

*The
New Relatedness
for
Man and Woman
in
Christ*

A Mirror of the Divine



V. Norskov Olsen

The New Relatedness

for

Man & Woman in Christ

A Mirror of the Divine

V. Norskov Olsen

Loma Linda University
Center for Christian Bioethics
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Statements on the Topic

God said, "Let us make humankind in our image..." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.

—Genesis 1: 26, 27¹

That is the immense double statement, of a lapidary simplicity, so simple indeed that we hardly realize that with it a vast world of myth and Gnostic speculation, of cynicism and asceticism, of the deification of sexuality and fear of sex completely disappears. It seems so incredibly naive to couple the statement that 'man was made in the image of God' with the statement that God 'created them, one man and one woman.' And yet in the whole long history of man's understanding of himself this statement has only been made once and at this point. Otherwise, in a hundred different ways, man has always said something else which contradicts this statement; sometimes he says too little and sometimes too much; sometimes one aspect or another of the problem has been over-emphasized; at other times men have cursed the fact that it exists at all. On account of this one statement alone the Bible shines out among all other books in the world as the Word of God. So there is a connexion between these two statements: God created man in His image, and He created him as man and woman. It will be worthwhile thinking deeply about this, that we too may say neither too much nor too little about it.

—Emil Brunner

*Man in Revolt*²

In all the common and opposing features of human existence, there is no man in isolation, but only man or woman, man and woman. In the whole reach of human life there is no abstractly human but only concretely masculine or feminine being, feeling, willing, thinking, speaking, conduct and action, and only concretely masculine and feminine co-existence and co-operation in all these things.

—Karl Barth

*Church Dogmatics*³

The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequences for Christian life.

The doctrine of the Trinity, which is the specifically Christian way of speaking about God, summarizes what it means to participate in the life of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is ultimately therefore a teaching not about the abstract nature of God, nor about God in isolation from everything other than God, but a teaching about God's life with us and our life with each other.

The doctrine of the Trinity... makes it possible for theology of God to be intimately related to ecclesiology, sacramental theology, grace, ethics, spirituality, and anthropology.

Sexuality broadly defined is the capacity for relationship...and is an icon of who God is, the God in whose image we were created male and female. Sexuality is a clue that our existence is grounded in a being whose To-Be is To-Be-For.

—Catherine Momry LaCugna

*God For Us*⁴

Also by V. Norskov Olsen:

The New Testament Logia on Divorce.

A Study of Their Interpretation from Erasmus to Milton

John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church

Papal Supremacy and American Democracy

Man, The Image of God:

The Divine Design—The Human Condition

Myth and Truth about Church, Priesthood, and Ordination

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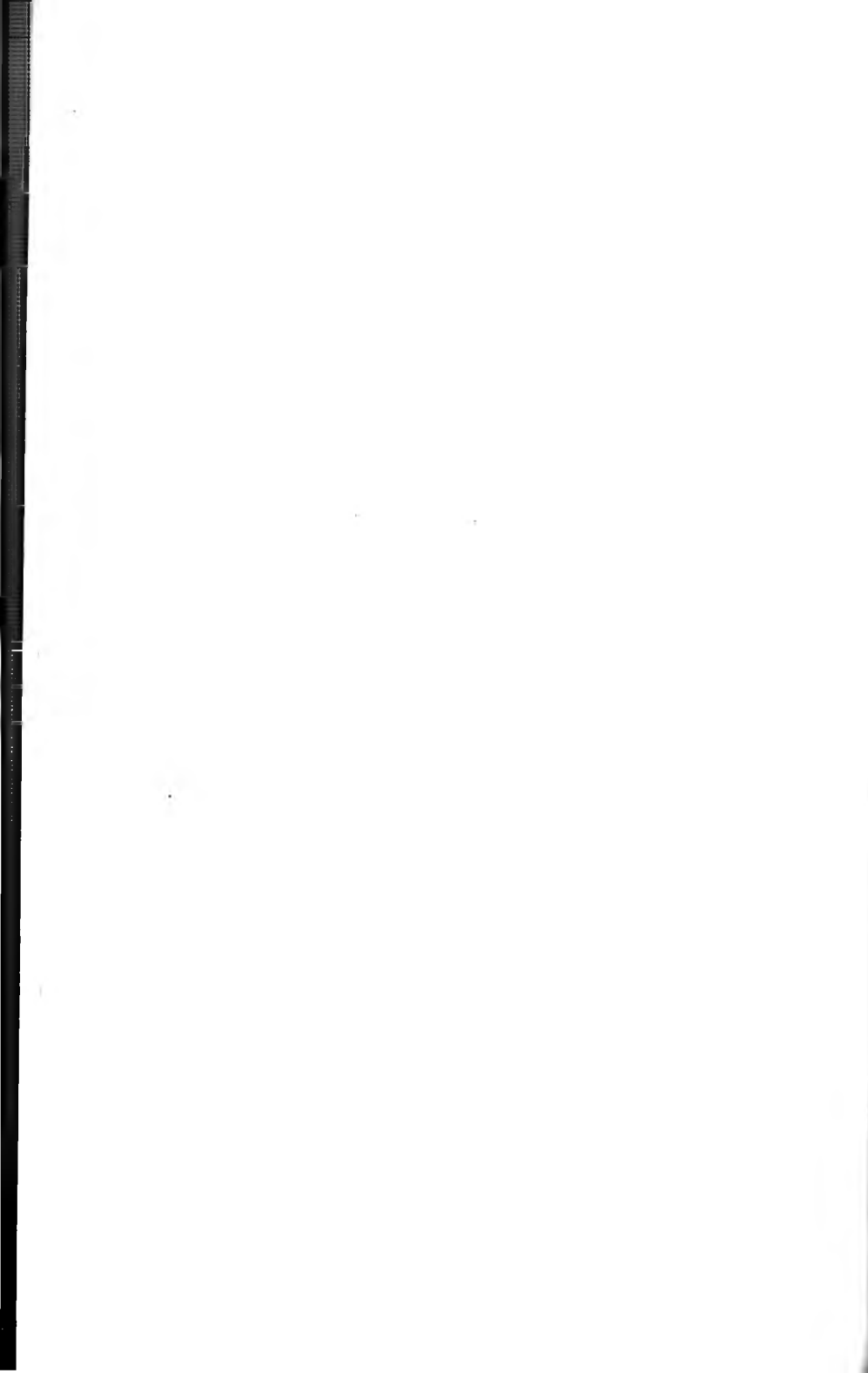
The writer is indebted to a number of people for their encouragements and help; only a few of these can be mentioned. I am most appreciative of the willingness of Dr. James B. Torrance (Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Aberdeen, Scotland) to write a most valuable introductory essay, which sets the stage for the chapters which follow. The same may be said about the comments on the back cover provided by Dr. David Augsburg (Professor of Pastoral Care, Fuller Theological Seminary) and Mrs. Alberta Mazat (Retired Professor of Marriage and Family Therapy, Loma Linda University). These three professors represent the areas of study for which this book has been created.

