

Fall 2004

A Response to Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World

John Tarwater

Cedarville University, jtarwater@cedarville.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/business_administration_publications

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), and the [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tarwater, John, "A Response to Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World" (2004). *Business Administration Faculty Publications*. 137.

http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/business_administration_publications/137

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Business Administration Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

A Response to *Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World*¹

John K. Tarwater

*Adjunct Professor of Christian Ethics,
Southeastern College
Wake Forest, North Carolina*

In their most recent work on marriage, Alice Mathews and Gay Hubbard—professor and guest lecturer at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary respectively—explore God’s design and purpose for marriage. Having received positive reviews from several leading evangelical scholars, such as Stanley Grenz, Gordon Fee, and Vernon Grounds, *Marriage Made in Eden* warrants considerable attention. Because Mathews and Hubbard’s book represents a significant argument supporting egalitarianism, it also deserves a serious response. In this article, I will concentrate my analysis on the book’s contribution as it relates to the role of women, which appears to be the driving issue for the authors. I will divide this article into two sections. In the first, I will present the contents of the text, giving special attention to the arguments in favor of egalitarianism. In the second, I will evaluate and respond to the authors’ rationale.

Arguments in Favor of Egalitarianism

Mathews and Hubbard claim that the purpose of the book is to explore “what God had in mind when he designed marriage and how the purpose of marriage is both to transform us and to witness to God’s grace and power in a sinful world” (19). In order to accomplish this task, they seek to answer two questions: “First, what is marriage as a social institution in this present culture? Second, what does marriage *for God’s people* look like in this present time, in this present culture” (20)? Organizationally, this becomes the outline of the text: Culture’s case against marriage and God’s case for marriage. Ironically, a large portion of their egalitarian position finds its support in the

section on culture’s case against marriage (91–152) rather than in the section on God’s case for marriage (153–250).

Mathews and Hubbard seek to justify their egalitarian position by utilizing arguments from history, from psychology, and from Scripture. Although they do not explicitly express this intention, these three lines of argumentation are clearly evident.

Arguments from History

Mathews and Hubbard develop their case for egalitarianism from history along two fronts. First, in their presentation of culture’s case against marriage, they suggest that record numbers of women chose not to marry and chose to divorce during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, primarily because of the Doctrine of Separate Spheres. The Doctrine of Separate Spheres, according to Mathews and Hubbard, is the belief that “men and women possess fundamentally different natures and thus must have completely separate spheres of activity” (92). In contrast to the press and clergy who reasoned gender differences were ordained by God, Mathews and Hubbard write that complementarianism distorts the “biblical vision” and represents the idea of “Constantinian accommodation to the culture” (106).

Mathews and Hubbard suggest that the Doctrine of Separate Spheres turned women into consumers of income rather than producers. Consequently, women became dissatisfied with not producing and developed low self-esteem (95). In the seventeenth century, women knew their husband’s business

and often played a vital role in it. Often they were considered “deputy husbands,” which meant that they performed many of the duties often associated with men. Women were politically active and often ran farms and businesses, especially during wartime to help provide for their families (98). In addition to contributing in political and business affairs, Mathews and Hubbard say that women actively participated in revival and congregational activities during the First Great Awakening. Thus, the authors seek to demonstrate that before the eighteenth century, women were active in every arena and that different roles for women based upon gender distinction were absent.

In the eighteenth century, however, as the economy flourished, families gradually changed. The idea of the “pretty gentle woman” emerged, and women began focusing their attention on the home and family. Gradually, Mathews and Hubbard suggest, “women’s work and space were separated from men’s work and space, and a new construct of ideal roles began to emerge” (97). Even the “Declaration of Independence” contributed to this change in understanding women’s role by expressing “all *men* are created equal.” By using the word *men*, the founding fathers excluded slaves, men without property, and women. Citizenship for women was relegated to moral training in the home and “spawned the sentimentalizing of domestic duties” (99).

