoning is also unconvincing. Does the Lord Jesus lack omnipresence because He has a form? Absolutely not! A simple resolution of this difficulty is the fact that all the members of the Godhead are one; hence any attribute possessed by one of the members of the Godhead is also possessed by the other two members. It is striking that Psalm 139:7–10, one of the most well-known passages discussing God’s omnipresence, seems to be describing the omnipresence of *the Holy Spirit*, especially in verse 7: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? [emphasis mine].” Thus, God the Father and God the Son are omnipresent because God the Holy Spirit is omnipresent.

4. *Since men and women bear equally the imago Dei, a literal understanding of the imago Dei is precluded.* There is a huge difficulty with this argument: the Bible nowhere makes such a claim (such a notion appears to be based more on “political correctness” than on Scripture!). In fact, there is positive evidence from Scripture to suggest that men and women do *not* bear the *imago Dei* in exactly the same sense: I Corinthians 11:7 states that “he [a man] is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.” This verse clearly suggests that men bear the *imago Dei* in a sense that women do not, a fact that makes perfect and obvious sense if the *imago Dei* is understood literally. Men and women both bear the *imago Dei*, but men bear it in a *primary* sense, since the male human form is derived from the divine form, while women bear it in a *secondary* sense, since the female human form is derived in turn from the male human form. Furthermore, this statement in no way demeans women, since it is simply an

undeniable fact that men and women differ in visible form.

Another possible objection is the fact that form implies spatial extent, and a being with spatial extent *demand*s a space in which to exist. A literal divine form, it could be argued, would imply that God the Father himself could not have existed prior to his *own creation* of space itself (Genesis 1:1). This absurd conclusion, the argument might go, precludes a literal divine form. Space does not permit me (no pun intended!) to address this objection here, but Hebrews 9:11 seems to permit an intriguing resolution to this apparent difficulty.

While I realize that most “reputable” theologians have argued against a literal understanding of the *imago Dei*, I cannot help but notice that the reasons often given for doing so seem both logically and exegetically deficient.

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Lita Cosner replies:

I have argued that God is relationally male, in that His interactions with His creation lend themselves to male imagery more than female imagery, and that it is theologically erroneous to describe God in relationally female terms. Indeed, the second Person of the Trinity has taken on a human male form. But to say that the human male form is a closer approximation to the divine form than the female form is exegetically irresponsible.

First, we must examine what it means when the Bible says that man was created in God’s image. It is not that God had two eyes, etc., so we do too. Rather, it means that we are *like* God in some ways, for instance, moral accountability and certain other attributes, and we stand for Him in certain ways in our function as stewards of creation. And when we examine Genesis 1:26–28; God speaks in the *plural* when he gives mankind,

then consisting of Adam and Eve, the commission to exercise dominion over creation; the commands extended to Eve as well. She then was just as much in the image of God as Adam was. The image and likeness of God in human beings has nothing to do with how we look, and everything to do with how we *function*. And women and men both have this role of stewardship over creation equally; intra-humanity relationships necessarily involve subordination, but when it comes to the rest of creation, women have the same sort of authority that men have.

Luke 16:24 is part of a parable; the imagery does not suggest that spirits actually have tongues and fingers, any more than Psalm 17:8 suggests that God has wings. Hebert’s second point is not supported anywhere in Scripture.

The third point may be inadvertently heretical; God the Son is incarnate but God the Father and God the Spirit are not. Therefore, we can say that God the Son has an attribute that God the Father and God the Spirit do not. The Spirit and the Son intercede for believers; the Father does not (there is no one for the Father to intercede to!) Rather, the members of the Godhead partake equally of divine attributes; this does not preclude differences between the members regarding attributes which they have in addition to divinity. If the members of the Godhead were all exactly alike, there would be no basis for differentiating between them. I am sure the correspondent did not mean it, but his thought if led to its logical conclusion would lead to multiple heresies, such as modalism (the idea that there is only one Person of the Trinity who appears as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and patripassianism (the idea that the Father suffered with the Son on the cross).

If the first point rises from an inappropriately literal interpretation of parabolic symbolism, the second is unsupported by Scripture, and the third point is inadvertently heretical, then the fourth point has no leg to stand on.