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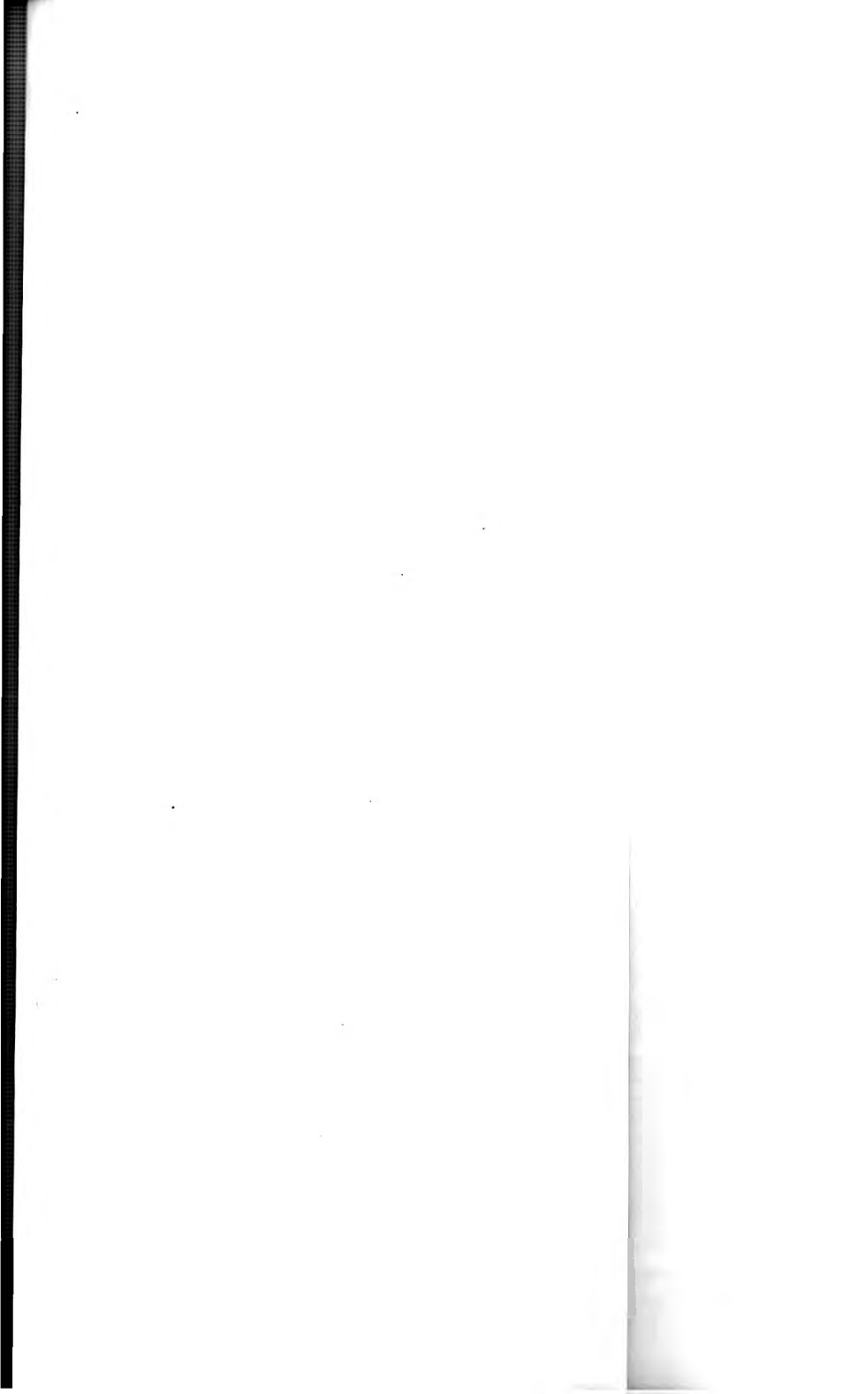


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Introductory Essay



INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

by James B. Torrance

From the history of Christian thought we can see that our doctrine of God determines our understanding of humanity and, conversely, our understanding of the human being reflects our view of God. The counterpart of the rugged individualism of Western culture is the concept of a Sovereign Individual Monad “out there.” The counterpart of the Protestant work ethic, as of Medieval Catholic piety, is the “contract God” who rewards merit and who, as in Puritan Calvinism, makes a covenant of works with Adam, the federal head of the race. Again, the counterpart of the Western concept of the human person as an individual endowed with the faculty of reason is the Stoic concept of God as the giver of natural law engraved on the heart of the individual and discerned by the light of reason. We think of the definition of Boethius (c. 480-525), which so influenced Western theology, *persona est individua substantia rationalis naturae* (a person is an individual with a rational nature). It is historically a static concept of the individual as a “substance” possessing the three faculties of reason, will and emotion, with primacy given to reason—a faculty identical in all individuals, governed by identical laws of non-

contradiction, and applied universally to all disciplines (be it the natural sciences, metaphysics or theology). According to this system, each individual has equal rights. The dominating concept of God is, in practice at least, a "unitarian" one, in which God's primary purpose for humanity is legal, rational, and individualistic. This is clearly different from a trinitarian understanding of humanity, of male-female relations, in which God's primary purpose for humanity is filial, not just judicial, in that we have been created in the image of God to find our true being-in-communion, as brothers and sisters, in the mutual personal relations of love. Here, reason is understood not statically nor substantively, but dynamically and functionally, as the capacity for the response of the whole person to the other, of being true to the Truth, of "being true to one another in love" (*aletheuontes en agape*, Eph. 4:15).

The strength and beauty of this important study by Dr. Olsen is that he sees that we need to recover a proper, biblical, and relational understanding of humanity, of the human person in the light of a Christian understanding of the triune God of grace, and see in male-female relatedness a mirror of the triune God. What is needed today is a better understanding of the person, not just as an individual but as someone who finds his or her true being-in-communion with God and with others, the counterpart of a trinitarian doctrine of God, who has His true being as the Father of the Son and as the Son of the Father in the Spirit. God is love and has His true being-in-communion, in the mutual indwelling of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—*perichoresis*, to use the Greek patristic word of the early trinitarian theologians. This is the God who has created us male and female to find our true

humanity in perichoretic unity with him and with one another, and who renews us in his image in Christ. There is established for us in the gospel a three-fold relation of communion, mutual indwelling, perichoretic unity between Jesus and the Father in His human life lived for us in the Spirit, into which we are drawn by the Spirit to share His communion with the Father; between Christ the head and His body, in the communion of the Spirit in the bond of perfect unity; between the members of the body, of life in the Spirit. This is what Karl Barth has called the "analogy of relation" on which he sought to ground a theological anthropology of co-humanity (*Mitmenschlichkeit*), on the Trinity. As God has loved us and accepted us freely and unconditionally in Christ, so must we love and accept one another freely and unconditionally "in Him."

Dr. Olsen's plea is that we recover the trinitarian understanding of male-female relations and interpret true relatedness in terms of our union with God in Christ, in terms of caring love and mutual functional complementarity, mutual submission. This is important because, in our modern world, in the tradition of Boethius and the Enlightenment, we usually equate the concept of the person with that of the individual. But in a Christian understanding this is a mistake. Just as the words "father," "mother," "brother," "sister," "husband," and "wife" are relational words, so is the word "person." The human person is someone who finds his or her true being in relation, in love, in communion. For too long Western theology has been dominated by a "substance ontology" of individuals with attributes, and in these terms has interpreted God, Jesus and ourselves as individual beings. In the manner of the great Greek Fathers,

Athanasius and the Cappadocian divines, we need to recover a "relational ontology" in order to have a better doctrine both of God and of the human person. It is for this that Dr. Olsen so rightly pleads.

This is a matter of great urgency in our cultures, in which we witness, for example, the break up of so much family life. We have too one-sidedly interpreted the individual as someone with rights (Thomas Jefferson), the thinking self (Descartes), endowed with reason (Boethius), a self-legislating ego (Kant) and motivated by a work ethic with physical, emotional, sexual, cultural, and economic needs. Two such individuals can contract together in marriage, but soon find that their marriage is on the rocks, each claiming their individual rights to realize their own potential or seeing the other as simply there to meet his or her own needs. The relationship disintegrates because there is no real covenant love, no mutual self-giving and receiving, no perichoretic unity.

The older individualism grew out of a belief in the objectivity of God as the Creator of natural and moral law and of the individual, with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (the American Constitution). But what happens in a culture when belief in the objectivity of God and moral law recedes? The result can be retreat into a preoccupation with the self—*my* rights, *my* life, *my* liberty, *my* pursuit of happiness. Then religion degenerates into becoming a means towards self-realization, with a narcissistic interest in self-esteem, self-fulfillment, self-identity—the human potential movement leading to the neo-gnosticism of the New Age movement, which then identifies the self with God. Know yourself! Realize your own identity! Then you will know God in the depths of your own "spirituality"!

Do we not need to return to the great Christian doctrine of the Trinity, to an understanding of the Holy Spirit, who delivers us from this narcissistic preoccupation, thereby opening us up to find our true being in loving communion with God and one another? Is not Christ's call to us in our day to participate through the Spirit in His communion with the Father and his mission from the Father to the world, to create in our day a new humanity of persons who find true fulfillment in other-centered communion and service in the kingdom of God?

