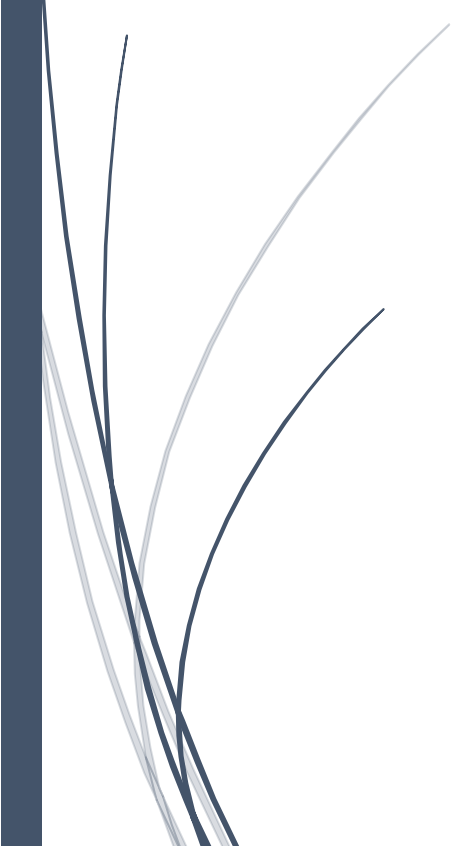




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An Intercultural Reading of Ephesians 5:21-33:
Examining Christian Marital Relationships in the
Pakistani Context

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

A patriarchal society consists of a power structure dominated by men throughout organized society and in individual relationships.¹ Pakistan is such a society, having statistically deteriorating conditions for the female population.²

In this context, the institution of marriage also comes with gender roles. Women's sexuality, rights, and access to financial resources are controlled in marriages. Such norms are not restricted to the Muslim community. During my pastoral experience in two provinces of Pakistan, I saw a visible sense of inferiority implied to wives by Christian husbands.

Those who argue that wives must submit in marriage claim that Scripture contains passages that advocate such a view. Among these passages, those in Pauline Epistles are often quoted, especially Ephesians 5:21-33.

So why did Paul tell wives to submit to their husbands? This paper will focus on the exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-23 from an intercultural perspective to explore how Muslim and Christian marital relations work out in the Pakistani context and provide a Christian perspective on this issue.

¹ James M. Henslin, *Essentials of Sociology* (UK: Taylor & Francis, 2001), 67.

² "Gender Inequality," DAWN.COM, December 25, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1453462>. (accessed 18th June, 2023)

Since the law of the land is underlined by the Sharia (the interpretation of the Quran and Hadith), this research also aims to explore the Islamic concept of marriage, albeit only to compare it with Christian perspectives.

1.1 Problem Statement

The current context is influenced by Islamic and cultural views on gender, suggesting women have an inferior status in marriage. The patriarchal norms in Pakistan may have originated during the colonial period and possibly earlier.³ Hence, this paper does not suggest that married women are inferior to men due to Islam.

After Pakistan was established in 1947 with Islam as its state religion, little progress has been made in improving the status of women. The situation has deteriorated over time, particularly in terms of gender-based violence.

According to the Reuters Foundation, Pakistan is the most dangerous country for women. The data available is quite frightening. While living in a joint family system, 70 to 90 percent of

³ Alex Buckley, "Gender Oppression, Inequality and Gender Roles in India and Southwestern United States: How British Colonial Rule and American Internal Colonialism Perpetuated Gender Roles and Oppression." People.smu.edu, April 30 2015, <https://people.smu.edu/knw2399/2015/04/30/gender-oppression-inequality-and-gender-roles-in-india-and-southwestern-united-states-how-british-colonial-rule-and-american-internal-colonialism-perpetuated-gender-roles-and-oppression/>. (accessed 22nd May, 2023)

married women endure physical, psychological, or economic abuse from their partners or other males in the family.⁴

These dynamics often intersect with religious beliefs, both Islamic and Christian. Within the diverse fabric of Pakistani society, there is a significant Christian minority with distinct religious perspectives and laws on marriage. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research exploring the intercultural aspects of marital relationships in Pakistani society, particularly considering the influence of context, Islamic perspective, and the Christian view. Hence this research.

By analyzing Ephesians 5:21-33 as a resource for understanding and improving marital relations, the research seeks to contribute insights and recommendations that promote marital well-being and understanding within the Christian community in Pakistan, as well as fostering dialogue and understanding among the two communities (within the country).

1.2 Methodology

This study will employ an intercultural exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 which involves a thorough examination of Ephesians 5:21-33 and a critical analysis of its text and historical context. Secondly, I will utilize a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the intercultural dynamics, context, and religious perspectives (Islam and Christianity) influencing marital relations in Pakistani society. For this, the research will delve into Christian and Islamic sources.

⁴ Changezi Sandhu, "Criminal Justice System & Women Empowerment Laws," March 18, 2023, Pakistan Today <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/03/18/criminal-justice-system-women-empowerment-laws/> (accessed 17th May, 2023)

The second approach will try to dig out the Islamic view of gender roles in marriage based on their authoritative texts and their dominant interpretations.

Thirdly, for this research, I will draw upon personal recommendations with three local experts: professor Aqleem Fatimah a Muslim scholar from Allama Iqbal University (Islamabad), and Dr. Ayra Inderyas, from Forman Christian College (Lahore), and Bishop Nadeem Kamran (Diocese of Lahore, Church of Pakistan). These conversations have been referenced as Appendices.

1.3 Data Collection

The data for this study will be collected through a review of relevant literature, including biblical commentaries, theological studies, and academic articles.

- Thematic Analysis: Employ a thematic analysis to identify recurring themes. This approach will help in organizing and interpreting the qualitative data in a systematic and meaningful way.
- Interpretation: Analyzing and interpreting the data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intercultural dynamics, cultural norms, and religious perspectives concerning marital relations in Pakistan. Look for connections and patterns between different themes and sub-themes.
- Exegesis: The research will conduct an exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 to explore its context, as well as its potential relevance and implications for marital relations in the Pakistani context. Utilizing scholarly resources, biblical commentaries, and theological literature to inform the analysis.

1.4 Research Questions

The main question that this thesis will try to answer is:

“What could the Christians of Pakistan learn from Ephesians 5:21-33 concerning marital relationships in the Pakistani Muslim context?”

Concerning (Christian) marriage in a Pakistani Muslim context, the sub questions that flow from this main research question are:

- What are the prevailing contextual norms and values related to marriage and marital roles in Pakistani society?
- What is the role and impact of Islam on marital relations in Pakistani society? How Do intercultural dynamics influence marital relationships in Pakistan, considering the diverse religious and social layers in society?
- What are the differences and comparisons between a Muslim / traditional and Christian understanding of marriage?

About the interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33 and the Christian view on marriage, the sub questions that flow from this main research question are:

- What did Paul, in his Judean-hellenistic context, teach on marital relations and roles in Ephesians 5:21-33?
- Which elements are constitutive of a Christian view on marriage, according to Ephesians 5:21-33?

About the contribution of Ephesians 5:21-33 for Christian marriage in Pakistan, the sub questions that flow from this main research question are:

- How does the interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33 contribute to the understanding of marital relations in the Pakistani context?
- To what extent could a Christian understanding of marriage help to build bridges with women/couples in the Muslim context?
- How can the Christian view shape marital expectations and dynamics within the Christian community of Pakistan?

1.5 Outline

Chapter 2 will explore the background of Paul's teachings on marital relations, with a particular focus on Ephesians 5:21-33. The sources of Paul's theology on marriage will be examined, and the study will delve into the concept of headship, authority, and submission in Ephesians. The classic view of "Head" as a source and its metaphorical interpretation will be discussed, as well as the definitions of "submission" and "subordination."

Chapter 3 will focus on Marital Relations in the Pakistani context. The contextual norms and values of marriage within Pakistani society will be explored, and the role of the context in shaping marital expectations and dynamics will be discussed. Furthermore, the Islamic view of marriage relations in Pakistan will be presented, along with the challenges faced in marital relations within this context.

Chapter 4 will transition from the Pakistani context to the exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33. The passage will be exegetically studied, and theological views on Ephesians 5:21-33, specifically the complementarianism versus egalitarianism debate, will be examined.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents the findings and analysis, shedding light on cultural dynamics and influences on marital relations within the Pakistani context. A comparative analysis of Islamic and Christian perspectives on marital relations is also presented. The understanding of the role of Ephesians 5:21-33 for the Christian community within the Pakistani context will be explored, leading to practical recommendations for marital relations in this setting.

Chapter 2 - Background of Paul's Teaching on Marriage in Ephesians 5

In this chapter, we will take an overview of the nature of Pauline epistles and the historical setting of Paul's teaching about marriage. This chapter also discusses views of men as the "head" of women from a historical and linguistic point of view. Exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 will come later in this thesis.

2.1 The Sources of Paul's Theology of Marriage

Like the other apostles, Paul had seen the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1), and the Lord himself called him to his apostleship (Galatians 1:1). As Paul was an apostle by God's call, therefore he could claim an authority equal to that of Peter, James, and John. He writes his letters with "the consciousness of this apostolic authority."⁵

It should be noted, however, that Paul distinguished between his teaching and the teaching of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:6, 10, 12; 2-Corinthians 11:17). Nowhere, however, did he imply that his epistles carry less authority than the other apostles.

Paul also claims that his gospel came by revelation from Jesus (Galatians 1:12). This revelation refers to the appearance of Christ to Paul on Damascus Road. In 1 - Corinthians 15:1-3 Paul asserts that "what I receive I pass unto you" corresponds to the language of Rabbis used to describe the transmission of traditions.⁶ This makes a point that what Paul taught was handed down

⁵ D.A Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (England: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 219.

⁶ *Ibid*, 221.

to him by other people. Behind the early Christian tradition lay the teaching of Jesus himself. Paul, however, was also educated in Pharisee tradition, an influence we will explore below.

2.2 Background of Paul's Epistles

It is imperative to discuss the place of women in Paul's day, particularly in the Greco-Roman world.

2.2.1 The Greek World

Many scholars are of the view that “regarding Paul, it is to be expected that he would use the language of that world to express the significance of Christ and even borrow its concepts where they could help illuminate aspects of the gospel.”⁷ That said, it is unlikely that the Greek world was a source for Paul's teaching in a strict sense as many popularly claim. The major influence, as we shall see below, is his Jewish upbringing.

John Drane considers “the influence of the Greek world on Paul must be reckoned to be minimal, none of us can escape using words and phrases, even religious ones, with which we are familiar in other contexts, if Paul ever used the language, and he gave it a new meaning.”⁸ That said, it is also incorrect to dichotomize Greek and Jewish cultures in the first century since the Jewish world was very Hellenistic.

2.2.2 The Place of Women in the Greco-Roman World

The world of the New Testament, whose setting is in the first-century Roman Empire, is an ancient world that is alien to us. Moreover, our understanding of women in this ancient world is limited.

⁷ Carson, Moo and Morris, 221.

⁸ John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament* (Oxford: Lion Publishing PLC, 1986), 256.

The treatment of Hellenistic women varied from region to region, ranging from Sparta and Rome, where women had political responsibilities, to Athens, where wealthy wives were essentially imprisoned.⁹

For the most part, women were little more than chattels.¹⁰ They were primarily regarded as a means of producing healthy and efficient citizens, and they were considered inferior to men, as belonging to a lower genus by nature."¹¹ To sum up, Hellenism was, anachronistically, "misogynistic." One can also grasp the position of women in the first century by some of the writers of that time. For example, ancient Greek philosopher and scientist Aristotle says that "for the male is by nature better fitted to command than the female (except in some cases where their union has been formed contrary to nature) and the older and fully developed person than the younger and immature."¹²

Menander, the Greek dramatist, called woman nature's greatest misfit and claimed that "where women are, all evil and to instruct a woman is simply to increase the poison of a dangerous serpent."¹³

2.2.3 Hellenistic Judaism

Hellenistic Judaism was likewise "misogynistic," in that it viewed women as inferior to men, Hellenistic Jews thought "that God's purpose in creating a wife for Adam was that death should come to him by his wife."¹⁴ As wives were generally treated as their husband's property,

⁹ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2009), 31.

¹⁰ Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (USA: The Paternoster Press, 1983), 39.