The correspondent has entirely ripped 1 Corinthians 11:7 out of its proper context to use it as a proof-text;

Paul is talking about order in the church here; and is using the order of creation as a ground for his teaching that women should respect their husbands by wearing their head coverings while they pray.

Regarding his opinion of most credentialed scholars' stance on the issue, scare quotes do not a sound argument make, and unsupported mudslinging does not deserve to be dignified with an answer.

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The Bible's high view of women—letter 2

I would like to pass my best words of appreciation to the author—this is an issue very much underestimated by the church, and the less we teach about what the Bible says about the issue, the more the world confuses people about it. The author has a really clear vision of the subject and, as I can see, was trained in the Wesleyan tradition (which is a pioneer in that area of practical theology), so, I would highly recommend the author to continue the study's development. That is the only reason I am writing—to encourage the author to improve the paper for the sake of God's greater glory.

I fear the paper does not go far enough with the Genesis account's proper exegesis. This results in confusion, such that despite "Eve's ontological equality with Adam ... she is subordinate him in some sense" (p.53). I would make the following comments:

1) The point that the name giving is an act of ultimate authority is a very good insight. But the Genesis account shows very clearly that the man "called his wife's name Eve" only in Genesis 3:20, i.e. after the Fall—the man did not have such authority over his wife until the God's verdict.

- 2) The word "adam" (Heb. "man") in Genesis 1–3 cannot be understood exclusively as the male person or even his personal name. It is also a general term for both male and female together (1:27) and even a collective given name for them: "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Genesis 5:2).
- 3) It could well be that the subordination of the wife to her husband was declared for the first time in Genesis 3:16: "thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee". There is no "shall be" in the original text, the word "desire" is in the present tense, so that is not a prediction but a statement of fact. And it is definitely not about sexual desire, as some understand, since sexual desire was given to the *adam* (male and female) as a commandment prior to the Fall (Genesis 1:28).

Precisely the same phrase "desire—rule over" as in 3:16 is used in 4:7 where sin is about to control Cain, but God says to Cain to rule over it. These are only two places we meet that phrase in the Scripture. So one can interpret the phrase in the way that the wife will have a desire to rule over the husband (and, probably, the opposite is right as well) as an outcome of the Fall, and God resolves the conflict of the desires declaring the order for the new conditions. From that interpretation one can conclude that before the Fall *adam* (man and woman) did not have the selfish longing to control one another, but were subordinate to one another in love.

That leads to interesting New Testament implications: the Church is called to restore the proper order of God's household (Gr. *oikonomia*—translated as "dispensation" in Ephesians 1:10, 3:2), where all are submitted (Gr. *hupotassomenoy*—subordinated) to one another. However while "there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28), their roles are different. That is why in Ephesians right after

the instruction of submitting to one another Paul shows the difference in the way wives should be submitted to their husbands and husbands to their wives (and also role differences in the mutual submission of masters/slaves and parent/children later on).

- 4) The idea of the ontological subordination of woman "in some sense" comes also from a misunderstanding of the word *ezer* (helper) as an apprentice or assistant, while it could mean "enabler" or "empowerer" and more commonly refers to God (cf. Deut 33:7,26,29; Ps 20:2, 33:20, 70:5, 89:19, 115:9–11, 121:1–2, 124:8, 146:5; etc.). Sure, that role of woman was corrupted by the Fall, but even today the world recognizes that, like someone put it, "behind every great man one always can find a great woman".

While not pretending to be great in any way, I can testify that I would never have been able to start or run our ministry if not a for the support, enabling and empowering I receive from my wife Olga, for whom I praise God.

The last point: speaking of women in ministry in the NT it would be worthwhile to mention that Philip had four daughters "which did prophesy" (Acts 21:9), whatever that meant. Paul mentions prophecy among the special ministries of the word given to the Church by God (Ephesians 4:11). He describes it as speaking "unto men [i.e. people] [for] edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1Cor. 14:3), he even provides the instructions on how women should practice it in a culturally appropriate way (1Cor. 11:5).

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Lita Cosner replies:

I agree that this is a topic that the Church has not addressed as it