This need for what we might call a trinitarian understanding of humanity and of male-female relationships for which Dr. Olsen pleads, is highlighted by the fact that for centuries the Christian church has interpreted male-female relations in terms of "natural law" which justified certain forms of male "headship" over the female, which are the expression of patriarchal culture rather than a faithful interpretation of headship as revealed in Christ and interpreted in the New Testament. Dr. Olsen offers an extraordinarily useful discussion of New Testament concepts of headship and the relevant passages, distinguishing the Christian concept of representative responsibility, of mutual service and submission in love, from other notions of inherited superiority and authority over the subservient, which may reflect the male human being usurping the authority of God and hence owe more to the Fall ("and he shall rule over you," Gen. 3:16) than to the true purpose of God in creation for—male-female relations revealed by the triune God of love in Christ. Does not the gospel of grace deliver us from such false patriarchal views and the resulting discord? Dr. Olsen surveys the subservience of women in history from an-

cient Greek and Roman concepts through such church fathers as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, showing how tragically far removed the church has been from a genuine New Testament understanding of male-female relations. He discusses the difficult Pauline passages about the subservience of women in the light of certain gnostic views of the role of women. Just as it took the church nineteen centuries to unpack the implications of the Pauline statement that in Christ there is neither bond nor free, and so abolish slavery, so it is taking even longer for the church to recognize the full significance of the fact that in Christ there is neither male nor female! Of course this does not mean that in Christ we become unisex! God has made us male and female with our sexual diversity and harmony. But as men and as women we find the fulfillment of our maleness and femaleness in Christ in equality, unity, mutuality and complementarity.

The feminist movement in our time is calling us to re-examine our attitudes toward male-female relations and to consider anew our patriarchal attitudes towards women. What is the message of the New Testament? Again, in talking about God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are we not in danger of projecting gender and the patriarchal concepts of our culture onto God? It is interesting to recognize that this latter question was hotly debated in the fourth century in the Arian controversies which led to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Arius raised the question of the meaning of the words "father," "son," "begetting," "generating." If we define these terms biologically and sexually, as he did, and then project them onto God, we deny the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ.

For example, I am a married man with children.

There was a time when I was not a father, but when my wife conceived and my son was born, I became a father. Likewise, there was a time when my son "was not." But when he was born, he came into being at a point in time. In terms of such a definition of these words Arius argued that there was a time when God was not a father, but he became a father when he created his Son. Likewise, there was a time when the Son "was not," but he became a son when he was created by God. Athanasius and the Nicene Fathers replied to Arius by saying that he was mythologising (*mythologeîn*)—projecting onto God human understandings of creaturely gender. They said that whatever else we mean by "Father," "Son," "begetting," or "generating," we do not mean that! God is eternally Father, eternally Son, eternally begetting and generating in a way appropriate only to himself as Creator, not as a creature. In the light of God's self-revelation and of New Testament worship we engage in theology (*theologeîn*), not mythology. Worship is offered to the Son and to the Spirit as well as to the Father; hence each has the *ousia*, or being, of God, not of a creature. Only one who has the *ousia* of God is Creator, Judge, Redeemer, Object of Worship. All of these are ascribed in the New Testament, not only to the Father but also to the Son and the Spirit, "who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified" (Nicene Creed). So they coined the word *homousios* "one in being" to express the thought that Father, Son and Spirit are equally God in the one being, God. So we worship the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—not a creature. This God whom we worship and adore does not throw us back upon ourselves to project onto him our creaturely concept of gender. We must, therefore, allow our prior notions of "father," "son,"

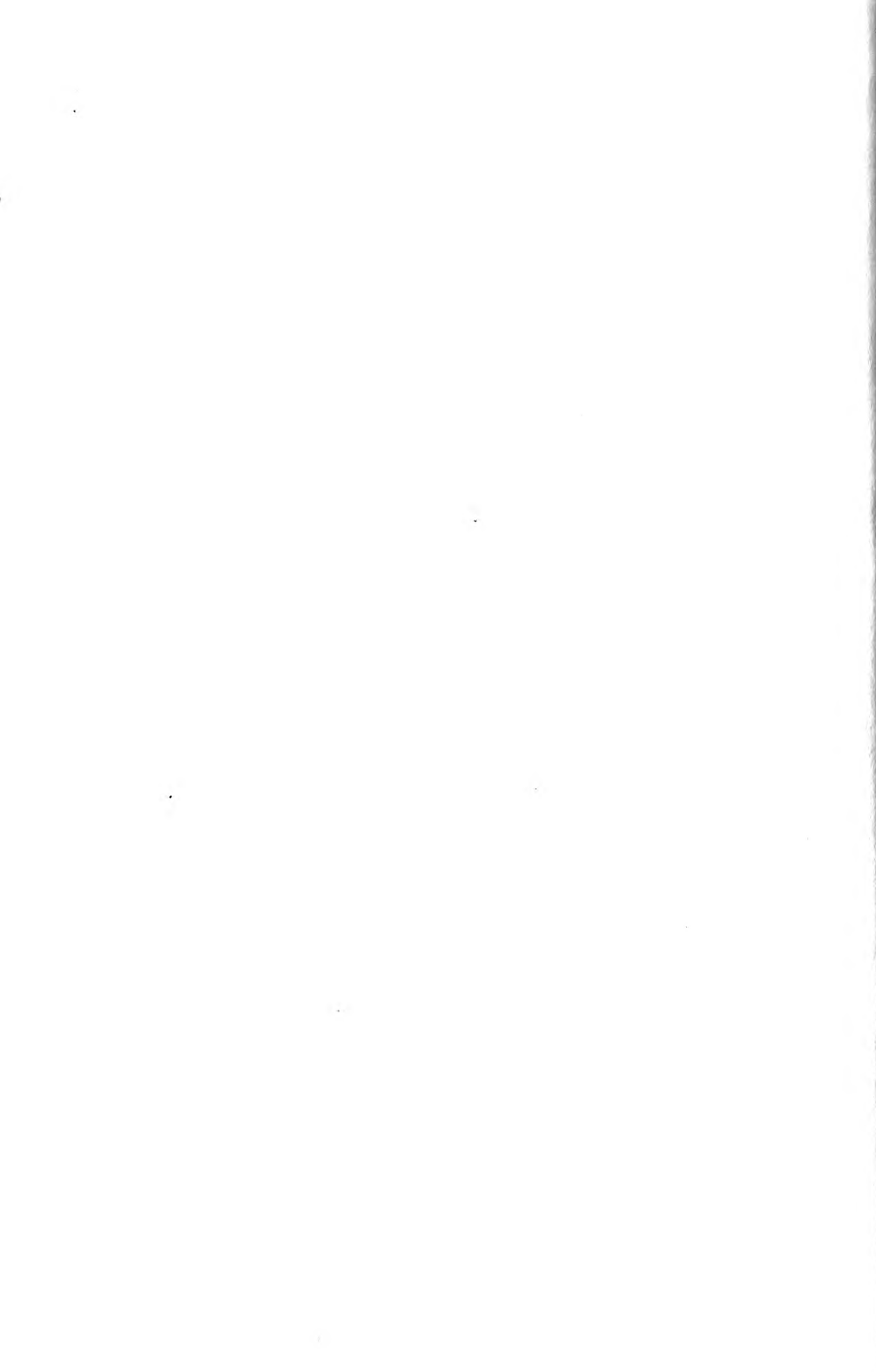
“spirit,” “begetting” to be transformed, reinterpreted, purged of all ideas of gender by God’s own self-revelation, if we would use them more truly of the ineffable God.

The ministry of Jesus was to interpret the Father to us. “No man has ever seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” (John 1:18). The Son, who is the only begotten God (*monogenes theos*), has exegeted him—(*exegesato*). Perhaps the central theme in John’s Gospel is that only by a knowledge of the Son can we come to know the Father, whom the world does not know otherwise (John 17:25-26).

