

Christ and Gender Roles Head and Body

John Launchbury

Head and body = Christ and church

1Cor 10:16-17 The bread that we break, is it not a **sharing in the body of Christ**? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

1Cor 12:12-13 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are **one body, so it is with Christ**. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

1Cor 12:27 Now **you are the body of Christ** and individually members of it.

Col 1:24 ...in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of **his body, that is, the church**.

Col 3:15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed **you were called in the one body**. And be thankful.

Eph 4:11-12 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for **building up the body of Christ**,

Rom 12:4-5 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, **are one body in Christ**, and individually we are members one of another.

Head and body = Christ and church

Eph 1:22-23 made him the **head over all things for the church, which is his body**, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Eph 4:15-16 ...we must grow up in every way into him who is **the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body**, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

John 15:4-5 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who **abide in me and I in them bear much fruit**, because apart from me you can do nothing.

Col 1:18 He is **the head of the body, the church**; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

Col 2:19 ...**the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together** by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.

Eph 2:19-22 ...members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In **him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple** in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

The doctrine of authority in the church

Mark 9:33 When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “**If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.**”

Luke 22:24-26 Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. **Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.**”

John 13:12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”

The leader washes feet

Head and body — husbands and wives

Eph 5:21-33

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body.

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.

Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Adam & Eve as a type

Eph 5:29-32 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
[ESV]

1Cor 15:45 Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

2Cor 11:2-3 I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Eden is about
Christ and the church

Adam represents
Christ

Eve represents
the whole church

The successes of the type

Adam and Eve

- Adam comes first
- It was not good to be alone
- Adam could not find a partner among the beasts
- Eve is formed out of sleep and a wounded side
- Eve is derived from Adam
- Adam and Eve are created in the image of God
- The two become one flesh
- Together they rule over the beasts and tend the garden
- They are undying
- They live in full communion with God

Christ and the church

- Christ is the firstborn over all creation
- Even for Christ, it was not good to be alone
- Christ could not find a partner among the nations
- The church is formed out of death and crucifixion
- The church is derived from Christ
- Christ and the church are made in the image of God
- The two become one body
- Together they rule over the nations and tend the kingdom
- They are immortal
- God is all and in all