¹¹ G.L Dickinson, *The Greek View of Life* (London: Methuen & Co, 1896), 170. See also Evans, 40

¹² Payne, 32-33.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

faithful observance of social conventions was expected, particularly in avoiding the appearance of an adulteress or prostitute.”¹⁵

The first-century biographer Plutarch goes to the extreme of saying that “the wife ought to have no feeling of her own, but she should join with her husband in seriousness and sportiveness and in soberness and laughter, she ought not to make friends of her own but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common.”¹⁶

This attitude continued after Paul’s time, as seen in Greek orator and author Aelius Aristides’s affirmations that a man shouldn’t listen to his wife; he will tell his wife what must be done.¹⁷

As the New Testament period approached, however, dominant Roman culture experienced progressive improvement.¹⁸ Various philosophical, political, financial, religious, and poetic forces promoted greater equality for women.¹⁹ “Women of status could study, organize meetings, and participate in religious ceremonies and demonstrations.”²⁰ Roman law also permitted women to hold political and religious offices, own and dispose of property, make a will, give testimony, terminate a marriage, and sue for child support and custody.²¹

¹⁵ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (England: Inter Varsity Press, 1981), 75. See G.L Dickinson, *The Greek view of Life*, 198.

¹⁶ Evans, 41.

¹⁷ Payne, 34

¹⁸ Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 31.

¹⁹ Hurley, 76.

²⁰ Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishers, 2000), 71.

²¹ *Ibid*, 315.

It was in this broader context that Paul attempted to establish the church. His general purpose in writing his letters was to further his mission to the Gentiles by spiritually forming, guiding, and correcting the Gentile churches he founded.

This was the background of Paul when he wrote his letter. How could women demonstrate Christian liberty and equality in Christ without bringing offence to the gospel, given the cultural context they lived in?²² One example is 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, where Paul honored women as fully human, even though it clashed with the cultural conventions of his day and he affirms prophecy by women if done with modesty.

2.3 Gamaliel and A Contrasting Jewish Culture

We will now explore one of the biggest influences on Paul's thought. In Acts 22:3, the highest credentials of Paul in Pharisaic rabbinic education are proclaimed. He is a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of his fathers, and zealous for God.²³

Gamaliel was a learned Rabbi, the grandson, and successor of the great Rabbi Hillel (60 B.C- AD 20).²⁴ He had taught a more advanced and liberal form of Judaism than his rival Shammai.²⁵ Even in Hillel's view, however, a man could divorce his wife if she displeased him in any way, even if she burned his dinner.²⁶ Acts 5:34 describes Gamaliel as "a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people." His learning and character earned him the title "Rabban", given to only seven Jewish teachers.²⁷

²² Ibid, 34-35.

²³ Drane, 248.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Used as a Jewish title of honor for the presidents of the Sanhedrin.

Gamaliel claims that “he saw directly by the Holy Spirit.”²⁸ “Holy Spirit is also the key theme in Paul’s letters, occurring 143 times in his corpus.²⁹ Naturally, his teachings were influenced by his teacher Gamaliel. The sayings of Rabbi Gamaliel indicate a lenient and favorable attitude toward women in contrast to the rabbinic tradition as a whole. Mishnah³⁰ records six sayings of Rabbi Gamaliel which treat women and men equally. These sayings of Rabbi Gamaliel “promote freedom to walk and welfare to women.”³¹

Gamaliel is considerate of the practical needs of women, as in allowing a woman to marry again on the evidence of one witness that her husband had died.³² Similarly Paul grants women the freedom to remarry in Romans 7:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:15. Another example is that Gamaliel ordains that a widow may make a vow to collect payment for her. Paul also defends women’s marital rights (1 Corinthians 7:3-40). Gamaliel affirmed that “Before God all are equal: women and slaves, poor and rich. Whether Israelite or Gentile, man or woman, male or female according to their works, the Holy Spirit dwells also upon them.”³³

Paul develops Gamaliel’s positive assessment of women, slaves, and gentiles in Galatian 3:28. This was revolutionary during the first century, when women had legal and property rights, but were inferior in religious matters.³⁴ Josephus describes two sections of a synagogue mentioned

²⁸ W.D Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1948), 331.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ The first major written collection of the Jewish oral traditions, known as “the Oral Torah.”

³¹ Elaine Fantham, *Women in the Classical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 136

³² Alan Cumming, “Pauline Christianity and Greek Philosophy: A Study of the Status of Women,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34, no.4 (October – December 1973): 523-524.

³³ Walter Scheidel, “The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labor and Women’s Life in the Ancient World (I),” *Journal of Greece & Rome* 42, no.2 (October 1995): 204.

³⁴ Belleville, 248.

in the law of Augustus the First, where the liturgical service took place was open to women too but the other part, given over to the scribes' teaching, was open only to men.³⁵

To sum up, it is crucial to have an understanding of the position of women in Paul's time, as well as the perspective of Paul's teacher Gamliel on this matter. Firstly, it is important to note that epistles typically address specific issues faced by the church. Secondly, the cultural attitudes towards women in Paul's era varied but generally held a negative perception of women.

By examining the influence of Paul, Gamaliel, Judaism, and Jesus, we can observe a contrast between the prevailing low regard for women in Hellenistic culture. This awareness of the contrasting views enriches the analysis of Paul's teachings for married women.

³⁵ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into economic and social conditions during the New Testament period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 373.

2.4 The Study of Headship Authority and Subordination in Ephesians

In the Pauline epistles, the Church is presented as being one body. While the epistles addressed problems of particular churches, there is remarkable consistency and unity in them, each individual church group is seen very much as part of the whole.³⁶ Each Church has its own particular characteristics with individual patterns of worship and leadership.

As Eduard Schweizer says that “there is no such thing as the New Testament church order. Even in the New Testament time circumstances were very varied”.³⁷ In such consistency and diversity, it is interesting to look at the teachings given to different churches by Paul on the nature of womanhood and their function in the household.

Two initial difficulties must be noted as we approach this task. The first problem we have is in discovering when there is a particular reference to the husband/wife relationship and when there is a more general reference to the men and women. The Greek has only one word “γυνή” (*gunē*) for both woman and wife³⁸ and “ἀνὴρ” (*anēr*) for both man and husband.³⁹ It is necessary to keep this fact in mind as we consider the various passages.

³⁶ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 13.

³⁷ Alvin Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 98-99.

³⁸ Schmidt, 98-99

³⁹ Payne, 112.

Secondly, as Mary Evans notes, there is the basic hermeneutical difficulty of relating the overall message to the specific teaching of individual passages. The former is obviously built up from the latter, but in coming to an understanding of the latter we are clearly and to some extent rightly influenced by our prior impressions of the whole picture. The problem arises when the prior understanding with which we approach the individual passages is influenced more by external presuppositions than by previous readings of the biblical material.⁴⁰

This chapter focuses on the concept of headship, particularly in terms of authority and subordination (*hypotassō*), which greatly influences interpretation. By examining various passages in the Pauline epistles, we seek to understand Paul's meaning when he speaks about man as the head. Specifically, we will analyze the classic view of headship in one of the most frequently cited passages that discuss the authority of man over woman and the subordination of woman to man (Ephesians 5:21-33).

2.4.1 Headship, Authority and Subordination

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Paul clearly states that the husband is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23). Some scholars consider this in a broad sense of male superiority over women. For instance, F.W. Grosheide says that “of every man, it can be said that he is above the woman.”⁴¹

Also George Eldon says that “Paul retains the Jewish idea of the subordination of woman to man.”⁴² The Good News translation also has built the same assumption into its translation, where in Corinthians 11:3 it reads: “the husband is supreme over the wife” and in Ephesians “man has authority over”.

Careful analysis of the word however results differently than the traditional translation of the word used for “head.” It is important to note that “in the first century it was the heart, not the head that was seen as the source of thought and reason, the head this time being seen rather as the source of life”.⁴³ Therefore, if we have to understand this as a principle, there must be a careful analysis. Unfortunately, many Christians have simply presumed that “head” means “authority” in Ephesians 5:23, and most churches continue to teach this interpretation.

In English, the word “head” has more than one meaning. Metaphorically, it means “leader” or “chief.” Any head of an institution or organization is regarded as a leader.⁴⁴ However, in Koine Greek, the word for head is “κεφαλή” (*kephalē*), which also has metaphorical meanings, but not “leader” or “chief person.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ F. W Grosheide, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing 1954), 250.

⁴² George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing 1993), 328.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Head,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/head#> (Accessed 7th February 2019)

⁴⁵ Marg Mowczko, “Kephale and male headship,” <https://margmowczko.com/kephale-and-male-headship-in-pauls-letters/#> (Accessed 7th February 2019)

James B. Hurley points out that “it is important to remember that “head” used in this context is a metaphor and there is no reason to suppose that the first-century use of this metaphor will be identical with its twenty-first-century use.”⁴⁶ In order to understand Paul’s use of the “κεφαλή” (*kephalē*), it must be understood against the background of its use in ancient Greek.

Marg Mowczko also defines “κεφαλή” (*kephalē*) as “head” source or origin.⁴⁷ However, in Hebrew, the word “רֹשׁ” (*rosh*) can be used in a metaphorical sense as “chief over,” although even here the idea is often of priority rather than of controlling influence or authority.⁴⁸ This makes clear that the Greek word “κεφαλή” does not mean “headship” in the literal sense.

2.4.2 The Classic View of “Head” as Source

Plato and Aristotle, among others, maintained that sperm was formed in the brain.⁴⁹ The Pythagoreans considered the head to be the source of human generation. They refrained from eating any part of an animal or fish head, lest the creature be a reincarnated ancestor. The head is the very organ from which they themselves had derived.⁵⁰ By the time of Plato, adherents of the Orphic religion were using “κεφαλή” and “ἀρχή” together.⁵¹ These words were used synonymously and were translated as “source” or “beginning.” There is debate among scholars whether “κεφαλή” should be translated as source or origin or as chief or ruler even if it is used synonymously with “ἀρχή” beginning.

⁴⁶ Hurley, 145.

⁴⁷ Mowczko, “Kephale and male headship”

⁴⁸ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 146.

⁴⁹ Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 375.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Wayne Grudem views “ἀρχή” as conveying the sense of “rule or dominion” when used synonymously with “κεφαλή”⁵² but it does not seem tenable. Hippolytus emphasized the productivity of this bodily member when he designated the head as the characteristic substance from which all people were made.⁵³ Philo declared that “as though the head of a living creature, Esau is the progenitor of all these members”.⁵⁴ Photius considered it a synonym for procreator and progenitor. This makes clear that even the early church interpreted this word as “source” or “beginning,” rather than “head.”⁵⁵

Early Church Father Irenaeus equated head with source.⁵⁶ Tertullian’s discussion on the word “head” begins as Paul’s affirmation that Christ is the head of man indicates that Christ is the author of man. Hence, he has authority, and observing that authority can belong to no other than the author.

There is other evidence for not translating the word *kephalē* as “head” or “chief.” Marg Mowczko gives an example from Hebrew translation of the word “head” to Greek (Septuagint):

“In the second–first century BC translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, the Hebrew word for “head” (*rosh*) meant a literal head, the translators invariably translated *rosh* into *kephalē*. However in Hebrew, like in English, “head” can also mean a leader or ruler. In the instances where *rosh* meant a leader, in most cases, the translators did not use the word *kephalē* in their translation; instead, they typically used the Greek word *archōn*, which does mean ruler or leader. It seems

⁵² Wayne Grudem, "Does Kephale (Head) Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey Of 2,336 Examples," *Trinity Journal* 6 NS (1985): 38-59.

⁵³ Hawthorne, 375

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Hawthorne, Martin, Reid, 375.

that most of the translators of the Septuagint knew that *kephalē* does not usually mean leader, ruler, or authority”⁵⁷

The context of the word decides whether the text is about marital relations or general relations between men and women. Therefore, most English translations have translated the verse as “man and woman” rather than “husband and wife.” In order to discover the context. It is necessary to peruse these verses to grasp whether they support the interpretation of headship as a source or origin, or whether it is necessary to introduce the concept of authority in order to understand the passage.