Mathews and Hubbard argue that the Doctrine of Separate Spheres produced mutual animosity between men and women during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Men resented having to work long hours to produce all of the income, and women became bitter for being confined to the home (114). Consequently, more and more women chose not to marry during this period, and record numbers of women chose to divorce and avoided the emerging structures of male domination.

A second line of argument from history in favor of egalitarianism also stems from culture’s case against marriage. The authors note that in the twentieth century, more and more couples chose cohabitation rather than marriage. First, cohabitation represents the present generation’s fear of divorce (67–69). Second, from the postmodernist perspective, cohabitation is not necessarily morally wrong, since morality is a private matter. Mathews and Hubbard disagree with this ethical stance, but agree that it does faithfully represent postmodernism’s case against marriage. Third, Mathews and Hubbard write, cohabitation permits greater freedom for individuals than marriage does. With this statement, the authors agree. Marriage involves the loss of personal freedom, sexual freedom, and economic freedom. For women, this loss includes control over their own bodies—their safety. Mathews and Hubbard continue, “The church, particularly its evangelical arm, continues to demonstrate a shameful disregard for women’s safety in marriage” (74). In the footnote on this quote, the authors write: “For example, a very large Protestant denomination recently made

part of their statement of faith the requirement that a woman submit ‘graciously’ to the loving leadership of her husband. Nothing was said about her options if he chose to enforce his ‘loving’ leadership with his fists. Still less was said about the denomination’s provisions to deal with the man if violence occurred. Such disregard of women’s safety is not lost on the present generation (men and women) when they consider marriage” (266). Citing Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, Mathews and Hubbard contend that conservative religiosity—complementarian theology—is the greatest indicator of domestic violence, only second to alcohol (144). Sadly, the authors record, “women in conservative churches and denominations often find little or no sympathy from their ministers” (145). Thus, women should not marry if the institution includes the recognition of God-ordained roles, because such an arrangement threatens their health and well-being. Women are less likely, moreover, to receive help and comfort from churches that teach God-ordained gender differences.

These lessons from history challenge the church’s understanding of how marriage was, and its presuppositions about how it ought to be. History, they record, demonstrates that the pattern of marriage advocated in the Victorian period was a “nineteenth century invention . . . and had little if anything to do with the Christian mandate for marriage” (220). They conclude that the Victorian model, supporting gender-specific roles, did not work and cannot, in good faith, be taught as a biblical model.

Arguments from Psychology

Mathews and Hubbard also argue for egalitarianism from psychology. With a doctoral degree in psychology, Hubbard is certainly qualified to speak from this perspective. In developing their case against biblical complementarity, Mathews and Hubbard consider whether or not women experience protection, provision, and harmony in marriage in exchange for their self-surrender (131–33). In order to understand a woman’s experience in marriage, Mathews and Hubbard utilized macro-sociological analysis developed by Samuel Huntington, which examines possible gaps between an individual’s ideals and his reality. The authors contend that a gap does exist between “a man’s and woman’s commitment to the Doctrine of Separate Spheres in Christian marriage and his or her lived experience within marriage” (134).

According to Matthews and Hubbard, people feel uncomfortable when there is a gap between what is promised and what is experienced, often without knowing why. If people recognize the gap and also believe in the ideal and its promise, they begin to question the authority behind the teaching, such as the church. Or, they will work to reduce the tension between their commitment to the ideal and their experience by experimenting with alternatives. In order to discover what people

believe about and experience in marriage, Mathews and Hubbard distributed questionnaires to men and women in “eleven large conservative churches in various parts of the United States” about Scripture’s teachings in four areas: general roles, sex, decision making, and earning and spending patterns. They claim that in fact a gap existed between what people said they believed and how they actually acted. “For example, while more than half of the women in the study said that they believed fully in hierarchical structures for marriage, only 8 percent held hierarchical beliefs in the specific areas of sex in marriage or decision making in marriage” (138).