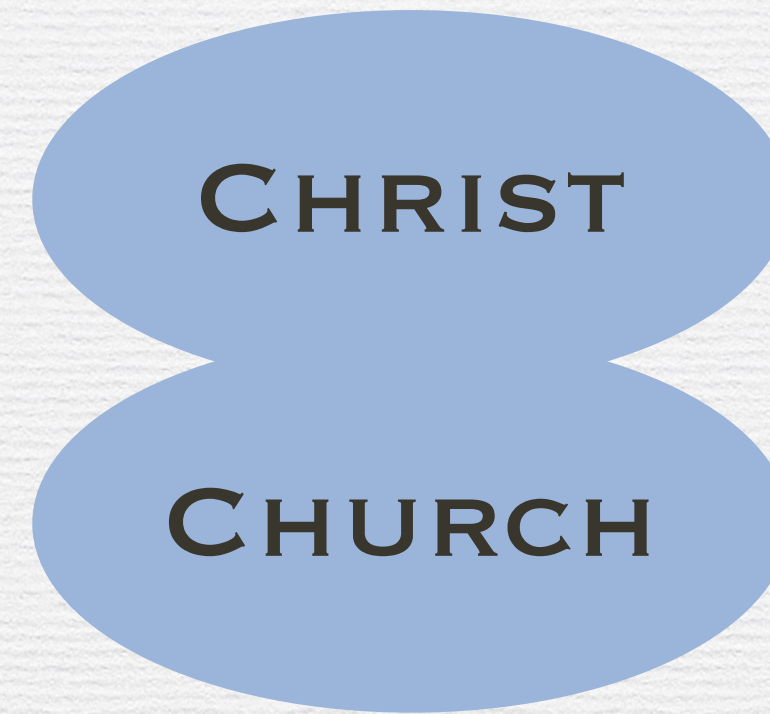
The failures of the type

Adam and Eve

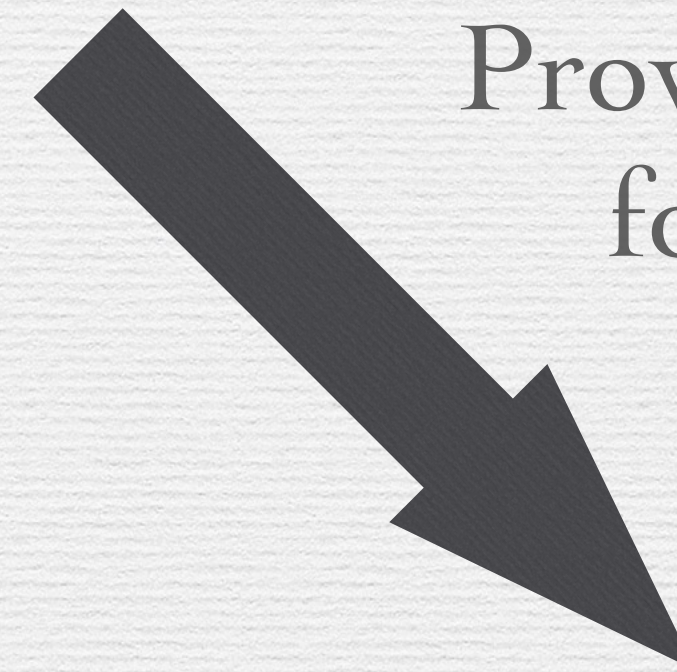
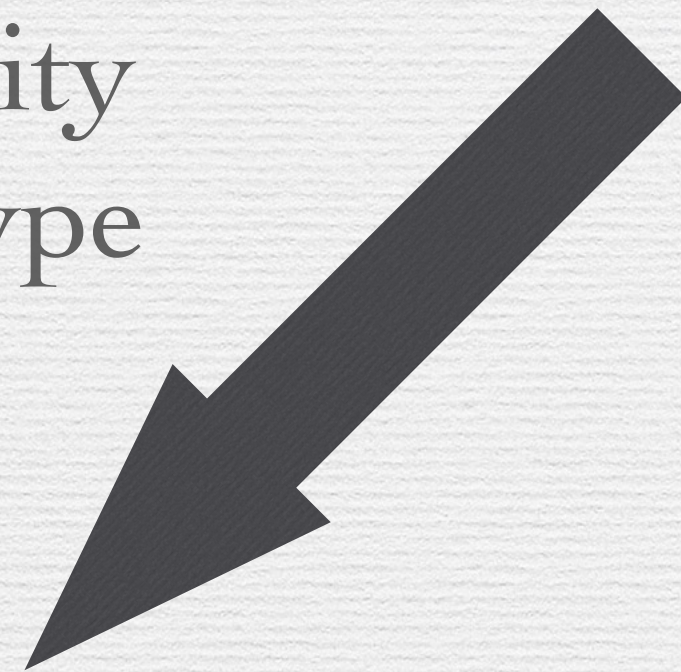
- Naked and unashamed of it
- Eve deceived by the serpent
- Adam follows the prompting of Eve instead of listening to God
- Serpent feeds on the dust
- In pain Eve struggles to give birth
- Harmony of one flesh degrades to Adam having rulership over Eve
- Thorns and thistles grow rather than fertile grain
- Adam and Eve are banished from the garden