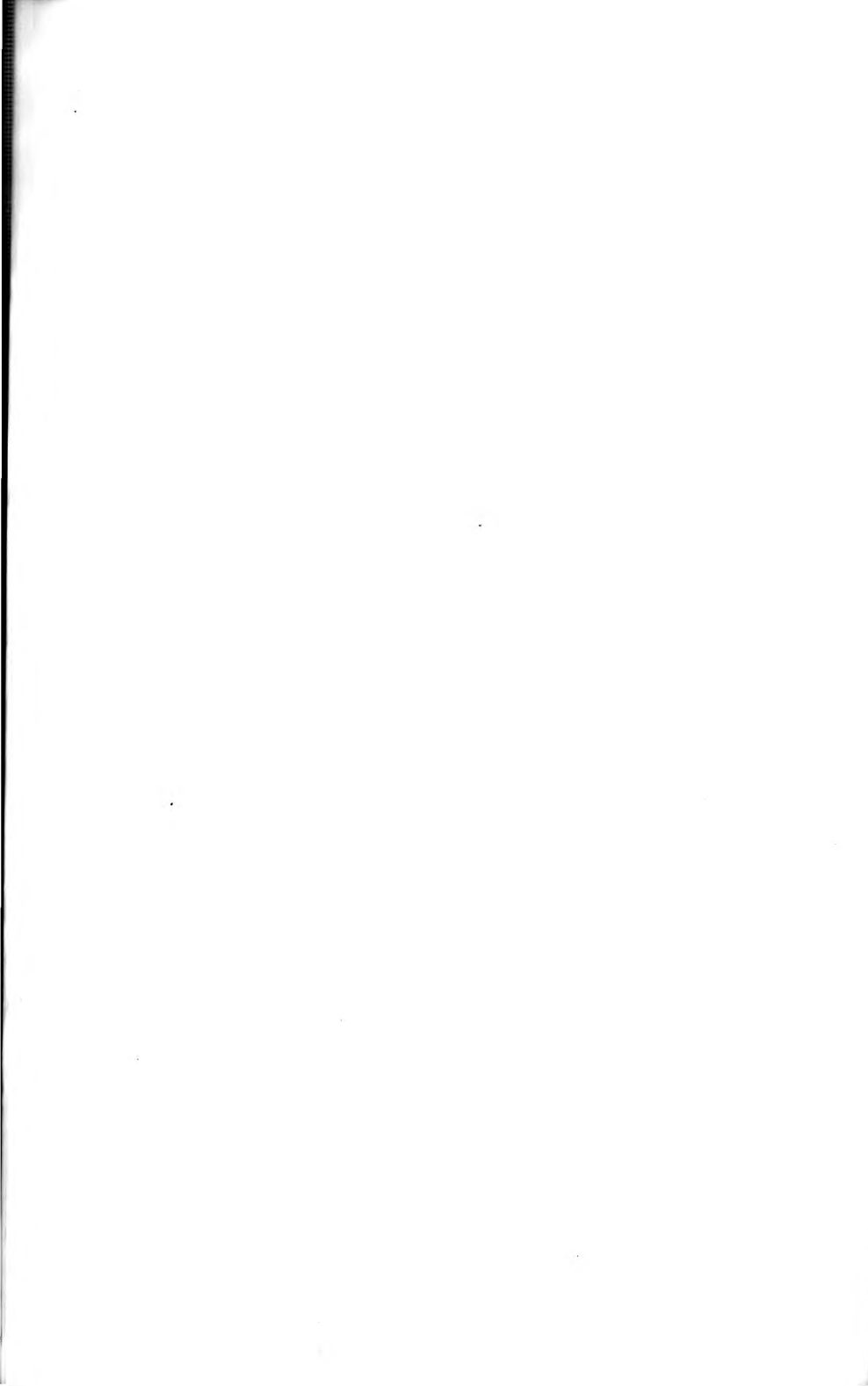
In a remarkable passage, Matthew 23:9, 11-12, Jesus says, “And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. . . . But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.” Our Lord recognizes that the word “father” as used in that patriarchal culture was inappropriate to apply to God, as it implied lording it over others. So Jesus seeks to evacuate the word of all patriarchal, sexist, dominating notions in interpreting God as the only true Father. By coming to us in love, to humble Himself, to serve, to go the way of the cross on our behalf, He interprets the Father to us (and hence all true fatherhood in His image). God’s Fatherhood is thus defined for us by the Son—by His ministry, His obedience, His sacrificial death on the cross. The church does not simply acknowledge God as Father, but as “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and the Father “from whom every family in heaven and in earth derives its name” (Eph. 3:15). Only by knowing the love of Christ can we know the love of the Father, which surpasses

knowledge, and be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. To let Christ interpret the Father to us is the task of theology—not to engage in mythological projection of patriarchal notions onto God. But if radical feminists insist on rejecting the “Father-Son” language of God, are they not in turn evacuating these words of the content that Jesus has poured into them—by insisting that these words *are* the projection onto God of patriarchal, sexist notions? This is to regard Christianity, in Arian fashion, as so much mythology, as so-called post-Christian feminists do.

Perhaps we need to listen to the debates of the Fathers at Nicea to help us listen to the New Testament in order to recover a better understanding of the triune God of grace, and hence a better understanding of male-female relatedness. The apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:18, 17 prays that “you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ,” that as “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,” Christ may interpret the Father to us by drawing us by the Spirit into His loving communion with the Father, that our male-female relations may be a better mirror of the triune God.



The Relatedness of the Triune God



Chapter 1

THE RELATEDNESS OF THE TRIUNE GOD

When we contemplate the Christian worldview and seek to evaluate the meaning and conditions of life, we must begin where the biblical revelation begins. The opening words of Holy Scripture—"In the beginning God"—are of great significance. They tell us that God is the originating source and prime mover of life. The statement "In the beginning" is not merely a reference to primeval time, but to original and true life conditions proclaimed and established at that time. We refer to these constitutive principles as "the order of creation." Accordingly, in all our thought processes and activities God and the order of creation should always come first and be at the very center.

The Trinitarian God Concept

The unity of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—is referred to by the word Trinity. The three Persons are linked together in the baptismal formula as expressed by Christ Himself. The disciples should baptize in the one name of "the Father

and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The trinitarian concept is also expressed in the apostolic benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14).

The biblical concept of God is explicitly and implicitly trinitarian: the Godhead is One-in-Three, Three-in-One. Only in the divine plurality is found the fullness of divinity. At the same time the unity must be kept intact so one speaks about Three-in-Oneness. The trinitarian doctrine is the expression of orthodox (literally, “straight thinking,” “correct opinion”) and normative Christian understanding of the doctrine of God, and is considered fundamental and non-negotiable.

Within the Trinity are perfect relationships; accordingly, the triune God consists of “relational Persons” having distinct individualities. Both on the divine and human levels personhood exists in relationships and requires interdependence.

Perfect interrelatedness and interconnectedness lies in the center of divine reality—which is inherently relational. Jürgen Moltmann writes about the Trinity: “The Persons do not merely ‘exist’ in their relations; they also realize themselves in one another by virtue of self-surrendering love. . . . Only when we are capable of thinking of Persons, relations, and changes in the relations together does the idea of the Trinity lose its usual static, rigid quality. Then not only does the eternal life of the triune God become conceivable; its eternal vitality becomes conceivable too.”¹

The creative and sustaining power of the universe flows from the divine relational oneness and equality expressed in functional complementarity. Likewise, the

possibility and reality of redemption is rooted in relational oneness and equality. Redemption is restoration, and the theology and message of the New Testament are retrospective, going back to "the beginning." It is most significant that Christ, when He spoke about the husband and wife relationship and the question on divorce, said that certain Mosaic laws had been given "because of your hardness of heart, . . . but from the beginning it has not been this way" (Matt. 19:8).

The inter-relatedness of the triune God defines genuine relationships and the original intent was that the divine relatedness should be reflected (imaged, mirrored, echoed) in human relationships and social behavior, thus providing the basic structure for genuine personhood and successful relational existence. In view of this we must take note of the divine characteristics in order to perceive the human traits correctly.