When participants were asked about their own experience of marriage and to describe the degree to which they were happy in marriage, Mathews and Hubbard report the results were startling. Among participants who held egalitarian views, *none* rated their experience as poor or negative. However, there were participants who held complementarian views of marriage who rated their experience of happiness in marriage as negative and poor. Thus, Mathews and Hubbard conclude: “When men and women identify for themselves the criteria for happiness in marriage, then rank their own experience of happiness in their marriages as fair or poor, it is difficult to defend hierarchical marital structures as ‘right’” (142–43).

In light of the historical and sociological data, how do Mathews and Hubbard propose people of faith should respond? They maintain that Christians must free themselves from “erroneous ideas about marriage” and stop discussing roles for men and women. Until this is done, marriage will continue “to baffle and disappoint many who have entered it” (147).

Arguments from Scripture

Mathews and Hubbard develop their case for egalitarianism from Scripture along two lines. First, they remind the reader that marriage is part of the whole story of God’s relationship with his people and that it stretches from Genesis to Revelation. Marriage is part of God’s story, and he can tell it the way he chooses. In order for us to hear it, however, we must lay aside personal agendas (160). Mathews and Hubbard write, “Because marriage is embedded within the experience of God’s people, it cannot, in a form of spiritual reductionism, be abstracted into a legalized prescription for marital roles” (162). Sometimes Christians place an irresponsible amount of emphasis on certain passages, such as Paul’s letters about husbands and wives, and assume that these passages are relevant to God’s case for marriage. However, this practice demonstrates a misunderstanding of God’s goal and purpose for marriage in the lives of his people. God calls for Christian marriage to reflect his relationship with his people, the same purpose it had in the beginning. Accordingly, marriage for God’s people should be transformational and missional. Participants, by faithfully

embodying God within communities, become more like God and demonstrate by their lives how others can come to know him.

A second line of argument from Scripture involves the examination of specific passages in the canon. First, they discuss passages from Genesis, which they affirm describes what God had in mind when he designed humans and marriage. The Genesis narrative expresses the foundation of God’s design for marriage: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The phrase, “for this reason,” reflects God’s relational imperative that led to Eve’s creation. “God did *not* say, ‘Adam has too much work to do. Let’s send help.’ God did *not* say, ‘Adam is the important First Man of humanity. Let’s send someone to cook and clean for him.’ God did *not* say, ‘Adam needs help in making babies.’ What God *did* say was, ‘Adam is alone. That aloneness is not good. Let’s make someone like him so that he will be alone no longer’” (177).

God’s relational purpose of marriage was part of his broader plan to manage creation and fill the earth. The first two chapters of Genesis demonstrate three truths about humanity as male and female. First, men and women differ physiologically in order to fulfill God’s mandate to be fruitful and multiply. Second, chapter two indicates that the purpose of masculinity and femininity is to permit men and women to connect in more ways than sexual. “To help,” means “to share the same tasks.” Men and women are dependent and interdependent. Third, God gave his command to be fruitful and to subdue the earth to both men and women. “Both are to share in parenting, and both are to share in dominion” (179).

The fall, however, introduced conflict into the marriage relationship. Adam began to exert power over Eve, a pattern that was unknown in the Garden (184). Mathews and Hubbard maintain that marriage is not about a hierarchy of privilege, authority, or importance. “Marriage does not provide a job description detailing the assignment of the tasks of daily living” (200). Rather, marriage is about helping and caring for one another. God’s desire to restore his creation to shared parenting and shared provision has not changed, and the present tension in marriage is being resolved by the coming of Jesus Christ.

Second, Mathews and Hubbard address various New Testament passages that speak of the husband being the head of his wife and of the wife being in submission to her husband. The authors insist that proper interpretation and application of Scripture necessarily involves determining which commands and practices were only for the audience to which they were given and which ones are permanent and binding for all people in all places at all times. After discussing particular passages, Mathews and Hubbard write that although Christian marriages in the first century were structured hierarchically because the wider culture demanded it, this fact does not necessarily mean

that the household codes were only an interim ethic (214). Instead, the stipulations for husbands and wives are applicable today because they were mandated for the whole body of Christ—all of God’s people are to possess submissive spirits. Mathews and Hubbard summarize the New Testament’s picture of marriage as shared calling, shared parenting, shared dominion, and shared accountability, which work together to make marriage missional (215–16).