Christ and the church

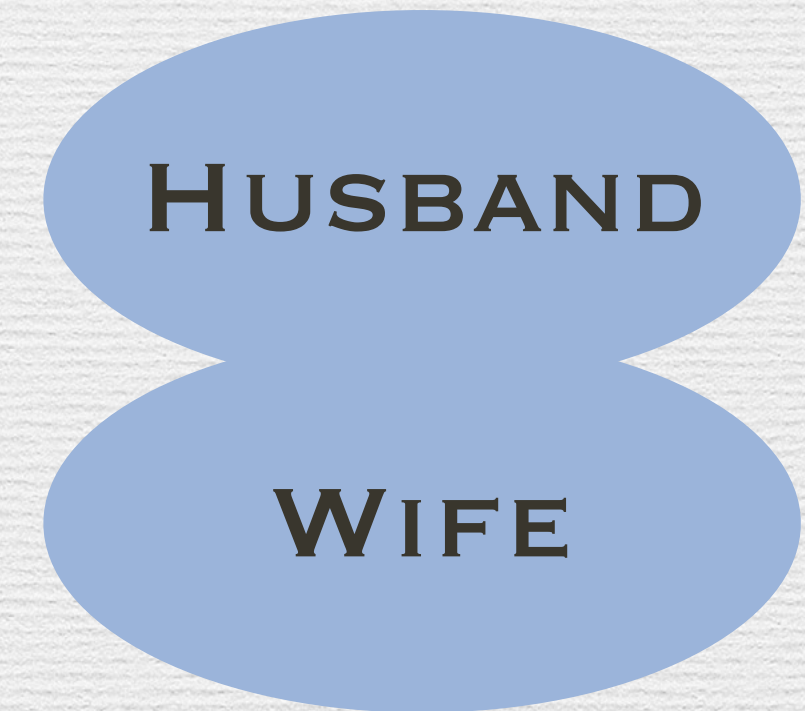
- Clothed in righteousness
- The true church not deceived by human pride
- Christ rejects the prompting of the church (misguided disciples), and instead listens to God
- Human pride feeds on the spiritually dead
- In Christ, the church abundantly spreads salvation
- Harmony of one body is established eternally by Christ nurturing the church
- Temptations wither, and the word of God flourishes
- Christ and the church live eternally in the kingdom