Dealing with creedal statements regarding the Trinity, Philip Schaff states: "The divine persons are in one another, and form a perpetual intercommunication and motion within the divine essence. Each person has all the divine attributes which are inherent in the divine essence, but each has also a characteristic individuality or property, which is peculiar to the person, and can not be communicated. . . . In this Trinity there is no priority or posteriority of time, no superiority or inferiority of rank, but the three persons are coeternal and coequal." Having made this theological observation Schaff quotes Augustine as saying: "God is greater and truer in our thoughts than in our words; he is greater and truer in reality than in our thoughts."²

We have to recognize that the life of the Godhead is unfathomable and a mystery; likewise, the triune God

transcends the limitations (including the meaning of person and sexuality) of God's created human beings: male and female. Accordingly, "humankind" cannot be an exact copy of the divine. At the same time we must acknowledge that the biblical revelation has given us a picture (to serve as an analogy of relatedness) of the triune God, which is foundational for theology in general and for the understanding of relatedness in particular. The picture of the triune God as given by revelation in the Bible should be kept intact by the expositors of Scripture as the biblical writers do, the apostle Paul specifically. The divine relatedness is established in oneness and absolute equality. An interdependent relationship is expressed in complementary functions, which are rooted in the very divine essence—a subject-object interaction in which love (*agape*) is an immutable quality. To meet the needs and results of the Fall the divine *agape* manifested itself functionally in sacrifice, suffering, and self-humiliation (see John 3:16; Phil. 2:5-11). The members of the triune God are distinguished from one another by being "Persons" and having diversity of "roles."

On account of the very nature of the divine oneness and equality, identified in all aspects of existence within the Trinity (none of them would think and act differently from one another), there can never be superiority or subservience in their distinctively functional activities, different and complementary as they are of necessity even within divine oneness and equality. Even though the members of the triune God have distinct individualities there is no need for authority in order to enforce conformity and unity, for the Trinity is one in purpose. The creation of the world was a trinitarian process (John

1:1-3, Gen. 1:2); likewise the work of redemption.

A typical Pauline reference to the triune God, as the source of redemption, reads: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we exult in hope of the glory of God. . . . and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:1, 2, 5; see also 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13, 14; Gal. 4:4- 6).

It is with the divine oneness in mind—a unity of complementary functions—that Christ prayed that the believers "may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:11). There is complete harmony between the being and acting of the triune God, and so it should be on the human level.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit had an intricate part in all the Christ events from the incarnation to the resurrection. In connection with the incarnation of Christ we read that Mary "was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit," and to Joseph it was said that what had been conceived in Mary "is of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18, 20). Christ's public ministry began after His baptism and the temptation in the wilderness, and at that time "the Spirit of God descended as a dove, and came upon Him" (Matt. 3:16) and "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Luke 4:1).

Next, Jesus returned to Galilee "in the power of the

Spirit" (Luke 4:14). In Nazareth He "entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read." He read from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me" (Luke 4:16, 18). Christ's total ministry was done in the Holy Spirit. We are told that "He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit" (Luke 10:21). Finally, it was the Spirit who resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead (Rom. 8:11). We must never forget that the Christian community was formed and publicly inaugurated by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as Christ Himself had predicted just prior to His ascension (Acts 1:4-9).

In the farewell discourses of Christ (John 14-17) He not only spoke about His unity with the Father but also with the Holy Spirit, and their common unity with the Father. Christ calls the Holy Spirit "the Helper" (also translated Comforter, Counselor, Advocate). We read: "When the Helper comes, Whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of Truth, Who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. . . . But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 15:26; 16:7).

Describing the work of reconciliation the apostle Paul, like Christ, emphasizes the common unity of the Trinity. God the Father is present in the work of reconciliation (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:19; 2:9). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are identifiable in one another (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17-18; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19). Hans Küng makes the following observation: "*God is revealed by the Son in the Spirit. It is important to see the unity of Father, Son and Spirit as revelation event and revelation unity.* At the same time, what really matters is never to put in question the unity

and uniqueness of God, not to cancel the diversity of the 'roles' of Father, Son and Spirit; not to reverse the 'sequence' and in particular never to lose sight for a moment of Jesus' humanity." Accordingly, Küng points out that "the trinitarian question has developed out of the christological question. The relationship of God and Jesus was considered with reference to the Spirit; a christology without pneumatology (theology of the Spirit) would be incomplete."³

The Holy Spirit communicates and manifests the divine love. Dealing with the subject that God is love and every self-communication presupposes the capacity for self-affirmation, Moltmann makes the following observation: "God loves the world with the very same love which He Himself is in eternity. God affirms the world with the energy of His self-affirmation. Because He not only loves but is Himself love, He has to be understood as the triune God. Love cannot be consummated by a solitary subject. An individuality cannot communicate itself: individuality is ineffable, unutterable. If God is love He is at once the lover, the beloved and the love itself. Love is the goodness that communicates itself from all eternity."⁴

In addition to what already has been said about the role of Spirit within the Trinity, a few other observations should be made. In the Old Testament the Spirit of God (Hebrew, *ruah*) is in the feminine gender. When God in the life of the Israelites is described as a mother, this is no doubt an indirect reference to the working of the Holy Spirit, as for example when Isaiah writes: ". . . you shall be nursed, you shall be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (Isa. 66:12-13). While God is constantly

referred to as the Father it has been pointed out that “various attributes of God are described with feminine imagery. In the Old Testament, the mercy of God is one of these attributes. The very word, *mercy*, in Hebrew is *raham*, a word that also means *womb*.” Accordingly, “when God is merciful, this is an image of the mother surrounding the child with warmth, with her life-begetting spirit.”⁵ A classical statement in this regard is Isaiah 49:15: “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.”

At the beginning of creation we read that the Spirit of God “moved,” “hovered,” “stirred,” or “brooded” over “the surface of the water.” Likewise, God is depicted as a mother bird: “Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that hovers over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on his pinions” (Deut. 32:11). There is an analogy between the Holy Spirit and the women in their common nurturing role and in the unique way in which they bear and sustain creative powers. We find the same in the New Testament. Only by being “born of the Spirit” can one enter the kingdom of God. The Spirit creates, gives birth to, and sustains the new life that comes into the repentant and believing person (see John 3:8; Rom. 8:10; Titus 3:5).

In most English translations of the New Testament the analogy between the Holy Spirit as the Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and the woman as the helper (Gen. 2:18), is somewhat obscured because the Holy Spirit is generally referred to by the pronoun “He.” “Spirit” is masculine in Latin and many other languages. In contrast to the Hebrew Old Testament where “Spirit” is in the feminine gender, the Greek Old Testament uses the

neuter gender. No doubt this was because the Jewish translators wanted to emphasize their monotheism: God is one!

The writers of the New Testament unfold the trinitarian god-concept, through stressing its "interrelationship" as central to the divine reality, but within a monotheistic idea of oneness. Even so, the writers of the Greek New Testament retained the "it" of the Greek Old Testament, while describing the Spirit as a person. It is understandable that the "it" of the Greek and the "he" of the various vernacular translations have blurred the analogy of the Spirit-female analogy.

Regarding this, one further observation should be made. Four times, according to the Gospel of John (14:16; 15:26; 16:7), Christ refers to the Holy Spirit as the *parakletos*. This has been translated as "Helper" (NASB), "Comforter" (KJV, LB, RSV), "One to stand by you" (PME), "Counselor" (NSV), and "Advocate" (JB; NREV). The fact that *parakletos* is in the masculine gender has also influenced translators to use the pronoun "he" for the Holy Spirit.

In order to clarify John's use of *parakletos*, it should be noticed that he uses the same word in his epistle (1 John 2:4) to refer to Christ. In his Gospel John used (as noted) this word in the context of the Holy Spirit as Christ's representative. Paul does not use the word *parakletos*, but deals with the same subject as John and identifies the Holy Spirit as the "alter ego" of Christ (Rom. 8:27, 34).

From scriptural analogies—and none should be pressed to any extreme—some basic principles of relatedness clearly emerge, not least that of complementarity performed in love and oneness.

The Headship of God the Father

In the biblical description of the various spheres of functional relationship within the Trinity a certain headship is exercised by God the Father; "God is the head of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3). In the eschatological fulfillment Christ "delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. . . that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28). This does not mean that one of the three is ultimate and the other two are subservient.