Mathews and Hubbard note that the New Testament has six “household codes,” three of which specifically address the husband/wife relationship: Eph 5:15–33; Col 3:18–19; and 1 Pet 3:1–9. The authors contend that Peter’s passage, much like Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, was based upon already existing hierarchical structures and was introduced to maintain order within society (206). Their missional character is evidenced by Paul’s statement “to give the enemy no opportunity for slander” (1 Tim 5:14). When Peter writes that women are to submit to their own husbands, he is speaking of a voluntary act for the purpose of demonstrating the gospel, not because men have any God-ordained authority.

Similarly, Paul’s injunction in Ephesians is not about authority. The phrase, “For the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church” does not establish a doctrine of headship, which Mathews and Hubbard note is not a biblical term or biblical concept. They maintain that “head of his wife” is not defined in Scripture, but rather, it is described as a metaphor of two becoming one flesh. “Whatever else this metaphor carries, it is not linked to authority,” assert Mathews and Hubbard (209). Although they do not discuss Paul’s passage of 1 Cor 11:3 in the text, they do make a similar argument in the endnotes. “Those who insist on interpreting *head* to mean ‘leader’ or ‘ruler’ or ‘authority over’ trip up on 1 Corinthians 11:3, which states that ‘the head of Christ is God.’ While there are other dangers in a doctrine of subordination in the Trinity, in its simplest form it ignores the three-in-oneness of the Godhead” (280). Hence, Mathews and Hubbard reject the notion that Scripture defines certain roles based upon gender. Specifically, the complementarian view cannot find support in the writings of Peter and Paul in the New Testament nor in a doctrine of functional subordination in the Godhead. They conclude, “Only one passage in the New Testament explicitly addresses the question of authority in marriage”—1 Corinthians 7:2–5. In this passage, Paul makes clear that authority in marriage relationships is *mutual* (211–12). Since our bodies belong to God, we can trust them to our mates.

Evaluation of and Response to the Text

The evaluation below will focus on what I consider to be the most pivotal weaknesses in the text. I will organize my remarks according to the same paradigm used above: history, psychology, and Scripture.

Arguments from History

With regard to history, Mathews and Hubbard argue that complementarian theology represents a post-eighteenth century phenomenon that distorts the biblical vision and accommodates culture. Consequently, they continue, greater animosity exists between men and women and more individuals are choosing cohabitation and divorce rather than entering into an asymmetrical marriage relationship. Mathews and Hubbard rightly notice a considerable increase in the number of couples experiencing the tragedy of divorce and separation over the past century. Likewise, they correctly record that more individuals, Christian and non-Christian, are choosing to cohabit rather than to marry. It is not apparent, however, that this increase in divorce and cohabitation stems from a doctrine of complementarity. More pointedly, it is difficult for Mathews and Hubbard to support their claim that complementary ideals only recently appeared and that it is characterized by a “Constantinian accommodation to culture.” At least three reasons mitigate against their conclusion.

First, culture affirms exactly what proponents of egalitarianism affirm, namely the impossibility of maintaining simultaneously male and female equality and God-ordained gender roles—exactly what complementarianism rejects. Similarly, egalitarianism and culture agree that gender differences are primarily, if not only, important for biological reproduction, a claim that proponents of complementarianism strongly deny.

Second, culture encourages exactly what some proponents of egalitarianism encourage—the acceptability of the gay and lesbian lifestyles. Consider the remarks of Jack Rogers, the elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 2001: “I believe if we read the Bible in the same way we learned to read it in order to accept the equality of... women, we will be forced to the conclusion that gay and lesbian people are also to be accepted as equal.”² Again, this is in stark contrast to the commitments of complementarianism.