Provides the reality
pointed to by a type



Provides an exemplar
for love in unity



Head and body — husbands and wives

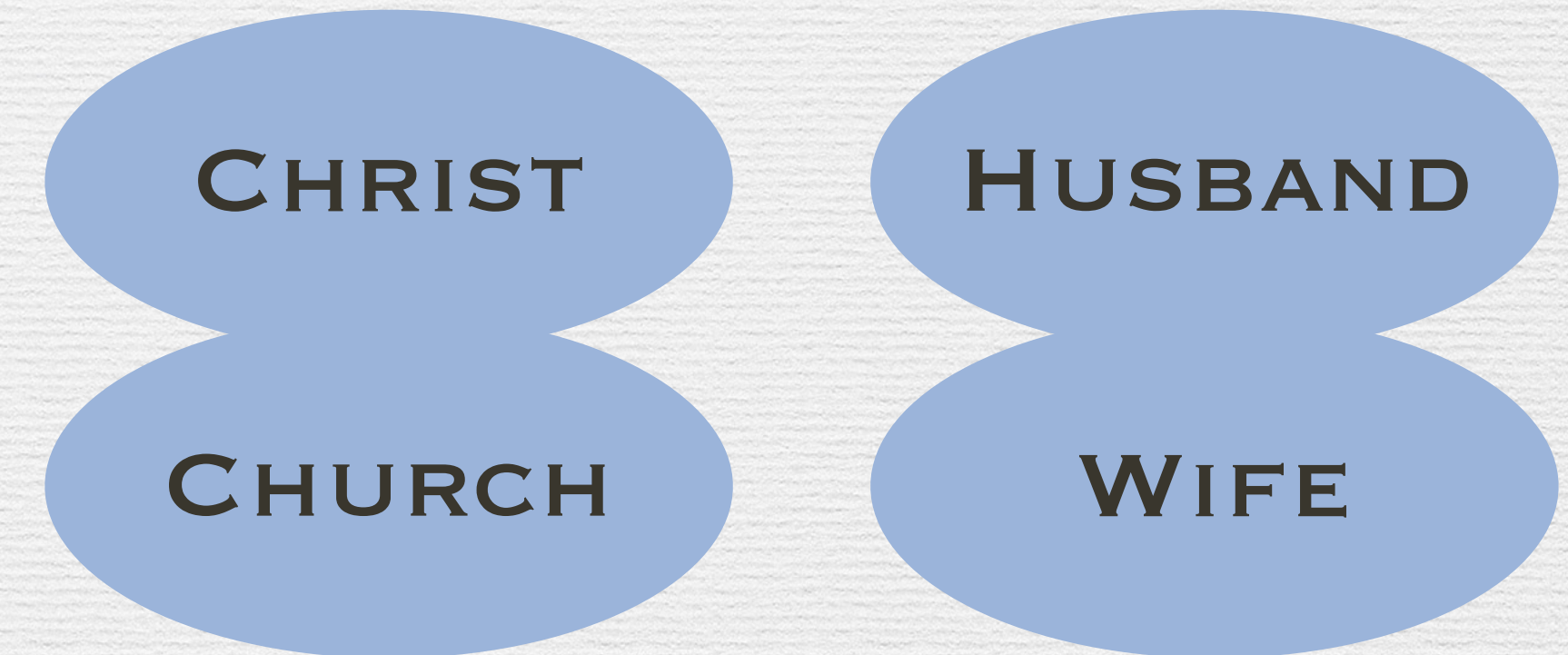
Eph 5:21-23

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[Literally...]

... subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of God. The women to your own men subject yourselves, as to the Lord, for the man is head of the woman, as also the Christ head of the assembly, and he is savior of the body



gune — can mean ‘woman’, or ‘wife’

[Matt 9:22](#) Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment.

[Matt 1:24](#) When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

aner — can mean ‘man’, ‘husband’, or ‘person’

[Matt 14:21](#) those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. [males]

[Luke 2:36](#) There was also a prophet, Anna... She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,...

[Rom 4:8](#) Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him. [both genders]

[Jas 3:2](#) For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. [both genders]

[Eph 4:13](#) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [both genders]