On account of the very nature of divine oneness and equality exercised in complementarity, the headship of God the Father is, in its very nature, representative. It depicts a responsibility created by love (*agape*) and demonstrated in giving and self-sacrificing as expressed in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." The same is also made concrete in the headship of Christ as expressed in the *kenosis* (emptied Himself) passage of Philippians 2:5-9: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Therefore, also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name."

Likewise we read that God gave Christ "as head over all things to the church" (Eph. 1:22). In other words, Christ did not find equality antithetical with headship

and functional differences. The subject of headship will be further explored when dealing with Pauline male-female subjects.

A Mutually Related Creation

We began this part of our study by emphasizing the significance of trinitarian theology as the starting point for all our thinking and evaluation of life. We note the following observation by Patricia Wilson-Kastner: "The notion of the Trinity is based on the self-revelation of a God who is at heart relational, not a bare unity, or an isolated divine monarch. A monarchical notion of the deity encourages the idea that relationship is secondary to God; a trinitarian concept asserts relationship as fundamental to the divine. Furthermore, to speak of the interrelationship of the persons of the Trinity as the key to understanding the divine is to establish personal interrelationship as the foundation of God's interaction with the world." Correspondingly, it is emphasized that "the principle of coherence for the world which emerges from a trinitarian deity is not that of a divinely imposed fiat, but an affirmation of a diverse and interrelated creation."⁶

A similar view is expressed by Moltmann in his comments on "The Mystery of the Trinity": "The unity of the Trinity is constituted by the Father, concentrated round the Son, and illumined through the Holy Spirit. . . To throw open the circulatory movement of the divine light and the divine relationships, and to take men and women, with the whole of creation, into the life-stream of the triune God: that is the meaning of creation, reconciliation and glorification."⁷

The apostle John tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). George H. Tavard in his book *A Way of Love* suggests that "John formulated the key to Trinitarian theology." Further, "The mystery of God as One-in-Three is a mystery of love. God's essence is to love." He explains: "At each level, love instances identity in distinction. It unites persons, making them one at the very moment when they remain other. Human love unites persons as though each were the other."⁸ This is illustrated in the words of Christ, "However, you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12), and in the marriage relationship, "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself" (Eph. 5:28).

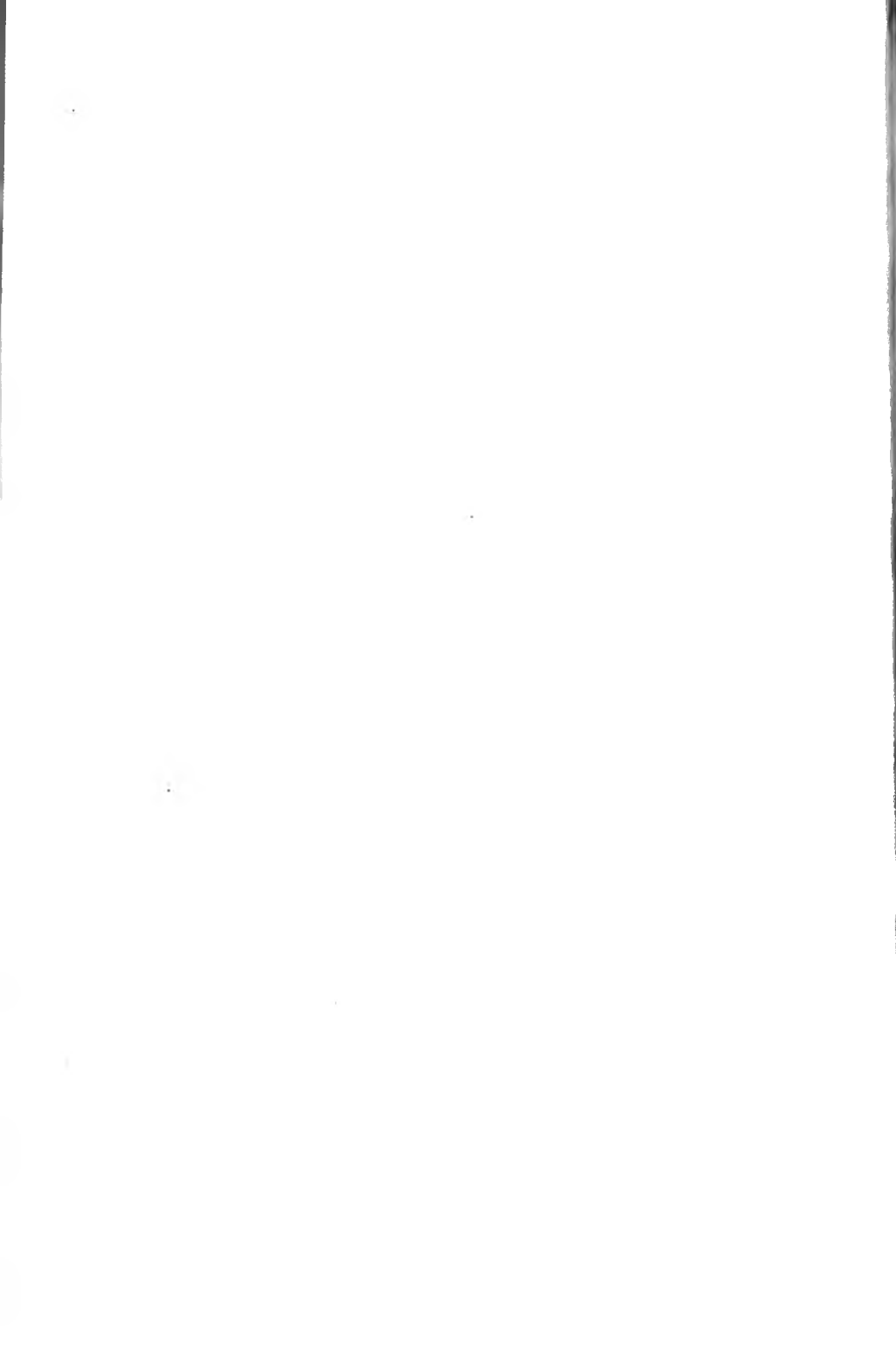
In the biblical record of man's creation, the word *man* (humankind) is used in a generic sense; man is described as a two-fold being: man-male and man-female (Gen. 5:1, 2). There is in the order of creation an analogy between the I-Thou relationship of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and the I-Thou relationship between man-male and man-female. That God is One-in-Three means that there are three distinct Persons united in love. Correspondingly, on the human level love "posits two lovers united by mutual love." Tavard further observes: "Such a unity, far from abolishing, requires distinctions. As distinction of person makes their union possible, this does not constitute a negative limitation but a positive perfection of being. As such it may be cogently attributed to God: unity and distinction are, in God, carried to their acme."⁹

In an essay "Spirituality and the Doctrine of the Trinity" (written to honor Professor James B. Torrance) J. M. Houston emphasizes that "trinitarian theology is

