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## GOOD NEWS FOR A COUNTRY

Paul G. Hiebert

Equality and mutual submission between men and women is God's ideal for humanity. But, some ask, do these work in a world ruled by power-hungry leaders, inequality and hierarchy? Do we not need strong leadership for a nation to prosper?

Emmanuel Todd, a Dutch social demographer, studied more than 70 countries around the world. He found that the relationship between the sexes in marriage is the most important factor in national advancement (*The Causes of Progress*, 1986). Economists argue that savings, productivity and land distribution are needed for progress. Political scientists call for democratic governments. None of these, Todd concludes, have been the causes of development in the world in the last 200 years. Rather, they are byproducts of development.

The most important requirements for national progress, Todd found, are equality and mutual respect between the sexes in marriage, and women's literacy (development has only a low correlation with men's literacy). The reason for this, he argues, is that children learn their views of personhood primarily from their mother. When they see their mother treated with dignity and acting as an autonomous person, they gain a high view of themselves as persons.

But what is good for the country is also good for the family. When men take absolute authority, they and their wives are incomplete persons. The husband cannot express the child within him, nor can the wife be an adult. The result is not a marriage, but two half-persons living in a codependent relationship. When husbands and wives relate to each other as equals, and help each other to develop their full capabilities as autonomous beings, we have a true covenant relationship between two whole persons.

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