2.4.3 Head as Metaphor

The verses that describe a man or husband as head of a woman or wife draw an analogy with Jesus as the head of the church. Gordon D. Fee has argued that the usage here needs to be understood in light of the usage elsewhere in Paul’s letters.⁵⁸ He argues that in Colossians and Ephesians, the term is used of Christ as the supplier of guidance and power to the body; the body must hold fast to the head from which it grows (Colossians 2:19) and must grow up into the head (Ephesians 4:15-16).⁵⁹

In Ephesians, Christ as head over all things is given to the church, the clear implication being that the church shares in his headship over the other powers in the universe.⁶⁰ From which he concurs that the point of the analogy here is that the husband is the person on whom the wife depends just as the church depends on Christ, and therefore subordination is appropriate. The

⁵⁷ Mowczko, “Kephale and male headship”

⁵⁸ Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Gordon D. Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality* (USA: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 198.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

statement that Christ is the savior of the body favors such an understanding of the husband as essentially the provider, the one who cares for his wife. There is nothing more to the analogy than that.⁶¹

F.F. Bruce argues that Paul is making a reference to the creation narrative of Genesis 2:21-24.⁶² He further explains that in Genesis 2:21-24, the woman came from the man and this narrative has influenced the thought and language of Ephesians 5:23.⁶³

As Adam was the source of his wife's existence, so the husband is the head of the wife in this sense.⁶⁴

Mowczko has argued that the Genesis 2 record does not reveal any hint of male privilege, primacy, or authority by virtue of man being created first despite what some assert to the contrary. Nevertheless, man was created first and this fact needed to be explained to newly-converted Gentile Christians, many of whom may have held to pagan myths about the creation of various men and women and gods. A faulty doctrine of the origins of mankind has the potential to lead to other faulty beliefs, practices, and behaviors.⁶⁵

F.F. Bruce further explains that in the context of Ephesians 5:23 the word "head" has the idea of authority attached to it after the analogy of Christ's headship over the church. For when Christ is said to be head of the church, that involves the correlative figure of the church as his body

⁶¹ Pierce, Groothuis, Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 198-199.

⁶² F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans publishing company, 1984), 384.

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Marg Mowczko, "Kephale and male headship"

<https://margmowczko.com/kephale-and-male-headship-in-pauls-letters/#> (Accessed 9th February 2019)

(Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Colossians 1:18; 2:19); however, this correlative is absent from the husband-wife relationship.⁶⁶

2.4.4 Authority

The word translated for authority in the New Testament is “ἐξουσία” (exousia).⁶⁷ This specific word does not occur in Ephesians 5. It should be pointed out here that in 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul forbids women to have authority over men, although the verb used here is *authentien* (from the Greek “*authenteō*”) and not ἐξουσία. The former also expresses power and is translated “authority.”

It must be noted, however, that at least no word for authority in marriage has been used in Pauline epistles. The only time the word ἐξουσία is used in the context of marriage is in 1 Corinthians 7:4. It says, “The wife does not have authority of her own body but her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but his wife.”

In the following verse, Paul adds, “Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time”. Mowczko explains that “a married man or woman cannot choose to become celibate without their partner’s permission (as some Corinthian Christians appeared to be doing), or have sex with whoever they want, as their spouse has the exclusive right (*exousia*) of a sexual relationship with his or her own spouse”.⁶⁸ This makes clear that Paul never hints at such ideas for husbands to have authority over their wives, or that “headship” is not the same as “authority” in Christian marriage as per Ephesians 5.

⁶⁶ F.F Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 385.

⁶⁷ Evans, 68.

⁶⁸ Mowczko, “Kephale and male headship”

2.4.5 Subordination

The verb translated in this passage as “submission” or “subordination” is “ὑποτάσσω” (*hupotasso*). Its root meaning is to “put in order” or “to arrange.”⁶⁹ In Pauline writings, the word “ὑποτάσσω” is used twenty-three times as verb and eight times in various noun forms.

Subordination was naturally expected in marriage relationships in the ancient world, especially as the wife could have been as much as twelve to fifteen years younger than her husband and the marriage would have been arranged.⁷⁰ Another reason was that husbands were generally, breadwinners at that time and for this reason, subordination was expected at that time.

Ephesians 5:21 shows us that subordination does not have to be a one-way thing; it is mutual.⁷¹ It is important to note that in Ephesians 6:5, Paul instructs slaves to obey “ὑπακούετε” (*hupakouete*) their masters, and children to obey their parents in 6:1) he uses the same word. It does not imply, however, that all women should submit to all men in a general sense. The context is marriage.

Furthermore, subordination is a responsibility that lies with the women themselves, of their own volition. The directive for husbands, on the other hand, is to love, care for, and selflessly sacrifice for their wives (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33, Colossians 3:19). Therefore, if this passage includes a command for subordination, it implies a notion of mutual subordination between both husband and wife. It is not solely the wives who are required to submit to their husbands, but rather the subordination is intended to be mutual.

69 Ibid.

70 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics 3* (London: T&T Clark, 1961), 172.

71 Ibid

2.5 Conclusion

Ephesians 5:21-33 has often been interpreted in a way that places the husband in a dominant and authoritative position within the marriage. This has contributed to gender imbalances and inequalities within marital relations.

In this chapter, we have examined the historical background in which Paul speaks of the subordination of wives to their husbands. The historical and linguistic background will help us exegete this passage in chapter 4. For now, it helps us understand that given Paul's context, he would speak of his husband as the head of his wife. Nowhere does it mean, however, that men have dominion or authority over their wives (in the sense of superiority), or that husbands have to forcefully make their wives submit to them. Rather, subordination is something a Christian wife commits to voluntarily.

Chapter 3 - Marital Relations in the Pakistani Context

This chapter explores and analyzes the intricacies of marital relations in the Pakistani context. We will delve into the traditional practices and gender roles prevalent within the Christian and Muslim communities. These considerations can help us to apply Ephesians 5 contextually.

3.1 Contextual Norms and Values of Marriage in Pakistani Society

Islam is both the official and the majority religion of Pakistan. The Christian community forms a small but visible religious minority. Marriage practices are governed by cultural norms, Islamic traditions, and the law of the land (which is a combination of Anglo-Saxon laws and religious laws of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence).

Going into the intricacies of how various Islamic laws in the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) developed since 1947 is beyond the scope of this paper. In this chapter, we will provide general observations of Muslim marriage practices in Pakistan, as well as Islamic guidelines on the same. Christian marriage practices in Pakistan are a combination of culture, Biblical teachings, and the Christian Marriage Act of 1875.

The State of Pakistan does not recognize either civil marriage. Marriages are usually solemnized and registered according to a person's religious identity.⁷² Christians in Pakistan also have separate laws for inheritance, as documented below.

⁷² Ayra Inderyas, "Christian Marriage and Divorce Act 2019 — a Long Awaited Legislation," Daily Times. September 3, 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/459454/christian-marriage-and-divorce-act-2019-a-long-awaited-legislation/> (accessed 30th July, 2023)

3.1.1 Arranged Marriages

In Pakistani society, parental involvement in selecting a spouse is commonplace.⁷³ In this arrangement, parents play a central role, but the extended family's impact also influences the decision-making process.

Arranged marriages are seen as a way to preserve cultural heritage, maintain family honor, and ensure family compatibility.⁷⁴ In some communities, it is also a way of keeping the family wealth within the bloodline, particularly when it comes to cousin marriages.⁷⁵ Potential spouses may be introduced through family connections, community networks, or matrimonial services.

Parents seek spouses for their children based on shared religious beliefs, family background, social status, and financial standing. The compatibility of personalities and values is also considered, but it is not critical to the selection process. This emphasis on shared values and religious beliefs aims to foster a stable and lasting marriage.

Arranged marriages are cultural norms and are not necessarily enforced by Islam, which requires the consent of both marriage parties (as does the constitution). That said, forced marriages are common.⁷⁶ This is where Muslim social activists in Pakistan note the distinction between

⁷³ N. Evason, I. Memon, & H. G. Saeed, "Pakistani Culture - Family," para 16, Cultural Atlas.<https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/pakistani-culture/pakistani-culture-family#pakistani-culture-family>. (accessed 15th July, 2023)

⁷⁴ A. Khurshid, "Love marriage or arranged marriage? Choice, rights, and empowerment for educated Muslim women from rural and low-income Pakistani communities." *A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(1), 90-106. doi:10.1080/03057925.2018.1507726. 98

⁷⁵ A. Shaw, "The arranged transnational cousin marriages of British Pakistanis: Critique, dissent and cultural continuity." (2006) *Contemporary South Asia*, 15(2), 214. doi:10.1080/09584930600955317

⁷⁶ "Forced into marriage," *The Express Tribune*, November 24, 2011, Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk/article/9056/forced-into-marriage/>

Islamic teachings and cultural norms.⁷⁷ The latter can also be abusive towards women, as noted below.

Christian marriages in Pakistan may include elements of arranged marriages, but the practice may not be as prevalent as in Muslim communities. That is not to suggest that Christians are more liberal in this regard, but perhaps they do not have strong ties to a particular clan identity. Also considering that most Christians in Pakistan do not know significant assets, the paternal pressure may not be as strong.

3.1.2 Courtship and Dating Practices

Traditional courtship and dating practices in Pakistani Muslim society are generally discouraged, as they are perceived to contradict Islamic principles of modesty and avoidance of premarital relationships. It is evident in the recent attempts by some Islamic organizations and political parties to ban Valentine's Day in Pakistan.⁷⁸ Instead, interactions between potential partners are often chaperoned and limited to ensure propriety.

Rather than openly admitting that love weddings are on the upswing (due to those who remain opposed), they refer to it as an "understanding."⁷⁹ Parents frequently talk about how their children developed an understanding at school, college, or employment and then came to them for guidance. This is one method they have combined love marriage and arranged marriage to ensure the happiness of both their children and society.

⁷⁷ Abu Bakr Agha, "How I learnt where Islam ends, and culture begins," November 29, 2011, The Express Tribune, <https://tribune.com.pk/article/9084/how-i-learnt-where-islam-ends-and-culture-begins> (accessed 1st August 2023).

⁷⁸ "Pakistan Capital Bans Valentine's Day," BBC News, February 13 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38958999> (accessed 19th July, 2023)

⁷⁹ A. Maqsood, "Love as understanding. American Ethnologist," (2021) 48(1), 98. doi:10.1111/amet.13000

Christian communities in Pakistan may exhibit a broader range of courtship practices, as male-female interactions are considered less taboo, if not openly encouraged.

Christian couples may have opportunities to get to know each other better before marriage, allowing them to assess compatibility and shared values. It is also understandable considering Christian boys and girls meet in church, whereas Muslim religious gatherings are mostly segregated. However, like their Muslim counterparts, Christian couples also navigate the cultural expectations of modesty and propriety.

3.1.3 Gender Roles and Marital Expectations

In Pakistan, husbands are regarded as the head of the household and decision-makers.⁸⁰ Women are typically expected to fulfill domestic roles, such as taking care of the home and family, even if they are working.

Christian marriages in Pakistan generally also demonstrate traditional gender roles influenced by cultural norms. Observationally, however, one may see many Christian women in the workplace. Here, class structures may also come into play.⁸¹ Since the majority of Christians are economically disadvantaged, women are compelled to work, disregarding traditional norms due to economic necessity.⁸²

⁸⁰ Khurshid, 96

⁸¹ Personal Interview with Dr. Ayra Inderyas, Assistant Professor Foreman Christian College Lahore, Pakistan, 5th June, 2023

⁸² Ibid

3.1.4 Marital Finance and Property Matters

In Pakistani weddings, the practice of giving dowries and bridal gifts is common. The Mehr (dowry or bridal gift) is an essential component of the marriage contract in Islam, symbolizing the husband's commitment and financial responsibility towards his wife.

It serves as a form of security for the wife in case of divorce or the husband's death. The amount of Mehr can vary depending on cultural and economic factors. It is predetermined and announced in front of the guests during the *Nikkah* (wedding) ceremony.

Bridal gifts, known as *Jahez* in Urdu, can include household items, jewelry, and even furniture. It is different from dowry⁸³ and is an ancient custom, often perceived negatively. Nevertheless, it is still practised, with the pretext that these gifts are meant to help the bride set up her new home and ease the financial burden on her family.

Christian couples also navigate financial considerations during the marriage process, often focusing on financial planning and preparation for their life together. The expectations of gifts can be a critical factor in the matchmaking process. The practice of giving *jahez* is not rare in Christian communities either.

3.1.5 Property Rights and Inheritance

Islamic law outlines specific guidelines regarding inheritance, with male heirs typically receiving a larger share than female heirs. The Qur'an says: "For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share."⁸⁴ In Islam, women are entitled to half of the inheritance

⁸³ "Dowry and Jahez Different Things." DAWN.COM. November 10, 2013. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1055364#:~:text=Jahez%20is%20culture%20of%20the>. (accessed 16th July, 2023)

⁸⁴ Sura 4:7 (Sura means "chapter")

share available to males. Shari'a has permitted unjust inheritance laws and norms towards women to remain in many Islamic majority cultures.

This inheritance system can influence family dynamics and financial arrangements within marriages. Couples entering prenuptial agreements to protect their assets are not widespread in the Muslim community due to cultural norms and religious beliefs.