Third, culture rejects exactly what Mathews and Hubbard call the “historical model” of marriage (248). Far from an eighteenth or nineteenth century invention, or even a marked shift in the church’s traditional teaching, numerous theologians throughout the history of the church have taught that Scripture prescribes certain gender-specific roles within the family and the church. The following three quotes from Patristic, Reformation, and Modern periods serve as examples:

Augustine: “Nor can it be doubted that it is more consonant with the order of nature that men should bear rule over women than women over men. It is with this principle in view that the apostle says, ‘The head of woman is man’ and ‘Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands.’”³

Calvin: “Thus he [Paul] teaches that, even if the human race had remained in its original integrity, the true order of nature prescribed by God lays it down that woman should be subject to man. . . . Thus, since God did not create two ‘heads’ of equal standing, but added to the man a lesser helpmeet, the apostle is right to remind us of the order of their creating in which God’s eternal and inviolable appointment is clearly displayed.”⁴

Barth: “At this point something must also be said about the question of the supremacy of the male and the subordination of the female in marriage. The question has been confused on both sides. . . . What else can supremacy and subordination mean here but that the male is male and the female is female. . . . The simple test is that when two people live together in demonstration of free mutual love this separation of functions will just take place . . . in all freedom . . . so that in fact the husband will precede and the wife follow.”⁵

The preponderance of evidence strongly moderates Mathews and Hubbard’s claim that the complementarian position is a recent development and that it accommodates society. To the contrary, present-day complementarianism aligns itself well with the Church’s historical understanding of authority within the male/female relationship, a position that obviates cultural accommodation.

Mathews and Hubbard also speak to the growing episodes of violence among men and women in marriage relationships. They are correct to call attention to Scripture’s prohibition against abuse in marriage or any other relationship. However, they appear to stretch the bounds of credulity when they charge that the evangelical arm of the church demonstrates disregard for women’s safety within marriage. Equally disingenuous is their allegation that the Southern Baptist Convention’s recent affirmation that a woman graciously submit to the loving leadership of her husband encourages husbands to “enforce his ‘loving’ leadership with his fists.”

While these accusations are sure to incite the emotions of egalitarian readers, they do little to stimulate change and they demonstrate no acknowledgement of the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood’s *Statement on Abuse*, which is endorsed by the framers of the Southern Baptist Convention’s statement on submission.⁶ This statement by the CBMW makes clear the complementarian position that Scripture does not support but condemns abuse between men and women. Furthermore, the *Statement* insists that the Christian community is responsible for the well-being of its members and has “a responsibility to lovingly confront abusers and to protect the abused.” This position by complementarians stands in stark contrast to how Mathews and Hubbard portray them. While I

trust that their depiction of complementarity was not intentionally skewed, their actions, nevertheless, merit concern.

Arguments from Psychology

Mathews and Hubbard also suggest that a gap exists between what men and women say they believe about roles within marriage and what they actually experience within marriage. More importantly, this gap directly relates a poor or negative experience within marriage to participants who hold complementarian views of marriage. Because some men and women who hold to complementary structures within marriage rate their experience in marriage as poor or negative, Mathews and Hubbard conclude that it is doubtful such structures are “right.”

Mathews and Hubbard correctly note that not all marriages are filled with happiness and bliss. Often participants articulate dissatisfaction and frustration, evidenced by the growing numbers of divorce. Moreover, the authors rightly warn readers against determining truth by one’s feelings (239). Notwithstanding these warnings, the authors position themselves dangerously close to postmodernism’s temptation of “truth-by-feel-good.” How else are readers to understand the statement, “When men and women identify for themselves the criteria for happiness in marriage, then rank their own experience of happiness in their marriages as fair or poor, it is difficult to defend hierarchical marital structures as ‘right?’” Whatever else it means, this statement entreats the reader to determine the rightness or wrongness of marital structures on his experience (i.e., feeling) of happiness within marriage. The problem with making feelings the determinant for right and wrong, Henry Fairlie writes, is that it is possible to feel good about oneself “in states of total vacuity, euphoria, intoxication, and self-indulgence, and it is even possible when we are doing wrong and know what we are doing.”⁷ Against this temptation to determine right and wrong by looking within, Scripture implores individuals to fix their eyes on a higher authority: God’s revealed Word. Because of the sinfulness of humanity—our righteousness is like filthy rags—faithfulness to God’s special revelation must be the final determinant of right and wrong, not one’s experience of happiness.