In Greek, ‘man’ and ‘woman’ have a range of meanings

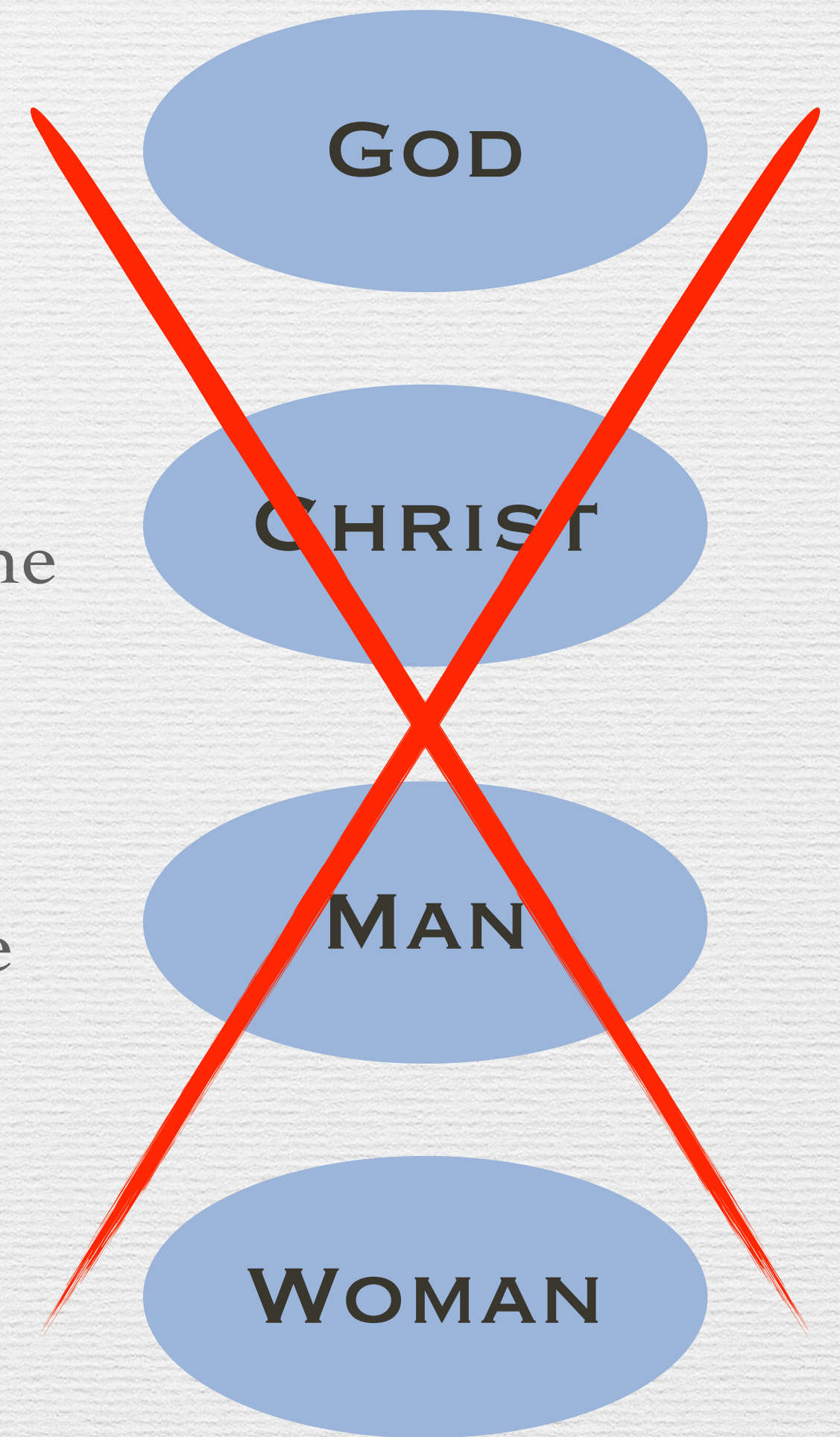
The context has to be used to determine the intended meaning — it’s not always straightforward

Headship lego?

1Cor 11:3

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. [NRSV]

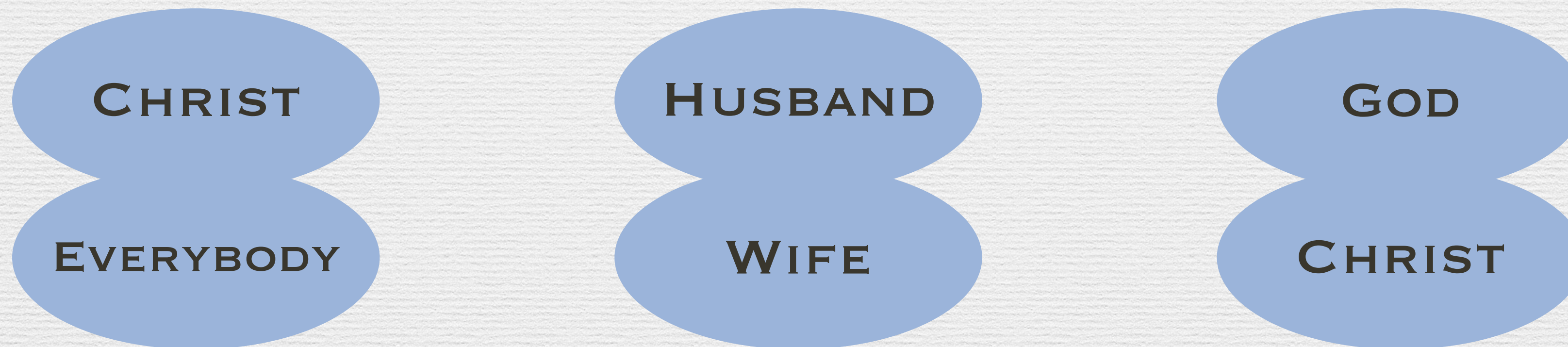
But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. [KJV]