Christians have their own inheritance laws in the constitution, which give women the right to inheritance.⁸⁵ In the case of mixed marriages, Islamic law usually applies as the law of the land does not recognize mixed marriages, especially if the male is a Christian or Hindu.⁸⁶

3.2 Islamic View of Marriage Relationships in Pakistan

There are four schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam. Out of these, three (Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki) consider marriage (*nikah*) mandatory, while the fourth (Sha'fi) deems it preferable (*mubah*). The Qur'an itself instructs Muslims to get married when it says "And among His signs is this, which He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts. Undoubtedly in these are signs for those who reflect."⁸⁷, and "And Allah has made for you your mates of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters and grandchildren, and provided for you sustenance of the best."⁸⁸ The following are the key facets of marital relationships in Islam.

⁸⁵ Succession Act 1925, Section 32

<https://www.sja.gos.pk/assets/BareActs/SUCCESSION%20ACT%201925.pdf>

⁸⁶ "Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Interfaith marriage" 2016, http://azil.rs/azil_novi/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Interfaith-marriage.2016.Home-Office.pdf (accessed 11th June, 2023)

⁸⁷ Sura 30:21

⁸⁸ Sura 16:72

3.2.2 Marriage as a Contract

Islamic marriage is viewed as a contractual relationship between a husband and wife.⁸⁹ The contract is formalized through the 'Nikah' ceremony, where both parties agree to specific rights and responsibilities. That said, Islam emphasizes the virtues of marriage as a means of attaining spiritual growth and closeness to God. It is seen as a way to strengthen one's faith and practice Islamic principles within a family unit. It is also known as “completing one’s religion.”

The concept of marriage as a contract is deeply rooted in the Quran, where it is referred to as "mithaq" (covenant) and "aqd" (contract). This contractual nature emphasizes the voluntary and consensual nature of the union, where both parties willingly agree to enter into the marriage with full understanding and acceptance of their respective rights and responsibilities. Even when the marriage is arranged, Islamic law requires seeking the consent of the bride and bridegroom.

There is also the concept of "Ijab" (proposal) and "Qubul" (acceptance). The groom or his representative initiates the proposal, expressing the intention to marry the bride, and the bride or her guardian responds with acceptance. This exchange is a formal expression of their consent to enter into the marital bond

The marriage contract serves as the legal and spiritual foundation of the marriage, laying out the framework within which the relationship will operate. It defines the terms and conditions of the union, outlining the rights and duties of both spouses and the obligations they owe to each other. This contract-based approach ensures that each partner is aware of their role and responsibilities, fostering an environment of transparency and mutual understanding.

⁸⁹ N. R. Keddie & B. Baron, *Women in Middle East history: Shifting boundaries in sex and gender* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 57.

Scholars of Islamic studies suggest that the roles of spouses are perceived as complementary, reflecting their different capacities and dispositions in conforming to the values of a traditional patriarchal society.⁹⁰

The Islamic tradition also teaches that the most perfect in faith among believers is he who is best in manners and kindest to his wife.⁹¹

3.2.3 The Nikah Ceremony

The Nikah ceremony is a religious event conducted by an Islamic scholar or religious figure. It typically involves a recitation of Quranic verses, prayers, and the formalization of the marriage contract. As part of the marriage contract, the groom is required to give a 'mehr' or dowry to the bride.

Before the Nikah, the families of the bride and groom undertake meticulous preparations for the ceremony. They set the date, arrange the venue, and invite guests from both sides to witness and celebrate the union. They also exchange gifts and sweets as a symbol of goodwill and love.

On the day of the Nikah, the designated venue is adorned with vibrant decorations. A religious scholar, known as the Qazi, officiates the Nikah ceremony. He symbolically represents the authority of Islamic teachings and ensures that the marriage adheres to Islamic principles.

The Nikah ceremony begins with the recitation of relevant Quranic verses that emphasize the sanctity of marriage, such as Surah Nisa,⁹² which describes the Islamic theology of marriage.

⁹⁰ S.Silvestri, "Europe's Muslim women: Potential, problems and aspirations" 2008, p. 23, Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.kbs-frb.be/publication.aspx?id=295018&langtype=1033>

⁹¹ A. Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud. (A. Hasan, Trans.)*, (New Delhi, India: Kitab Bhavan, 2004), 2014

⁹² Chapter 4 of the Qur'an

The Qazi may also deliver a sermon, offering advice and guidance to the couple about their responsibilities and duties within the marriage. The sermon emphasizes the importance of mutual respect, love, and understanding between the husband and wife. Note here that many Muslim families practice segregation, and the bride and groom may not be present in the same place.

The Qazi seeks the consent of the bride, asking her if she accepts the proposal of the groom.⁹³ The bride's consent is pivotal in Islam, affirming the importance of her free will in the marriage decision. Before proceeding with the Nikah, the Qazi ensures that both parties agree upon the amount of mehr (dowry) that the groom will give to the bride.

The Qazi then initiates the *Ijab-e-Qubul*, where the groom or his representative formally offers marriage to the bride, and she, or her representative, accepts the proposal. This contractual agreement is a significant aspect of the Nikah ceremony, signifying the legal recognition of the marriage.⁹⁴

To validate the Nikah, two adult male witnesses (or one man and two women) must testify to the contract's acceptance by both parties. Christian marriage also requires two “credible” witnesses.⁹⁵ The Christian marriage law does not specify that these witnesses have to be male, but that is the general practice.

⁹³ Ruqaiyyah Maqsood, “BBC - Religions - Islam: Weddings.” Bbc.co.uk. 2009. https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/ritesrituals/weddings_1.shtml. (accessed 16th July, 2023)

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Christian Marriage Act 1872, https://punjabcode.punjab.gov.pk/uploads/articles/CHRISTIAN_MARRIAGE_ACT%2C_1872.doc.pdf (accessed 10th June, 2023)

3.3 Marital Roles and Responsibilities

Islamic teachings grant women various rights within marriage, including the right to be treated with kindness, respect, and fairness. The wife also has the right to pursue education, maintain her cultural identity, and participate in decision-making. Other rights include:

- **Right to Mahr:** The wife has the right to receive a 'mahr' or dowry from the husband, which is agreed upon and specified in the marriage contract. The mahr serves as a financial security and gift to the wife.
- **Right to Education:** The wife has the right to pursue education and intellectual growth. Islam recognizes the importance of knowledge and encourages both husbands and wives to seek education.
- **Right to Maintenance:** The husband has the financial responsibility to provide for his wife's basic needs, including food, clothing, and shelter. This duty extends even if the wife has her income or wealth.
- **Right to Privacy:** The wife is entitled to privacy within the marriage. Matters discussed in private between husband and wife should be kept confidential.

The husband is obliged to provide emotional and financial support to his wife and children. He is expected to show kindness, compassion, and protection towards his family. Other responsibilities include:

- **Decision-making with Consultation:** While Islam acknowledges the husband's role as the head of the household, it also emphasizes mutual consultation between husband and wife in matters that affect the family.
- **Respect and Consideration:** The husband is required to treat his wife with respect and dignity. He should value her opinions and feelings and avoid demeaning or disrespectful behavior.

- Sharing Household Chores: Islamic teachings encourage husbands to participate in household chores and responsibilities. Muhammad set an example by assisting in domestic tasks.
- Loyalty and Fidelity: The husband should be loyal and faithful to his wife, maintaining the exclusivity of their relationship. In the case of polygamy, the husband has to take consent from the first wife to marry another woman, and he has to treat both his wives equally.⁹⁶

3.3.1 Husband as the Head of the Household

Considering the list of rights and responsibilities in Islamic marriage, it seems that Muslim men have authority over their wives. While the spirit of these injunctions may be to encourage husbands to care for their wives, they can lead to instances of domination and violence.⁹⁷

The Qur'an, for instance, seems to allow Muslim men to beat their wives: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand."⁹⁸

It is helpful to delve into this verse further, as it is a basis for a hierarchical relation between and roles of women and men in the household in Islam. There's one hadith (saying of Mohammad)

⁹⁶ H. Bhatti, "Man must pay mehr to first wife immediately for contracting second marriage without her permission: SC," DAWN.COM, August 26, 2020. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1576586> (accessed 5th July, 2023)

⁹⁷ L. Ahmed, *A quiet revolution: The veil's resurgence from the Middle East to America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 63.

⁹⁸ Sura 4:34

where he said “Had it been permissible that a person may prostrate himself before another, I would have ordered that a wife should prostrate herself before her husband.”⁹⁹

Several scholars of Islam, however, want to go beyond the literal meaning of the text with a more *contextual* approach as compared to a mere *textual* approach.¹⁰⁰ These include scholars like Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Abdullah Saeed, and Fazlur Rahman.¹⁰¹ The last one is of Pakistani origin and taught Islamic thought at the University of Chicago.¹⁰²

These scholars also note that the Qur’an contains misogynistic verses (like Sura 4:34), but also those that promote equality between genders.¹⁰³ Other verses that teach the subordination of women include Sura 2:128 and 2:282. The contextual scholars argue that these verses can be interpreted by acknowledging that the Qur’an promotes women’s rights compared to the patriarchal customs of 7th century Arabia.¹⁰⁴

Even textual scholars, however, note that the words used in Sura 4:34 (*al-rijāl* and *al-nisā’*) can mean men and women, or husbands and wives.¹⁰⁵ They note that the textual background of these verses makes it evident that it is about marital relations. Hence, even if Sura 4:34 promotes submission of women, it is only in marriage, not in the wider society.

⁹⁹ This hadith is found in various redactions in Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Sunan Abū Daūd, Sunan Ibn Majah, and Musnad Aḥmad.

¹⁰⁰ Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur’an: An Introduction* (London: Indonesian Journal of Theology, 2008), 198

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² N. F. Paracha, “Smokers' Corner: The Return of Fazlur Rahman.” May 20, 2018, Dawn.com. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1408776> (accessed 20th July 2023).

¹⁰³ E.g. Sura 9:71-72, 4:124, 16:97.

¹⁰⁴ Saeed, 198.

¹⁰⁵ It is comparable to what we noted in 2.3 regarding similar words used for men/women and husband/wife in Koine Greek.

Gender Studies scholar Aqleem Fatima notes that Muslims also believe in the concept of *qiwamah*, which further reinforces the idea of partnership and cooperation within the marital relationship.¹⁰⁶ *Qiwam* means “ruler,” but even then the Quranic concepts and code of ethics of a ruler are so important and valuable. It requires a ruler to be loving and compassionate for all. There is a hadith that if a dog dies out of hunger near a riverside the ruler would be answerable.¹⁰⁷

She further says that in a Muslim marriage, the husband as a farmer takes care of his field and crop (wife). Sura 2:223 uses the analogy of a field to convey the idea that spouses are like a source of nourishment and growth for each other. However, it is essential to understand this analogy in its context and not take it in a way that devalues or objectifies men.¹⁰⁸

Hence, we see that various Muslim scholars consider male headship in marriage not in a misogynistic sense, but in the sense of husband as provider. It is similar to what we noted about the concept of “headship” in Ephesians 5 in the previous chapter.¹⁰⁹

3.3.2 Divorce (Talaq)

Divorce in Islam is known as "Talaq." The husband has the right to initiate divorce by pronouncing the phrase "I divorce you" (in Arabic: "Talaq") to his wife. The husband can do this either in one sitting (Talaq-e-Sunnat) or by pronouncing it on separate occasions within the waiting period (Talaq-e-Bid'ah). Talaq-e-Sunnah is considered the recommended way, but both methods are recognized in Islamic law.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Aqleem Fatima (Gender Studies Department, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad), 5th June, 2023.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ See § 4.1.4

After divorce, there is a waiting period known as "Iddah," during which the wife cannot remarry. The purpose of the Iddah is to ensure that the woman is not pregnant and to allow for reconciliation between the couple if possible. The length of the Iddah varies based on certain conditions but generally lasts three menstrual cycles.

“But if you decide to take one wife in place of another, even if you had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back; Would you take it by slander and a manifest wrong?”¹¹⁰ In this verse, the Qur’an prohibits the husband from taking back the bridal gifts in case of divorce.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, only men have the right to divorce in Islam.¹¹¹ In Muslim-majority nations, women's divorce rights are frequently limited. She can either end the marriage by khula or file for divorce. If a woman breaks her marriage by khula and the husband is not at fault, the wife must refund her dowry to end the marriage because she is the contract breaker. Women must also wait for one menstrual cycle to rule out pregnancy.

When initiating or fighting for divorce, they frequently face legal and financial liabilities, as well as the loss of custody of their children.¹¹² That is why women do not usually initiate divorce in Pakistan, even if they are abused or unhappy in the relationship.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Sura 4:20

¹¹¹ F .Mernissi, *Beyond the veil: Male-female dynamics in Muslim society* (London: Saqi Books, 2003), 46.