There are other weaknesses in Mathews and Hubbard’s argument for egalitarian structures for the marriage relationship, primarily related to their theory regarding a gap between beliefs and experiences. Their subjective conclusions are at best tendentious, triggering more questions than answers. For example, what does it mean to say that “sixty percent of the participants practiced completely egalitarian decision making in the marriage” (140)? By this statement, are Mathews and Hubbard implying the husband consulted his wife in making decisions? Or, do they portend that the husband in these relationships never made significant decisions? Even more

puzzling is their claim that only eight percent of the women in the study “held hierarchical beliefs in the specific areas of sex in marriage or decision making” (138). What can it possibly mean to have hierarchical beliefs about sex? Does this mean women initiated sex? Or, do they mean that these wives were not permitted to say “no” to their husbands? By no means are these ideas synonymous with complementarian doctrine. Whatever Mathews and Hubbard connote by these statements, they do so without clarity. Accordingly, readers should probably temper Mathews and Hubbard’s conclusion that “In light of these facts, Christians cannot in good faith continue to teach” a complementary model of marriage because “as it was practiced [it] did not work well for thousands of men and women” (221). Although all Christians desire for marriage to work well for those involved, pragmatism has never been the arbiter for whether or not a complementary model of marriage should be taught. Faithfulness to Scripture should guide the teachings of Christians. Therefore, I now turn my attention to the authors’ rationale for egalitarianism from Scripture.

Arguments From Scripture

With regard to Scripture, Mathews and Hubbard correctly write that God designed marriage and that proper interpretation of God’s design requires readers to lay aside personal agendas. They are also right when they point to the creation narrative as the most important passages regarding male/female relationships because there God expresses the foundation of his design for marriage. However, I am convinced that their incomplete handling of these passages leads to a distorted view of God’s intentions for men and women within the family and the church and contributed to their choice not to include discussions in the main text on such important passages as 1 Cor 11:3–16 and 1 Tim 2:11–14. Since the creation narrative is most important to the discussion, it is difficult to imagine why Mathews and Hubbard would not discuss these two passages, especially since they appeal directly to Genesis. Perhaps, the exclusion of these passages in the text reveals the authors’ failure to grasp or explain fully the centrality of the creation story for the present debate.

Mathews and Hubbard are correct that Gen 1:26–28 teaches the equality of men and women, even presenting man and woman as co-rulers and equally necessary for multiplication. Thus, they correctly note that Scriptures proposes that participants in marriage share dominion and share parenting. They incorrectly deduce, however, that shared dominion excludes God-ordained, gender-designed roles. Their confusion stems from a failure to comprehend fully chapter two of Genesis. There, Scripture says that God created man first (2:7–9), charged him to care for the garden (2:15–17), and provided him with a set of laws to enforce in the garden. God even gave the man authority to name the animals, as well as the woman (2:19–23). Hence, the male was the first one to care for the

garden, to subdue it, and to enjoy dominion. Consequently, he bore ultimate responsibility before God for the initial mandate to subdue the earth and rule over it. In fact, he could have performed this task alone, but God said it was not good. Accordingly, God made man a helper, not in order that the garden have another leader, but rather, that man may have a helper, connoting functional responsibility. A proper understanding of the relationship between the sexes must include elements from both chapters: Genesis one and two. If this is done, one may rightly conclude that men and women are equal—they are both image bearers—and that they have different roles—the man is to lead and the woman is to come alongside and help.