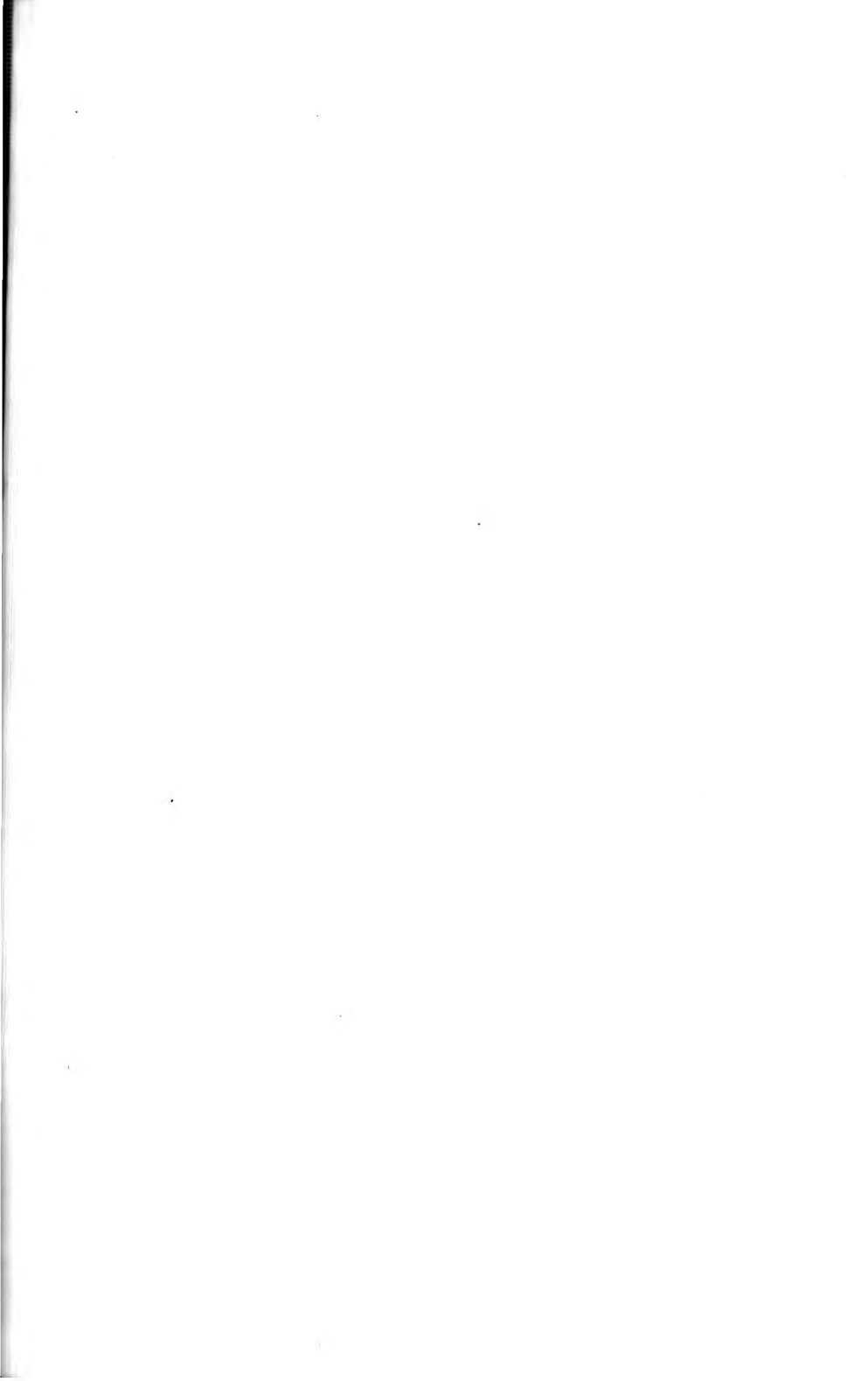
inevitably relational” and points out that the salvific “knowledge of the three-personed God, is itself known as the love-gift of the three active divine Persons, calling for, calling forth, a love-life of response to all three, as modelled on and actually sharing in that divine fellowship of the Son to the Father, in the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

The trinitarian unity is constituted in “mutual otherness,” which is the source and model for a mutually related creation. In his article “Toward the Heart of the Matter,” Eberhard Jüngel succinctly writes: “The trinitarian being of God, which I understand as a *community of mutual otherness*, could be an incentive to develop models of earthly being-together: *vestigia trinitatis* [imprints of the Trinity], as it were, in which creatures would be enabled to exist in communities of mutual otherness (this could also be relevant for political ethics). To be sure, the kingdom of God wouldn’t thereby be brought about. But in spite of that, the earth would be protected from becoming hell.”¹¹

We will now turn to the subject of male-female relatedness as an image or reflection of divine oneness, equality, and distinctively interdependent relationships.



Man & Woman in Creation



Chapter 2

MAN & WOMAN IN CREATION

The triune God and man (male and female) are relational beings; they exist by being in relation to one another. There is a horizontal relatedness on the divine and on the human levels, but also a divine-human vertical relatedness. The divine relatedness is constitutive for the human relatedness, which should mirror the first; the divine relatedness is not only the model but also the means (in a vertical relationship) for discerning human relatedness as the image of the divine.

We should also take note, as pointed out by James B. Torrance, that early church fathers in the East (Cappadocian Fathers) spoke about a twofold relational movement between God and man, both in the creation of man and the incarnation of Christ as well as in the union with God through Christ. The first is “a God-manward movement, from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.” The second is “a man-Godward movement, to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit.”¹

Male-Female as the Divine Image

The creation story tells us that “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27 NRSV). The parallelism of the three phrases points out that “humankind” consists of “male and female,” who in their togetherness were to be “the image of God.” Commenting on this text Jaroslav Pelikan writes: “The fundamental concept in the biblical understanding of what it means to be human is the doctrine of creation in the image of God. Despite the obvious analogies between human anatomy or physiology and those of other creatures... both Judaism and Christianity have affirmed that there is an even more basic and profound analogy between human existence and the very being of the living God.”²

Through bearing the image of the divine, human relatedness was designed to be one of unity and equality within the framework of complementarity. Man (generic for mankind) was created with two distinct sexualities—male and female. As such they exist in mutual belongingness and in correlation to one another. They stand vis-a-vis one another in polarity. Karl Barth succinctly wrote: “We cannot say man without having to say male or female and also male and female. Man exists in this differentiation, in this duality.”³ He explains: “It belongs to every human being to be male or female. It also belongs to every human being to be male and female: male in this or that near or distant relationship to the female, and female in a similar relationship to the male. Man is human, and therefore fellow-human, as he is male or female, male and female.” Barth continues by

saying: "But it certainly does not belong to every man to enter into the married state and live in it. The decision to do so is not open to each individual, and there are reasons why it is open to many not to do so. Even then they are still men and therefore male or female, male and female."⁴

As male and female bore together the image of triune God, they were the crown of creation and together "God blessed them" and said, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). They were created to live and work in cooperative interdependence. In his reflection on this theme Carl E. Braaten writes: "When God creates man in His own image, He does not create a solitary sexless individual, but male and female in their sexual difference. A single human being by himself could not reflect the image of God, unless God were a static unity. But God has revealed Himself as essentially love, and love is not a static thing." From this it follows that "Love presupposes difference and generates relationship. To be in love is to open up one's existence to another, as God has opened Himself up to humanity in Jesus Christ. Sexuality is to be a servant of relationship in love, of driving men and women into unity without cancelling their enjoyable difference."⁵

Cooperative Interdependence

The male-female oneness and equality does not mean sameness. By being created male and female (husband and wife, father and mother), each had their own stamp. This means complementarity in their mutual interdependence. This is further spelled out in the creation story of Genesis, chapter 2. In chapter 1 the

emphasis is placed on the vertical divine-human relatedness, and in chapter 2 on the human horizontal relatedness. Discussing the meaning of man as the image of God, historical theology in the West generally refers to man as having some godlike traits of character, but seldom is reference made to the significance of the human horizontal relationship as a reflection of the divine horizontal relatedness. As a result much misunderstanding has prevailed throughout the centuries. It is hoped that the current discussion and study regarding male-female relatedness in society and in the church may help to clarify the true meaning of relatedness as embodied in the purpose of creation.