¹¹² Hamada, 2010

¹¹³ Qamar & Faizan, 2021, p. 352

It should be noted that while Islam acknowledges divorce, it actively discourages it. In Islamic tradition, it is considered "the most hateful to God."¹¹⁴ However, under Shari'a law, there are unique divorce rules for males and women. The unfairness in divorce stems from the perception that males have total power in getting a divorce. Scholars have previously interpreted that if the male initiates the divorce (talaq), the reconciliation phase of appointing an arbiter from both sides is eliminated.

The Qur'an seeks to uphold justice, even in divorce: "...And due to them [i.e., the wives] is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."¹¹⁵

The Christian Marriage Act in Pakistan, based on the Biblical understanding, allows divorce in two cases: adultery or conversion of one partner to another.¹¹⁶

3.3.3 Remarriage

After the completion of the Iddah, the woman is free to remarry if she wishes. Both men and women have the right to marry after divorce. Understanding the Islamic perspective on marriage relations is crucial to comprehending the dynamics of marital relationships in the Pakistani context.

For the Christian community, the law only permits divorce in extreme cases, but in no case allows divorcees to remarry as long as their earlier spouse is alive.

¹¹⁴ Dawud, 2004, 2013

¹¹⁵ Sura 2:228

¹¹⁶ Yaqoob Khan Bangash, "Under PTI, a Better Law for Pakistan's Christians," DAWN.COM, September 12, 2019, www.dawn.com/news/1504807, accessed August 6, 2023.

3.3.4 Polygamy

According to the Qur'an, a Muslim man to take up to four wives if he can treat them equally: "If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or that which your right hands possess. That will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice."¹¹⁷

At the same time, the Qur'an is clear that men with more than one wife are never "able to be equitable between your wives, be you ever so eager"¹¹⁸ and "God has not made for any man two hearts"¹¹⁹

117 Sura 4:3

118 4:125

119 33:4

3.4 Challenges in Marital Relations

Here are some key challenges often encountered in marital relationships within the Pakistani context:

3.4.1 Arranged Marriages

As mentioned above, arranged marriages in Pakistan are often a blend of family, culture, and tradition. While they can foster strong family ties and ensure compatibility in certain cases, they can also pose challenges. One significant issue is that the couple may not have had the opportunity to know each other well before marriage. This lack of familiarity can lead to initial discomfort and difficulties in adjusting to life together.

3.4.2 Cultural Norms and Gender Roles

As mentioned above, Pakistani society is often governed by traditional gender roles, where men are expected to be the primary providers, and women are expected to manage the household and raise children.¹²⁰ However, modernization and urbanization have brought changes to these norms, leading to evolving expectations. The clash between traditional and more progressive views can create tension and conflicts between spouses. Women seeking greater independence or professional careers may face resistance from their partners or families, while men striving to be more involved in domestic responsibilities might encounter social disapproval.

¹²⁰ T. Capstick, "Literacy mediation in marriage migration from Pakistan to the United Kingdom: Appropriating bureaucratic discourses to get a visa." *Discourse & Society*, 2016 27(5), 482. doi:10.1177/0957926516651220

3.4.3 Domestic Violence

Tragically, domestic violence can occur in Pakistani marriages. This includes physical, emotional, and verbal abuse, and it is a grave challenge that affects the well-being of both partners and any children involved. Domestic violence can be exacerbated by cultural norms that perpetuate unequal power dynamics and a lack of legal and social support for victims. According to a survey, 70 to 90 percent of married women endure some kind of abuse.¹²¹

Although domestic violence can occur in any marriage, women were more likely to remain in abusive marriages due to societal expectations in Pakistan. "Some of the risk factors of IPV [intimate partner violence] among South Asian women include gender role expectations, the need to protect family honor, cultural normalization of abuse, the arranged marriage system, abusive partner characteristics, and women's fear of losing children and being on her own," according to one study.¹²²

3.5 Brief Comparison of Islamic and Christian Marriage Concepts

Culturally, Christians in Pakistan follow much of the same marriage practices and customs as the Muslim majority. Some distinctions can be noted. For example, while Muslim wedding ceremonies can be segregated, Christian weddings are always gender-inclusive.¹²³

¹²¹ Changezi Sandhu, "Criminal Justice System & Women Empowerment Laws," March 18, 2023, Pakistan Today <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/03/18/criminal-justice-system-women-empowerment-laws/> (accessed 17th May, 2023)

¹²² Meesha Iqbal and Zafar Fatmi, "Prevalence of Emotional and Physical Intimate Partner Violence among Married Women in Pakistan," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, August 2018, 088626051879652. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518796523> (accessed 21st July, 2023).

¹²³ Tasmaha Khan, "For Some Muslim Couples, Gender-Separate Weddings Are the Norm," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2020, sec. Fashion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/23/fashion/weddings/for-some-muslim-couples-gender-separate-weddings-are-the-norm.html>. (accessed 12th August, 2023).

Before concluding this chapter, however, it is helpful to compare Islamic and Christian concepts of marriage.

For instance, the authority of husbands in Muslim marriages bears similarity to the idea in Ephesians 5, “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord.” Moreover, Islam considers marriage to be a contract. Contracts, however, can expire, which is evident in the permissibility of divorce in Islam. It diminishes the concept of union where the two become one, as in Christian marriage.

We have also noted that while Islam allows divorce, remarriage, and polygamy, these practices are regulated in the light of Qur’anic principles of justice, and of husbands being merciful towards their wives. Christianity, however, discourages remarriage after divorce and polygamy.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we provided an overview of marital relations and marriage practices in the Muslim and Christian communities of Pakistan. It also included a brief analysis of what both religions teach about the relationship between husbands and wives. Overall, Pakistan is a traditional society, emphasizing the role of the husband as the head of the household and provider, whereas the wife is relegated to domestic roles. We also noted how this system can enforce patriarchal values and lead to violence against married women.

Some Muslim scholars who note this dilemma have been included in this study, who are trying to interpret the Qur’anic verses, even those that seem to diminish the rights of married women (e.g. Sura 4:34), to promote greater equality between husband and wife while emphasizing

their complementary roles in the household. This is not much different from how several Christian scholars approach Ephesians 5.

In this context, a traditional interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33 which favors male authority over women in Christian marriage does not seem out of place. As we saw, however, in the previous chapter, these interpretations have been influenced by Graeco-Roman and Jewish male-dominated ideas.¹²⁴ In the next chapter, we will explore whether Ephesians 5:21-33 challenges the Graeco-Roman and Jewish household norms by promoting mutual submission between husband and wife based on love and respect, or upholds these norms.

¹²⁴ See § 2.1.2

Chapter 4 - Intercultural Exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33

The passage from Ephesians 5:21-33 holds wisdom and guidance for Christian households, with a particular focus on the roles and interactions between husbands and wives. The exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 within this context seeks to bridge the gap between the ancient biblical world and the cultural setting of Pakistan.

4.1 Exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33

4.1.1 Introduction to Ephesians 5:21-31: Authorship and Date

The Ephesian audience, living in the first-century Greco-Roman world, had a cultural background that shaped their understanding of Paul's teachings.¹²⁵ The debate surrounding the authorship of the Epistle to the Ephesians has led scholars to form two opposing groups. One group believes that Apostle Paul is indeed the writer, while the other contends that the epistle is "pseudonymous," meaning it was written in Paul's name by one of his devoted followers.¹²⁶ This latter view is somewhat ironic because many scholars highly regard Ephesians as the pinnacle of Paul's thoughts and the most significant among the epistles.¹²⁷ Even those who consider Ephesians to be pseudonymous still admire its message.¹²⁸ In the past, during the seventeenth and early

¹²⁵ See § 2.1.2

¹²⁶ Sebastian Kizhakkeyil, *The Pauline Epistles an Exegetical Study* (Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2011), 220

¹²⁷ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The letter to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Scotland: Saint Andrew Press, 2006), 61

¹²⁸ Max Turner, "Ephesians," in *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, eds. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Daniel J. Treier, and N.T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 124-133.

nineteenth centuries, there was no dispute about Paul being the author of the letter to the Ephesians. However, some scholars now argue that the evidence within the letter contradicts the idea of Pauline authorship.¹²⁹

Ephesians was likely written between 60-90 AD, possibly even earlier or later, after the fall of the Jerusalem temple. The exact time and place of its composition have been a subject of debate among biblical writers due to conflicting opinions. Some biblical writers argue that Apostle Paul was the author of the epistle, while others believe it was written by a follower of Paul. If Paul indeed penned the letter, it would have been written during his time in Roman prison.¹³⁰ On the other hand, Carson and Moo point out that if Paul didn't write it, then it likely belongs to the period immediately following the apostolic era. However, there are no clear criteria available to precisely determine its origin.

The recipients of the letter to the Ephesians are not definitively identified. Different scholars have proposed various possibilities. According to Barclay, it may have been written to believers who were not necessarily residing in Ephesus but could be part of a Christian community in Asia Minor.¹³¹ Another view suggests that it might have been intended for Christians in general. Kizhakkeyil believes the recipients were the Christian community in Ephesus. On the other hand, Belz argues that the letter specifically addresses Gentile proselytes, not a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians. These Gentile proselytes are described as having already heard the Gospel of salvation, being united with Christ, and now receiving further instruction on how to live out their new life in Christ positively.

¹²⁹ C.E. Arnold, *Letter to the Ephesians, Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 240

¹³⁰ Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 20

¹³¹ Barclay, 61

Here we will also explore the nuances of the text, trying to understand the meaning behind key terms and concepts such as “headship.” This discussion will draw upon §2.3.

Furthermore, by focusing on the structure and order of the passage, we can discern the logical progression of Paul's argument, highlighting the interconnectedness of each section. Understanding this structure will illuminate the significance of concepts like submission and subordination.

4.1.2 Orientation and Meditation of the Text

The opening verse, Ephesians 5:21 seems to set the tone for the entire passage, urging believers to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."¹³² In verses 22-24, Paul addresses the role of wives within the household. He instructs them to "submit to their husbands as to the Lord,"¹³³ drawing a parallel between the marital relationship and the relationship of Christ with the Church. This analogy elevates the sanctity of marriage, aligning it with the divine purpose of reflecting Christ's love and sacrifice.

The focus shifts to husbands in verses 25-31, highlighting their role as the head of the household and calling them to love their wives sacrificially, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her.¹³⁴

Finally, verses 32-33 bring the passage to a climactic conclusion, summarizing the essence of marital relationships. Paul affirms that marriage is a profound mystery, representing the union

¹³² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament) (Eerdmans, 1984), 380.

¹³³ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans: 1999), 417.

¹³⁴ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, (Baker Academic: 200), 803.

between Christ and His Church.¹³⁵ In doing so, he elevates the sanctity of marriage beyond mere human institutions and societal norms. We noted in the comparison between Islamic and Christian concepts of marriage how the former considers marriage a contract.¹³⁶ We can now include the reference to the love of Christ as an analogy of marriage, something missing in Islam.

4.1.3 Mutual Submission (v. 21)

In some Bible translations, verse 21 is not the start of a new section. Instead, it serves as a conclusion to the discussion about wisdom that began in Ephesians 5:15. Specifically, the section that talks about being filled by the Holy Spirit (5:18) concludes it. Christians are told in verse 18 to find spiritual fulfillment with the Holy Spirit, not by getting drunk on wine.

The spirit-filled life is marked by five key aspects, which are mentioned in Ephesians. These include:

- Being filled by the spirit (v.18)
- Communicating with each another (v.19)
- Praise and Worship (v.19)
- Thanksgiving (v.20)
- Mutual submission (in submission to Christ) (v.21)

In Ephesians 5:21, a new topic of submission is introduced, and this theme is further developed in the household code found in verses 5:22-6:9, with a particular focus on verses 5:22-33.

The word submission (*hupotasso*) means to “subordinate,” “be subordinated,” “subject oneself,” or “render obedience.” According to Hoehner, the term "*hupotasso*" has two possible

¹³⁵ John R. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God's New Society* (UK: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 178.

¹³⁶ See § 3.5

meanings: "submit" or "subordinate."¹³⁷ It can be used in either the middle or passive voice. When used in the latter, it suggests that the person has no control over their actions. On the other hand, in the middle voice, it implies a sense of cooperation, where the subject acts as a free agent.