The New Testament passages excluded from the book lend credence to this interpretation. For example, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul taught that “the head of woman is man” because man was created first: “For man is not from woman, but woman from man” (11:8). Mathews and Hubbard avoid mentioning Paul’s division of roles in his letter to Timothy. There Paul explicitly based his reasoning on the fact that “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (2:13). It is difficult to deny the importance of God creating men and women at different times and of creating man first. One has either to ignore New Testament passages which teach that this is important, or to reinterpret these passages by arguing Paul misunderstood the Old Testament, effectively calling into question the inspiration of Scripture. It is inadequate for Mathews and Hubbard to dismiss the topic of “headship” by merely stating “it is not a biblical term nor is it a biblical concept” (209). Rather, it is incumbent upon the authors to explain Paul’s appeal to the creation narrative for his discussion of the gender roles. In light of this information, one struggles to comprehend Mathews and Hubbard’s claim that 1 Cor 7:2–5 is the only New Testament passage that deals with the issue of authority in marriage.

Mathews and Hubbard do seek to address three of the passages which deal with the husband/wife relationship: Eph 5:15–33; Col 3:18–19; and 1 Pet 3:1–9. While they are right to note the missional character of these passages, they wrongly conclude that these passages do not attend to the issue of authority within the marriage relationship.

In Ephesians, Paul discusses the husband-wife relationship with regard to the Christ-church relationship. For example, the husband-wife relationship described in 22–23a is supported by an exposition of the Christ-church relationship in verses 23b–24a. Likewise, the husband-wife relationship in 24b–25a is illumined by the relationship espoused by Christ and the church in 25b–27. Lastly, the two relationships are brought together in verses 31–32 by a direct quote from Genesis 2:24. Hence, the primary focus of Eph 5:21–33 is human marriage as it is illumined by the Christ-church relationship. Paul’s appeal to the Genesis narrative directs the reader’s attention to God’s design at creation: equal natures with the man leading and the woman helping. In his study on Ephesians, Paul Sampley

insists that Paul relates the accounts of Adam and Eve to the relationship of marriage partners in order to support his argument regarding submission.⁸

The context of Ephesians details the kind of submission that Paul has in mind: wives submit to their husbands (5:22–23), children submit to their parents (6:1–3), and slaves submit to their masters (6:5–8). The egalitarian claim that Paul insists on a “mutual submission” contradicts the context of Paul’s argument and revises the church’s historical understanding of this passage.⁹ It would be absurd to suggest that Paul believes parents should submit to their children or masters to their slaves. Equally outrageous is the egalitarian claim for husbands to submit to their wives.¹⁰ Interpreted consistently, Scripture asserts God-ordained roles for men and women. Not only does this appear to be the straightforward reading of Genesis, but it is also the New Testament’s interpretation and application of the creation narrative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can be grateful to Mathews and Hubbard for urging readers to listen to God’s case for marriage. Christians can surely profit from their discussion of the transformational and missional character of marriage. Nevertheless, the book fails to explain fully God’s case for marriage because of the authors’ distorted understanding of God-ordained gender roles. Misplaced emphasis upon history and psychology, accompanied by a less-than-complete handling of Genesis, severely handicaps Mathews and Hubbard’s ability to discern correctly God’s intentions for men in women in the family and in the church. Ultimately, Mathews and Hubbard are unable to heed their own advice to lay aside personal agendas. To summarize, Mathews and Hubbard exegetically fail to make their case for egalitarianism. ■■

⁷Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 40.

⁸Paul J. Sampley, *And the Two Shall Become One Flesh: A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21–33* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 100.

⁹See Daniel Doriani, “The Historical Novelty of Egalitarian Interpretations of Ephesians 5:21–22” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002) 203–20.

¹⁰See Wayne Grudem, “The Myth of Mutual Submission as Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002) 221–32.

¹Alice P. Mathews and M. Gay Hubbard, *Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

²Deb Prince, “Presbyterians Push Church to Embrace Gays,” *The Detroit News*, <http://detnews.com/2001/editorial/0106/25/a09-240016.htm>. Accessed 12 Aug. 2004.

³Augustine, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, 1.9.10, CSEL; Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, NPNF 5:267.

⁴John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* trans. William Pringle, vol. 10, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 218.

⁵Karl Barth, *Ethics* ed. Dietrich Braun, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928–29) 235.

⁶Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, *Statement on Abuse*; http://www.cbmw.org/resources/articles/abuse_statement.php. Accessed 12 Aug. 2004.