Parallel head/body pairings

1Cor 11:3 [literal + context]

I wish you to know that of every *aner* [everybody] the head is the Christ, and the head of a *gune* [wife] is the *aner* [husband], and the head of Christ is God.



The passage presents three profound unions that echo one another

Incorrect teachings

1. The fourfold hierarchy is a misreading of Scripture
 - A woman has Christ as her spiritual head even if her husband objects (1Cor 7:15)
2. A man cannot be head of someone else's wife
 - Otherwise he would have to care for her just as Christ does the church (Eph 5:29)

Marriage in Graeco-Roman society

- The paterfamilias (father of family, estate owner) was the lord of the family
 - Normally a man, occasionally an independent woman (e.g. Lydia)
 - Sole ownership of the family assets and finances
 - Total authority over all the affairs of the household
 - Full rights to children in the event of a divorce (wife had no rights)
 - Sole authority to decide who to marry daughters to (transfer of ownership)
- In high society, marriage was mostly for social positioning and alliances, not romance
- A 'wife' is owned by the husband-lord, along with the other family members
 - 'Chattel-wife' would better be a better description

A Christian in first century society (1Pet 2:13 – 3:6)

For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution

Of the emperor as supreme or governors who punish and praise

- It is God's will that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people
- Be free, not as a cover-up for evil, but as servants of God
- Honor everyone, including the emperor

Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, even the harsh

- If you endure when you do right and are beaten for it, you have God's approval.
- Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example

Women [chattel-wives], in the same way, accept the authority of your men [husband-lords]

- If some do not obey the word, they may be won over by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct
- Holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.

Exhortation for first century marriages (Eph 5:21-33)

To the chattel-wife (owned by the husband)

- Submit to each other in the church
- Submit in particular to your own husband-lord
- Respect him
- Use the church as a model

To the husband-lord (owner of the family)

- Submit to each other in the church
- Love your chattel-wife
- Sacrifice yourself for her
- Consider her to be perfect in your eyes
- Love her as much as you love yourself
- Care for her like you care for your own body
- Use Christ's love as a model

Aspire to the world before sin

meshol (to rule, to master)

Gen 1:16 God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

Gen 4:7 sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

Gen 24:2 Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had...

Gen 37:8 His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?”

`ezer (helper)

Gen 49:25 by the God of your father, who will help you,

Deut 33:7 O LORD, give heed to Judah... and be a help against his adversaries.

Josh 10:4 “Come up and help me, and let us attack Gibeon;...”

Is 41:6 Each one helps the other, saying to one another, “Take courage!”

Is 41:10 do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you,

Under sin, complementary partnership had degenerated into rulership

Summary of head-body

- The primary example of head-body is the unity of Christ with his disciples
 - It is a nurturing and nourishing relationship
 - A partnership sourced and completed in Christ
- The Adam and Eve account provides a detailed lived-prophecy of Christ and the church
 - Through rebellion, some aspects of the type failed to live up to reality of the antitype
 - In the church, we are all Eve to Christ's Adam
- The teaching of fourfold hierarchy should be rejected
 - Men (in general) are not head over women (in general)
 - Men are not intermediaries between women and Christ
- Scripture does not present Adam and Eve as a model for marriage
 - The more appropriate pattern is the supreme union of Christ and the church
 - Sacrificial love of Christ in supplying the needs of his complementary partner