In this context, the verb should be understood in the middle voice. This is because the person is believed to be willingly acting under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Paul's admonition to wives is an appeal that can only be followed voluntarily.¹³⁸ It should never involve eliminating or distorting the human will, nor should it lead to servile submissiveness.¹³⁹

When believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, the verb "submit" is used along with the reciprocal dative pronoun "one another." This means that the outcome of being filled by the Holy Spirit is mutual submission among the members of the faith community. They willingly submit to each other with humility, showing reverence for the Holy Spirit. In contrast, nonbelievers often exhibit a strong inclination towards individualism, independence, and self-centeredness, and do not demonstrate the same spirit of submission to others.¹⁴⁰

According to one scholar, Paul uses the middle voice to express a willing and voluntary submission or subordination. This means acting in a loving, considerate, and selfless manner towards each other. It's an example of the self-sacrificing love that defines the Christian community. Paul's intention is for everyone to be obedient and avoid despising or thinking of others as inferior. Instead, "one another" implies unity. This means that all believers, no matter their status, function, gender, or rank, should interact as fellow believers. They should focus on serving each other with love.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Hoehner 716-717

¹³⁸ See § 2.4.5

¹³⁹ Ibid

¹⁴⁰ O'Brien 412

¹⁴¹ Mary Achiro, "Submission: An Engendered Reading of Ephesians 5:21-33," pg 27
<http://www.vid.brage.unit.no> (Accessed July 8, 2023)

In the Pakistan Bible Society Urdu Translation, the word is “تابع” which also gives the meaning of submission or subordination.

4.1.4 The Headship of Christ (v. 22-23)

After talking about mutual submission, the headship of Christ over His church is the first characteristic mentioned by Paul in this text, which is to be symbolized in a Christian marriage. “Head” or “headship” (*kephalē*) gives the meaning of “origin” or “source.” One expression is employed by Paul here to explain how our Lord is the Head (Urdu سر) of His church—He is the “Savior of the body” (verse 23). In other words, the headship of Christ is linked to his salvific verse on the cross.

In the preceding chapters of Ephesians, Paul speaks both of Christ as head¹⁴² and our salvation in Christ. These texts provide the context for what Paul now says concerning the headship of Christ.

In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth (Ephesians 1:8-10).¹⁴³

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.¹⁴⁴

The concept of headship also extends to subsequent chapters as well:

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in

¹⁴² Ephesians 1:10, 22

¹⁴³ The expression, “summing up” is a verb form of the same term which in the noun form of “head.”

¹⁴⁴ Ephesians 1:22-23

deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.¹⁴⁵

The concept of Christ's headship is a Pauline theme, also mentioned in other epistles.¹⁴⁶ From these texts, we can also try to understand the headship of a man in relation to his wife.

4.1.5 Responsibility of Wives in Marriage vv. 22-24

In verses 22-24, Paul addresses Christian wives, urging them to respect the leadership of their husbands within their marriage. It's important to note that he does not advocate for unquestioning servitude; instead, he asks them to willingly support their husbands' leadership. The idea of submission is derived from the preceding participle in the earlier verse.¹⁴⁷

Verse 22, however, teaches that women should avoid trying to take control or dominate their households. Instead, they should acknowledge and respect the God-given role assigned to their husbands as the leaders of the family.¹⁴⁸

During the first century, no man exemplified the tender shepherding love and care that Christ bestows upon the church. Thus, it is crucial to understand that Paul does not make the woman's response dependent on her husband's flawless obedience to Christ. But it's important to know that Paul didn't expect Christian wives to blindly follow their husbands into sin or endure abuse.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Ephesians 4:14-16

¹⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:13-16, Colossians 1:16-18, Colossians 2:8-10, 18-19

¹⁴⁷ Achiro, 27

¹⁴⁸ Arnold 379

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 380

Paul tells wives to obey their husbands because it reflects Christ's relationship with the church. These roles do not come from the Old Testament, which doesn't apply to Christ. They also aren't influenced by Greco-Roman or Jewish customs. Instead, the foundation for these roles in marriage is firmly rooted in the principles of the New Testament.¹⁵⁰

The metaphor "head" in verse 23 has been debated vigorously by scholars in the past couple of decades. It has been discussed in § 2.4.1 but further comments will elaborate on the meaning.

Fifty years ago, the majority of scholars discussing Ephesians 5:23 interpreted the word "head" to imply a form of leadership and authority. But some interpreters started questioning this belief by examining these writings more closely. They proposed a different perspective, suggesting that "head" should be seen as a metaphor for "source." To clarify, just as a spring is the source of a stream, they believed the husband to be the source of his wife. This interpretation was based on the historical belief that God created Eve from the side of Adam, making Adam the source of Eve.¹⁵¹

It also means that the husband's role as a leader is similar to Christ's leadership, which is characterized by care, nourishment, and fulfilling divine purposes. In this context, husbands are encouraged to emulate Christ's example as a loving and caring head, rather than being autocratic. Their position as a head should be used for the benefit of their wives and children.¹⁵²

4.1.6 Responsibility of Husbands in Marriage vv. 25-30

In this text, husbands are called upon to love their wives unconditionally, with a love that seeks the best for their spouse. This love should be absolute, regardless of whether the wife seems deserving or reciprocates it. It's important to note that the wife's submission is not contingent on

¹⁵⁰ Achiro 29

¹⁵¹ Arnold 381

¹⁵² O'Brien 413

the husband's love, and vice versa. The love expected from husbands is pure and selfless, characterized by loving without expecting anything in return and not seeking what is best for oneself but for the other.¹⁵³

The love expected from the husband, as clearly defined in verse 25, mirrors the kind of love that Christ demonstrated for the church. Christ selflessly gave himself up for the church without expecting anything in return. Therefore, the husband's love for his wife should be defined by the example of Christ, characterized by self-sacrifice for the other person. Christ serves as the perfect illustration of love, and as Christians, we are called to imitate God's love and walk in love, just as Christ did.

The comparison between the husband and Christ pertains to love, not headship. This means that the husband's primary focus should be on loving his wife rather than enforcing dominance or headship over her.¹⁵⁴ In 1 Corinthians 13:1, love is described as encompassing all things and being the greatest virtue of all. Christ's love for the church was not based on its perfection or lovability but on His desire to transform it into something lovable and beautiful.

In verse 23, Paul uses an analogy between Christ and the husband to emphasize headship as well.¹⁵⁵ According to Paul, both headship and love play crucial roles in this analogy, and they work together, i.e., husbands should equally prioritize both their role as a leader and their expression of love.

Instead, it means that both spouses will shift their primary loyalty from their respective parents to each other. While they are still responsible for honoring their parents,¹⁵⁶ taking care of

¹⁵³ Achiro, 34

¹⁵⁴ Brooke Foss Westcott, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: The Greek Text with Notes and Addenda* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1906), 84

¹⁵⁵ Westcott, 84-85

¹⁵⁶ Ephesians 6:2; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16

them in old age, and listening to their advice,¹⁵⁷ their main focus should be on their spouses.¹⁵⁸ The term "to cleave" can be understood as bonding, similar to how two metals are welded or glued together. This illustrates that husbands and wives are meant to be united in every aspect of life, including thoughts, interests, and physical intimacy. Furthermore, this verb represents the idea of a deep and intimate relationship between a man and a woman that encompasses their entire beings—emotionally, physically, and spiritually.¹⁵⁹

4.1.7 Marriage as Mystery

There are three possible interpretations of the "mystery" in verse 32. The first interpretation links it to the human marriage mentioned in Genesis 2:24. In Vulgate, the word "mystery" is translated as "Sacramentum." Marriage is seen as a special blessing, showing that when Christian men and women marry, it represents Jesus and the church coming together. But this interpretation is not acceptable because Genesis does not specifically mention Christian marriage. It applies to all marriages, including secular ones. Both secular and religious marriages involve the joining of two individuals into one flesh.¹⁶⁰

Moreover, the concept being discussed here is rooted in third-century Gnostic sources, but there is no concrete evidence to suggest that this understanding was present in the early Christian community.¹⁶¹ Another viewpoint proposed by some scholars is that the mystery reflects a deeper meaning of human marriage as described in Genesis 2:24. However, this cannot be the case because the text already establishes Christians as the body of Christ, and Genesis 2:24 simply serves as an illustration of that spiritual union. Furthermore, Paul sheds light on this mystery, but

¹⁵⁷ 1 Timothy 5:3-4, Proverbs 23:22; 6:20

¹⁵⁸ Arnold 393

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Achiro 39

¹⁶¹ Achiro 40

it centers on Christ and the Church, introducing a new line of thought. By making this clarification, Paul concludes the previous discussion on the union between husband and wife.¹⁶² In no uncertain terms, Paul states that the mystery under consideration pertains to the union between Christ and the Church, not the physical union of husband and wife. He uses a quote from Genesis 2:24 to support the idea of this union and to illustrate its nature within the context of the relationship between husband and wife.

Paul employs singular verbs to indicate individual responsibility between the persons involved. In verse 25, he instructs husbands to love their own wives just as Christ loved the church, and wives are to show reverence for their husbands. When we talk about 'fear' in this context, it should be understood as reverence for the husband (Eph. 5:25-29). Moreover, Christians are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, and this principle applies to marriage as well. However, Paul also outlines specific obligations for individuals within a marriage.

4.2. Theological Views on Ephesians 5:21-33 (Complementarianism vs Egalitarianism)

Complementarians believe that God created both men and women with distinct gender-defined roles.¹⁶³ According to their views, God intended men to fulfill the roles of husbands, fathers, providers, protectors, and leaders. Additionally, they assert that men, by virtue of their creation, are meant to be the head of the household and equally responsible for providing godly leadership within the family.

¹⁶² Thorsten Moritz, "The Use Of Israel's Scriptures In Ephesians," Tyndale Bulletin TYNBUL 46:2, page 125, <https://www.galaxie.com/article/tynbul46-2-12> (Accessed 5th August, 2023)

¹⁶³ "Complementarianism vs. Egalitarianism," GotQuestions.org, accessed May 15, 2023, <https://www.gotquestions.org/complementarianism-vs-egalitarianism.html>.

The group's viewpoint is that God designed women to fulfill specific roles as wives, mothers, nurturers, and assistants. According to them, women should submit to male leadership in the family, church, and society.

The term "egalitarian" originates from the French word "egale," which means "equal." Therefore, it refers to the belief in affirming and promoting equal rights for all individuals. Egalitarianism is a hermeneutical viewpoint that asserts both men and women are created without gender-based limitations, allowing them to fulfill any function or role in the home, church, and society.¹⁶⁴ They advocate for equal opportunities in both the church and society, as well as equal marital roles within families.¹⁶⁵ According to their viewpoint, both men and women should mutually submit to one another and share responsibility in both family and church settings. This perspective rejects any form of subjugation or hierarchy based on gender, promoting equality for all individuals.

The egalitarians support their views with scriptures like Galatians 3:28 "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." It is the pinnacle of the egalitarian view.

Does Ephesians 5 promote complementarianism or egalitarianism? In one sense, neither, because these are modern terms, foreign to the worldview of the Biblical writers. Moreover, the debate has its origins in modern feminist moments. For one thing, the concept of submission or subordination of women applies within marriage, which is mutual and based on the example of Christ and the church, and not in the social sphere. All the relevant texts in this regard are

¹⁶⁴ Alyssa Roat, "What Are Complementarianism and Egalitarianism? What's the Difference?". Christianity.com (accessed 6th August, 2023).

¹⁶⁵ Alan G.Padgett, "What Is Biblical Equality?," Priscilla Papers, Summer 2002 (accessed 6th August)

specifically about marriage (Colossians 3:18, Ephesians 5:22-24). This is even true of the Petrine Epistles.¹⁶⁶

Secondly, I understand ‘headship’ of a husband means ‘source’ or ‘origin’, just as Christ is the head of the Church.¹⁶⁷ Traditionally, men are breadwinners of the family, and it seems appropriate that they should be considered heads of families as they are providers. In the modern world, however, traditional gender roles are being reversed. Women increasingly are pursuing economic opportunities, even in developing nations like Pakistan. The condition now, as can be observed in many local Christian families as well, is that women have become the primary or at least a significant breadwinner in the family.

In this scenario, the roles of the provider change. If a man is financially dependent on a woman, and we have many such examples in our own Christian community, what remains of the concept of ‘headship’ then?¹⁶⁸ Scholars who promote egalitarianism, like Dr Inderyas, suggest that Biblical interpretation should be done based on ground realities of abused and victimized Christian women of Pakistan.¹⁶⁹ They also warn against literalistic interpretations, where words like “submission” and “headship” can be taken to mean male superiority.

Complementarians will point back to the creation order of man before woman, which Paul uses as an analogy for marriage relations in his epistles. That, however, opens another debate about how New Testament writers used the Old Testament to support their theological positions, and how accurately they do so. In any case, we have seen that exegesis of the text leads to an understanding of mutual submission between the husband and the wife. When the woman is asked to submit to the headship of her husband, he has to demonstrate Christ-like love to her.

¹⁶⁶ 1 Peter 3:1-2

¹⁶⁷ See § 2.4.1

¹⁶⁸ Personal interview with Ayra Inderyas, Appendix 2

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

Moreover, there is no dichotomy between upholding the Biblical concepts of submission and speaking against abuse in the household. Rt. Rev. Nadeem Kamran says “To uphold marriage and denounce abuse, we need to come back to the text, rather than depart from it to conform to modern ideas of equality which may or may not be Biblical.”¹⁷⁰

4.3 Conclusion

Husbands have a responsibility to love their wives with vigilance and care, just as Christ loves the church. On the other hand, wives are encouraged to submit to their husband's leadership and be responsive to them, similar to how the church follows Christ's guidance. Both partners should prioritize each other's interests and be guided by the Holy Spirit to achieve a successful, stable, and harmonious marriage.¹⁷¹ What makes this verse remarkable is Paul's emphasis on individual responsibility. He uses the phrase "each one of you" to stress that he expects every married couple within the Christian community to uphold these standards in their marital relationships.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Zoom interview with Rt. Rev. Nadeem Kamran, the 10th Bishop of Lahore, on 25th June, 2023

¹⁷¹ Achiro 40

¹⁷² Arnold 397

Chapter 5 - Findings and Analysis

This research has focused on a study of religious texts (Qur'an and the Epistle to the Ephesians) with regard to what they teach about the role of husband and wives in marriage in Muslim and Christian communities. We focused our study on the Pakistani context, understanding how marriage works in both these religious groups. The chapter will summarize the findings and provide analysis and recommendations.

5.1 Headship and Subordination - Exegetical Findings

In ancient Greece and Rome, women were often treated as property, viewed primarily as tools for producing citizens, and considered inferior to men. However, as the New Testament period approached, Roman culture was more progressive toward women. Women of status gained opportunities for education, participation in religious ceremonies, and holding political and religious offices.¹⁷³

In this broader context, Paul sought to establish the church and guide the Gentile churches he founded. His letters addressed cultural norms that clashed with Christian morals and treated women as complete individuals.¹⁷⁴

In Ephesians 5, Paul also demonstrates the man's affection by referencing the Old Testament, where a husband and wife become one flesh.¹⁷⁵ The husband's love for his wife is rooted in the understanding that she has become integral to him, symbolizing the intimate unity between Christ and the ecclesia (the church). There is encouragement for husbands in marriage to view and treat their wives with the same care and respect they have for themselves. The text

¹⁷³ See § 2.1

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁷⁵ See § 4.1.7

underscores the importance of recognizing women as equals, not inferior beings, even when they subordinate themselves.

Overall, considering his historical context, Paul's teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5:21-33 is progressive, if not egalitarian.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, I have tried to demonstrate via exegesis that a husband's headship (*kephale*) and a wife's subordination (*hupotasso*) do not entail the former's domination over the latter. Rather, following Christ's headship of the Church, the husband has to care for his wife to the point of death (Ephesians 5:25). Christian marriage laws in Pakistan are undergoing development in light of social realities.¹⁷⁷ The principles outlined in Ephesians 5 should be underscored in these developments.

Understanding the cultural nuances and historical backdrop of the Biblical text not only empowers us to grasp the essence of Christian marriage better but also enables us to recognize its universal relevance and enduring wisdom across different societies. The Bible teaches that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8). Since Paul gives the example of Jesus in Ephesians in the context of husband-wife relationships, making his teaching on marriage universal. This Christo-centric approach frees us to approach the text in our context. For example, if the husband is a stay-at-home parent and the wife is the breadwinner, the Biblical model of headship *is not reversed*. Rather, husbands and wives have to work out the concepts of headship (which entails love and care) and subordination in light of these changing circumstances.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ See § 2.2

¹⁷⁷ Bangash, "Under PTI, a Better Law for Pakistan's Christians." Also see Chapter 3.1.

¹⁷⁸ Shah, Rahat. 2023. "The Social Stigmatization of Stay-At-Home Fathers in Pakistan." *Men and Masculinities*, April (April), 1097184X2311701. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x231170143> (accessed 9th July, 2023).

5.2 Marital Relationships in Pakistan - Contextual Findings

Concerning the Pakistani society, both religious and cultural norms were explored. It was demonstrated that marriage in Pakistan is deeply rooted in both religious and cultural traditions. Religiously, it is an essential institution in Islam, where it is considered a sacred contract between a man and a woman. Culturally, marriage is viewed as a joining of two families and plays a significant role in maintaining societal cohesion.¹⁷⁹

Arranged marriages are common, with families playing a pivotal role in the matchmaking process. Marital ceremonies are elaborate events, often involving multiple days of festivities. The husband is traditionally considered the head of the household, and the wife is expected to fulfill domestic duties.

It was also noted that while Islamic teachings and the law of the land grant rights to Muslim women, abuse still exists on a large scale.¹⁸⁰ We have noted the prevalence of domestic abuse. Another survey reports that “97 percent of Pakistani women do not inherit land or a house.”¹⁸¹ Hence, it can be said that patriarchal norms are deeply enshrined in the culture and influence how laws are enforced, but also how Islamic texts (Qur’an and Hadith) are interpreted.

The denial of rights to women also extends to the Pakistani Christian community.¹⁸² In this context, religious texts that talk about a husband’s headship over his wife can be misused to reinforce patriarchal norms.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ See § 3.1.1

¹⁸⁰ See § 3.4.3

¹⁸¹ Umar Bacha, "Women’s Right to Inheritance Is Enshrined in Islam and the Law — Why Do They Still Have to Fight for It?" DAWN.COM. March 5, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1678231> (accessed 9th August, 2023).

¹⁸² Asif Aqeel, “Why Divorce Is close to Impossible for Christians in Pakistan.,” Herald Magazine. July 25, 2016. <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153471>. (accessed 9th August, 2023).

¹⁸³ See § 4.2

Gender Studies scholar Aqleem Fatimah was approached to shed light on the Islamic view of marriage in light of these contemporary realities.¹⁸⁴ She emphasized belief in the concept of the analogy of *qiwamah*, and balance, cooperation, and equity to promote a strong foundation for a harmonious and fulfilling marriage, guided by Quranic principles and Islamic values.

She is convinced that Islam in essence promotes equality within marriage. It is not something that has to be reinterpreted from the texts. Even in the verse that talks about wives as “tilth”, Aqleem Fatima, like many modernist Muslim scholars, does not consider this a reference to women as property like land, but rather they understand it as an analogy of care. Like a farmer cares for his land and nourishes it, so does a husband take care of his wife.¹⁸⁵

A Pakistani Christian feminist scholar, Dr. Ayra Inderyas, was also interviewed.¹⁸⁶ She talked about how interpretations of Ephesians 5:21-33 may diverge significantly, ranging from those who adhere to traditional gender roles and uphold patriarchal views of the passage to others who reinterpret it to foster equality and mutual respect within their marriages. However, while scholarly and exegetical accuracy is crucial in understanding the biblical text, it is essential not to overlook the ground realities and lived experiences of Christian women who may suffer abuse and victimization within the patriarchal system. As discussions arise around Ephesians 5:21-33, it becomes imperative to address the harmful consequences of a literalistic and oppressive interpretation that perpetuates abusive relationships.

184 See § 3.2

185 Appendix 1

186 Appendix 2

It seems that religious scholars and social activists in both communities are united in their opposition to abusive tendencies within the household structure of Pakistan between husbands and wives.

Religious scholars have an exegetical approach, showing how phrases and verses that may seem misogynistic (e.g. Sura 4:34 and Ephesians 5:22) actually demonstrate a husband's care for his wife. Activists and feminist scholars, on the other hand, would like to emphasize the historical background in which these verses originated. And if the background is patriarchal, should these verses be applied literally today?

The question may be valid, but extreme feminist and egalitarian views seem to make it a social issue, rather than an exegetical one. On the other hand, conservative religious groups may also downplay the social reality of the suffering of women in domestic relationships to uphold the authority of the text. This paper has sought to present both views so that a better understanding can be fostered.

5.3 Comparative Analysis of Islamic and Christian Perspectives on Marital Relations

In comparing the Islamic and Christian perspectives on marital relationships, it becomes evident that both religious traditions grapple with the interpretation of scriptural passages concerning the roles and relationships between husbands and wives. The analogy of Christ and the church in Ephesians serves as a decisive clue supporting a more liberating message.¹⁸⁷ This analogy emphasizes that Christ's relationship with the church is rooted in love and service rather than in authority. Accordingly, the passage suggests that husbands' relationships with their wives should be built upon love and mercy rather than dominating authority.

¹⁸⁷ See § 4.1.7

On the other hand, in the Qur'an, there is no direct parallel analogy akin to the one found in Ephesians. However, scholars argue that by reinterpreting this verse through the lens of the Qur'an's broader universal message of humanity, justice, and equality, a more egalitarian understanding can emerge. This approach does not entail abandoning the text but rather seeks to transform the way it is interpreted, moving away from literal readings that have been used to subjugate women, like Sura 4:34.

The shared struggle for upholding the sanctity of marriage in both Islam and Christianity highlights the common challenges faced by adherents in reconciling ancient religious texts with contemporary values of equality and human rights. The need for alternative interpretations arises when certain scriptural passages are repeatedly exploited to justify injustices, reinforcing the necessity for reexamining religious traditions as powerful tools for social transformation.

We have noted how seemingly misogynistic verses like Sura 2:223 and 4:34 can be reinterpreted by Muslim scholars to demonstrate a husband's care for his wife. Likewise, there are verses in the Qur'an that talk about mutual responsibilities, though they may not be as explicit as Ephesians 5:21.¹⁸⁸ This shared exegetical struggle can open pathways for understanding and engagement between Muslims and Christians on topics like marriage, gender roles, and women's rights.

Perhaps the greatest difference between Christian and Islamic concepts of marriage, in the light of Ephesians 5, is that the former is rooted in Christ's own example of love and intimacy with his people. In Islam, however, marriage is something that God commands, not exemplifies (Sura 4:24).

¹⁸⁸ Sura 2:187

5.4 Practical Recommendations

Based on these findings, some recommendations can be made for Christians in Pakistan.

5.4.1 Mutual Submission for Stable Christian Marriages

For the purpose of stability and strength in the Christian marital institution, it is essential that both husbands and wives practice mutual submission in their marriage. This mutual submission reflects the biblical principle of love and mercy within Christian marriage.

5.4.2 Emphasizing Contextual Understanding of Scripture

Religious instructors play a crucial role in shaping the understanding of Scripture among their adherents. It is important for them to consistently emphasize that while all Scriptures are historically authoritative, they must be interpreted in their proper context. Contextual interpretation helps to avoid misinterpretation or misuse of religious texts and ensures that the teachings are applied appropriately to modern circumstances. By promoting a balanced understanding of Scripture, religious instructors can foster a more enlightened and tolerant religious community.

5.4.3 Sound Exegesis, Marriage Counseling, and Engaging with Culture

In order to promote healthy relationships, sound exegesis of religious texts is crucial in the church and during marriage counseling. This involves a careful and thoughtful interpretation of the Scriptures to provide guidance that is relevant to contemporary challenges faced by couples and families. Additionally, engaging with the wider culture is essential to understanding and addressing the complexities and influences that impact modern relationships. By combining scriptural wisdom with a deep understanding of societal dynamics, religious leaders and counselors can offer meaningful guidance and support to individuals and families navigating the complexities of contemporary life.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, delving into a contextual understanding of Ephesians 5:21-33, offers profound insights that contribute to a richer appreciation of the concept of Christian marriage. By examining this passage in light of its historical Greco-Roman context, we gain valuable perspective on the radical nature of its teachings, which challenged prevailing societal norms and highlighted the significance of love, respect, and partnership between spouses. Moreover, when applying these principles to the context of Pakistani culture, we discover the potential for overcoming cultural norms that often go against women in the household.

Paul never endorses submission or oppression. Instead, the scripture provides us with the most progressive (for its time) models for changing the norms of culture. The crucial indication supporting a more liberating message in Ephesians revolves around the definitive analogy of Christ and the church. This analogy emphasizes that Christ's relationship with the church is rooted in love and service rather than mere authority. Consequently, husbands' relationships with their wives should be based on love and compassion, not dominion and control.

Though the Qur'an lacks a parallel analogy, many Muslim scholars strive to imbue it with new meaning by analyzing the text in the context of its overall message, which they believe promotes justice and equality. In both instances, rather than abandoning the texts, it might be more pertinent to reconsider how we interpret them as scriptures. The pursuit of wholesome marital relations free from abuse and violence is (or should be) a shared struggle within both Islam and Christianity in Pakistan. Both Christians and Muslims in Pakistan share the responsibility of reexamining their religious traditions to facilitate transformation.

Appendix 1

Sunni Perspective on Marriage (Interview with Aqleem Fatima
(Gender Studies Department, Allama Iqbal Open University,
Islamabad)

Questions

- 1. How do you understand the roles of husbands and wives within a Muslim marriage, and how do these roles influence marital relationships?**
- 2. How do you think the context shape expectations and practices in marriage?**
- 3. Are there any intercultural challenges within marital relations?**
- 4. How do Muslim teachings and values impact beliefs and practices in marital relations?**
- 5. How do Quranic teachings resonate with your understanding of marital relations, and how does it influence your beliefs and practices?**

Answers

- In a Muslim marriage, the roles of husbands and wives are complementary, with wives being encouraged to care for their husbands as a farmer takes care of his field and crop. The verse I am referring to here is from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:223), which has been translated in various ways, but one of the translations is "Your husbands are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come

to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear Allah and know that you will meet Him. And give good tidings to the believers."

This verse uses the analogy of a field to convey the idea that spouses are like a source of nourishment and growth for each other. However, it is essential to understand this analogy in its context and not take it in a way that devalues or objectifies men. In Islam, wives are encouraged to treat their husbands with kindness, respect, and compassion, as emphasized by the various Quranic verses and Hadiths that promote love and care within marital relationships. This analogy emphasizes the responsibility and dedication wives should have towards their husbands, nurturing and supporting them in all possible ways.

Then the concept of *qiwamah* in my belief system further reinforces the idea of partnership and cooperation within the marital relationship. In a Muslim marriage, husbands and wives have distinct but complementary roles. Wives are seen as the leaders and providers, while husbands are regarded as nurturers and caregivers. These roles are influenced by Islamic teachings, including the concept of *qiwamah*, which emphasizes the balance and cooperation between spouses in fulfilling their respective responsibilities.

This understanding fosters harmony and mutual support within the marriage. I also here would like to refer to some Quranic verses that highlight the significance of marital relationships for sustaining the community. One of the primary purposes of marriage in Islam is to establish a

stable and harmonious family unit, which in turn contributes to the overall well-being and strength of the community. Here are some relevant Quranic verses:

Surah Ar-Rum (30:21): "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought." This verse emphasizes the concept of finding tranquility and mutual love between spouses as a sign of God's wisdom and mercy. This harmonious relationship contributes to the well-being of the individuals involved and positively impacts the community.

Surah An-Nur (24:32): "And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves. If they should be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty, and Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing." This verse encourages marriage, especially for those who are unmarried or in need, as it helps create stable family units that strengthen the community. Regarding the Quranic principles of equality within marriage, Islam advocates for equity and mutual respect between spouses. Both husband and wife are considered equal partners in the marriage, each with their rights and responsibilities.

Here are some general Quranic principles of equality within marriage: Surah An-Nisa (4:1): "O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer." This verse highlights the common origin of men and women from one soul and emphasizes that both genders are equal in

the sight of Allah. Surah An-Nisa (4:32): "And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For women is a share of what they have earned, and for men is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of his bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing." This verse reinforces the principle of equality by discouraging any wish for superiority of one gender over the other. It acknowledges that both women and men have their share of rights and responsibilities.

2. The context in which a Muslim marriage takes place can significantly shape expectations and practices. Cultural norms, traditions, and societal pressures may influence how roles are perceived and enacted within the marriage. However, the concept I mentioned in my first response reminds believers of the importance of adhering to Islamic principles in marital relationships, which can help navigate cultural influences and ensure that the partnership remains grounded in religious values.

One more thing that I would like to refer to here is that for instance, a person is living abroad and has a different culture where the context does not support the division of labor, Sunni Fuqha (scholars of jurisprudence) says that here men can share women's role, and women vice versa, because the core is to maintain a healthy family life that wouldn't violate the general principles of trust, piety, and purity.

3. Intercultural challenges can indeed arise in marital relations, particularly when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together. The concept outlined earlier encourages understanding, respect, and compromise, fostering an environment where both spouses can learn

from each other's cultures and traditions while staying true to their shared Islamic values. Resolving intercultural issues within Sunni Muslim marriages can be guided by Quranic principles and Hadiths that emphasize understanding, compassion, and cooperation.

Here are some Sunni sources and teachings that can help address intercultural challenges: First Sunni Muslims should seek Quranic Guidance on Diversity as it states in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you." This verse encourages Muslims to appreciate diversity and seek knowledge and understanding of other cultures to build stronger relationships. Then Sunni Muslims can follow the Prophet Muhammad's Example and of his Ahlybait (Household).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) demonstrated acceptance and understanding of different cultures. His interactions with various tribes and individuals set an example of tolerance and respect for diversity. In addition, among 11 imams, many have had married women from different cultures and ethnicities (read Choda Sitaray by Biharul Anwar of Allama Majlisi)

Then there is a need to emphasizing communication with Moiza bil Hasanah as Quran asks Prophet to communicate with people with a sweet tone. Encourage open and honest communication between spouses about their cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and practices. Understanding each other's cultural values and traditions can help foster acceptance and bridge potential gaps.

Another way to do so is by adopting Flexibility and Compromise within relationships. Emphasizing the importance of flexibility and compromise within the marriage is essential. It is also needed to realize and recognize that some cultural practices may differ, and it's essential to find common ground that respects both spouses' backgrounds. One must be aware that Quran sees this diversity as follows: Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13): "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." This verse emphasizes that human diversity is intentional, as God created people from different backgrounds, tribes, and races. The purpose of this diversity is to encourage mutual understanding, cooperation, and appreciation among people.

In addition, the Quran encourages spouses to treat each other with kindness, politeness, and not to be harsh towards one another. Here's the relevant verse: Surah An-Nisa (4:19): "O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them unless they commit a clear immorality. And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good." This verse advises believers to live with their wives in kindness, treating them with respect, and not being harsh or making difficulties for them. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining a harmonious and loving relationship within marriage, even in cases of personal dislike.

So, this general rule helps intercultural marriage to sustain in a nice fashion because this Quranic verse mainly reflects the Islamic teachings of treating spouses with empathy, compassion,

and understanding, promoting a positive and supportive marital relationship. Similarly, another way to dealing with such marital challenges one is encouraged to seek Sunni Islamic Scholars' Guidance. Couples must consult with reputable Sunni scholars who can provide specific guidance on intercultural challenges within marriage. They can offer insights from Islamic teachings and jurisprudence to address individual circumstances.

4. Muslim teachings and values play a central role in shaping beliefs and practices in marital relations. Concepts such as love, compassion, respect, and communication, as emphasized in the Quran and Hadiths, serve as guiding principles for Muslim couples. The concept of qiwamah reinforces the importance of equity and partnership, fostering a deep sense of responsibility and devotion within the marriage. However, the problem and issues that are prevalent within Muslim cultures especially in Pakistani society is the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the concept of qiwamah.

Here generally people consider that Islam allows wife beating and domestic violence and men can behave like a dictator. They forget that even if they would translate qiwam as ruler, even then the Quranic concepts and code of ethics of a ruler is so important and valuable. It requires a ruler to be loving and compassionate for all. There is a hadith that if a dog dies out of hunger near a riverside the ruler would be answerable.

So, it means men need to take care of everyone in their families. There is a book by renowned Sunni scholar entitled “Domestic Violence and Islam: An Islamic Perspective on Understanding” and “Eliminating Domestic Violence” by prominent Sunni scholar. This book

addresses the topic of domestic violence and clarifies the Islamic perspective on this matter. The Sunni scholar emphasizes the importance of treating wives with kindness and provides guidance on maintaining a harmonious and loving marital relationship.

5. Quranic teachings on marital relations resonate with the understanding of *qiwanmah*, which emphasizes mutual support, cooperation, and kindness between spouses. The Quran encourages husbands and wives to be each other's garments, symbolizing close and intimate bond. This spiritual connection nurtured by Quranic teachings strengthens the marital relationship, and the principles of *qiwanah* further reinforce this spiritual bond by promoting equality and understanding.

In conclusion, as a Sunni Muslim, my belief in the concept of the analogy of *qiwanah*, the analogy of tith, the analogy of garment, the concepts of the purpose of the creation, the reason for pairing, etc. facilitates familial relationships, and it aligns with Islamic teachings on marital relations. The balance, cooperation, and equity emphasized in all these concepts promote a strong foundation for a harmonious and fulfilling marriage, guided by Quranic principles and Islamic values.

Appendix 2

A Christian Feminist Perspective (Interview with Dr. Ayra Inderyas, Assistant Professor Foreman Christian College Lahore, Pakistan)

Questions:

- How do you understand the roles of husbands and wives within a Christian marriage, and how do these roles influence marital relationships?
- How do you think the context shape expectations and practices in marriage?
- Are there any intercultural challenges within marital relations?
- How do Christian teachings and values impact beliefs and practices in marital relations?
- How does Ephesians 5:21-33 resonate with your understanding of marital relations, and how does it influence your beliefs and practices?

Answers:

Ephesians 5:21-33 is a biblical passage that addresses marital relations from a Christian perspective. It contains instructions for both husbands and wives on how they should relate to each other within the context of marriage. Let's analyze how these notes relate to this biblical passage and how they might influence beliefs and practices:

Cultural epistemic construction - history of marital relationship: The historical context of marital relationships plays a crucial role in understanding how societies have viewed and structured marriage over time. Ephesians 5:21-33 was written in a specific cultural context, and its interpretation may vary based on the cultural norms and values of different societies. Considering the historical aspects of marital relationships can help in appreciating the evolution of marriage and how it has been perceived across different eras, rather than taking things at face value.

Patriarchal norms: The presence of patriarchal norms in various societies, including the literalistic interpretation of religious texts, should be acknowledged. Ephesians 5:21-33 has often been interpreted in a way that places the husband in a dominant and authoritative position within the marriage. This patriarchal understanding has sometimes been propagated by religious institutions, contributing to gender imbalances and inequalities within marital relations. As a Christian feminist and social activist, I have seen firsthand how these situations play out in the lives of victimized wives, their children, and the families to which they originally belonged.

Socio-economic necessity and class: Socio-economic factors influence marital relationships. In some cases, economic necessities push women to work and become the financial heads of their households, challenging traditional gender roles. Moreover, the angle of class in marriage can impact decision-making dynamics within the relationship, especially when there are disparities in socio-economic status. I am not a Biblical scholar, but I want to know if Paul was addressing these conditions in his epistles.

Intercultural challenges within marital relations: The literalistic interpretation of religious texts can create challenges in intercultural marriages, where partners may come from different religious or cultural backgrounds. This can lead to conflicts or differences in understanding and practicing the teachings of Ephesians 5:21-33, further complicating marital relations.

How these aspects resonate with an individual's understanding of marital relations and influence their beliefs and practices would largely depend on their cultural, religious, and personal experiences. Some may uphold traditional gender roles and patriarchal interpretations of the passage, while others may reinterpret it in a way that promotes equality and mutual respect within the marriage. Societal norms and pressures, as well as economic factors, can also shape individuals' attitudes and practices in their marital relationships. Ephesians 5:21-33, when viewed through the lens of cultural, historical, and socio-economic contexts, can spark discussions and reflections on the dynamics of marital relations. But no interpretations should ignore the ground realities of abused and victimized Christian women of Pakistan. What's the point of being exegetically accurate when you are bolstering an abusive system?

Appendix 3

A Bishop's Perspective

Paraphrase of a Zoom interview with Rt. Rev. Nadeem Kamran, the 10th Bishop of Lahore, Church of Pakistan on 25th June, 2023

In Ephesians, submission is not oppression, but a reflection of the dignity and privilege of spouses in marriage. When a husband and wife join together, it is like a special union that represents Christ's connection with the Church. The submission spoken of in the passage is primarily attributed to the wife because she symbolizes the Church in this analogy. However, it is important to note that being the image of Christ in the analogy does not exempt the husband from the call to submission. The husband should love his wife like Christ loved the Church. Christ showed sacrificial love by giving Himself completely for His Bride's holiness and happiness.

Both spouses, as members of the Church, share a common humanity and their relationship with Christ. Thus, they are equally called to submit to each other out of reverence for Christ and to imitate His humble service to His Bride. This mutual submission is not servile but rather receptive, involving the act of receiving Christ's love and the abundant gifts that His love compels Him to bestow upon them for their sanctification and growth.

This, I believe, is the plain meaning of the text. Thus, to uphold marriage and denounce abuse, we need to come back to the text, rather than depart from it to conform to modern ideas of equality which may or may not be Biblical.

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