The need for human relationship is expressed when God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). The male-female oneness is illustrated in the fact that "God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man" (Gen. 2:22). This no doubt illustrates absolute unity and equality. She should stand by his side as a partner. When Eve was brought to Adam he expressed this inseparable male-female fellowship when he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). Adam found wholeness in a complementary fellowship with Eve. Karl Barth tells us that the creation story of mankind is the "Old Testament Magna Charta of humanity."⁶

It was also said that man "shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Old Testament scholar Otto Piper has pointed out that oneness of the flesh embraces more than sexual unification; it is a unity that "embraces the natural lives of the two persons in their entirety. It is strange that two persons of separate wills

and individualities should succeed in achieving real unity." Further, "Flesh, in the biblical sense, denotes not only the body but one's whole existence in this world; and the attainment of oneness of the flesh, therefore, creates a mutual dependence and reciprocity in all areas of life. One is ready to sacrifice his life for the other person, one feels that life is valueless apart from him, and one wants to be and to act like him. Without previous examination one is able to share his views."⁷

Barth maintains "that in obedience to the divine command there is no such thing as a self-contained and self-sufficient male life or female life. In obedience to the divine command, the life of man is ordered, related and directed to that of the woman, and that of the woman to that of the man." Quoting Paul: "However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman" (I Cor. 11:11). Barth goes on to state: "This is true of man and woman in marriage, but not only of them. We remember that to say man *or* woman is also, rightly understood, to say man *and* woman."⁸

While we speak about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit we also designate the Trinity as God, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. The word "God" is used inclusive in a generic sense and as a proper name which also, as previously observed, includes a representative headship. In the creation story we find the same to be the case on the human level. Adam, the name of the first male, is also the generic name for man (mankind). Representative of the human race, Adam gave names to the living creatures as well as to the man-female: woman, Eve (Gen. 2:19; 3:20). Paul, likewise, considers Adam the representative of mankind, and in

effect says that when Adam sinned the human race sinned: "Sin came into the world through one man . . . death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgressions of Adam, who is the type of the one who was to come" (Rom. 5:12, 14 NRSV). Adam and Christ are compared and contrasted by Paul, accordingly, Christ is referred to as the second Adam. We read: "For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being, for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. . . . Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being,' the last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. 15:22-45, NRSV).

When Adam had given names to the living creatures he recognized that "there was not found a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:20)—a fact God had already pointed out when he said: "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). Examining the two key words "helper" and "suitable" we find again oneness and equality interrelated with complementarity.

In the Hebrew Bible the word "suitable for" reads *neged*, meaning "one like [him]," "corresponding to," "a counterpart to." In the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Greek word is *homoios* likewise meaning: "one like him," "similar," "of the same rank," "of the same nature."

The word "suitable" modifies the word "helper" (Hebrew: *èzer*). Significantly a "helper" is not to be regarded as an inferior person with a lower status, which the words "help meet" in the King James Version so easily can imply. The New Revised Standard Version

correctly reads: "I will make him a helper as his partner" (Gen. 2:18,20).

It has been brought to our attention that in the Old Testament the word "helper" (*èzer*) "is employed in contexts which refer to a beneficial relationship" and "primarily for God."⁹ When it is said that God is a helper to man, it does not make Him inferior to man. In this connection it is of significance to remember that the Holy Spirit was called the Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). Male and female were together made in the likeness of God as "one flesh." In their unity they should reflect the divine unity, possessing equality, and performing complementary functions. Consequently, the significance of the female as "helper," can be illuminated by observing the divine Helper's (Holy Spirit) complementary "role" within the Trinity.

We have previously noticed that in the Old Testament the Spirit of God (*ruah*) is in the feminine gender; likewise, there is an analogy between the Holy Spirit and women in their nurturing role, and the unique way in which they are the bearer and sustainer of creative powers. In this connection it should be noticed that "the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living" (Gen. 5:20). The name Eve means "life," "life-giving," given her after the Fall. Adam expressed thereby his hope of life through Eve.

Discussing the creative power of womanhood and the sense of wonder this embraces, Edith Deen points out that "from earliest times a sense of wonder filled the heart of a mother when she looked into the face of her new-born child." Dean quotes Bishop Fulton J. Sheen saying that every mother is "the bearer of life that comes from God." Further, she is "to humanity the bearer of

the Divine. . . when she gives birth to a child she thus becomes a co-worker with Divinity; she bears what God alone can give.”¹⁰

Equality in Complementary Service

To be created male and female means that in the equality of personhood there is a complementarity of service within the framework of love (*agape*). Emil Brunner explains: “The primal truth, however, is this: God created man in His own image; male and female created He them. This truth cuts away the ground from all belief in the inferior value of woman. The Creator has created man and woman not with different values but of different kinds, dependent upon one another, a difference in kind which means that each complements the other.” He further states: “Together with their different natural destiny—which as in original Creation should be taken seriously and not regarded as a secondary matter—man and woman have received a different stamp as human beings, as persons, which extends to their existence-for-community. Both are called to be persons, to live in love, in the same degree, but in different ways.”¹¹ It should be observed that the “distinctive qualities” of male and female “is a purely functional difference, not a difference in value, it is not a scale of values.”¹²

The Christian value system, as that of the divine, is one of love expressed in service. “The special call to serve where love is perceived as the meaning of life, is rather a privilege than a humiliation. This different attitude is maintained in the Bible, even in the Creation narrative. A ‘helpmeet’ is given to man. In our corrupted world that means ‘a subordinate, dependent, less impor-

tant person,' but originally this was not the intention; this is how it is interpreted by masterful people who want to be like God, positively by the man, and negatively by the woman." Brunner emphasizes that "mutual service is the supreme proof of fully mature and well-developed human life. From this center there should issue a transformation of all values, derived from Him who came 'not to be ministered unto but to minister,' and who by that very fact has revealed the meaning of human life."¹³

In this fallen world the values of the kingdom of God represent a complete repudiation of all that worldlings hold dear. Nowhere does this become more apparent than in the Sermon on the Mount and in the changed lives of the disciples. To meet the redemptive needs of the world the disciples of Christ exemplified the divine love and relatedness in sacrificial service, suffering, and self-humiliation.

The Wholeness of Personhood

Before we leave the creation story and turn to the account of the Fall we will take note of two statements constitutive for biblical anthropology as related to wholism; both have indirect bearing upon our topic.

Man was created by God as an indivisible whole. God "formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). The breath of life united with the body made him "a living being." This truth was expressed by H. Wheeler Robinson: "The Hebrew idea of personality is an animated body, and not an incarnated soul. . . There is no trichotomy in Hebrew psychology, no triple division of human personality into 'body, soul, and

spirit.”¹⁴

Man-male and man-female is a “whole” person; no part exists by itself or for itself. Dutch theologian G. C. Berkouwer expresses the same opinion: “Scripture never pictures man as a dualistic, or pluralistic being, but that in all its varied expressions the whole man comes to the fore, in all his guilt and sin, his need and oppression, his longings and his nostalgia. And it is thus *a priori* unlikely that the biblical view of man will distinguish a higher and a lower part in man implying that the higher part is holier than the lower and stands closer to God, the lower as such then being impure and sinful and further away from the God of life.”¹⁵

The unity of the human being was also asserted by Reinhold Niebuhr: “The view of human nature in Christian thought is to allow an appreciation of the unity of body and soul in human personality which idealists and naturalists have sought in vain. Furthermore it prevents the idealistic error of regarding the mind as essentially good or essentially eternal and the body as essentially evil.” Niebuhr’s conclusion is that “man is, according to the Biblical view, a created and finite existence in both body and spirit. . . . The concept of an immortal mind in a mortal body remains unknown to the end.”¹⁶ In similar vein E. Anthony Allen (a theologian and medical doctor with qualifications in psychiatry) writes: “The ‘spirit-body’ dualism of today’s Western-influenced church is alien to the biblical view of the person. When God created the person, He breathed ‘into his nostrils’ and the person became a living *nepesh* (Gen. 2:7). This Hebrew word for ‘soul’ speaks of the human individual as a totality rather than as a body with a soul.”¹⁷

God created man as male and female and man

(mankind, humankind) is not whole without both. At the same time male and female, each—in their own totality of being—has a wholeness, the parts of which (i.e., physiological and psychological) cannot be separated from one another. What a person is in his or her wholeness of being he or she is in his or her acts, and this is most uniquely expressed in complementary functions; thus together male and female become humankind and an image of the triune God. We are reminded about Philip Schaff's description of the Trinity: "Each person has all the divine attributes which are inherent in the divine essence, but each has also a characteristic individuality or property, which is peculiar to the person, and cannot be communicated."¹⁸

The Results of the Fall

The fact of human existence presupposes that consciousness exists and moral decisions have to be made. This has been stated as follows: "The emergence of the moral element in human life means that man has realized himself as a *person*; it means that the whole of life is now regarded from the point of view of decisions, self-determination, freedom, responsibility."¹⁹

The Christian world view begins with God as Lawgiver, for life is found in an existence doing the will of God. Accordingly, in His first personal dealing with man "God said" and "the Lord God commanded" (Gen. 1:28; 2:16); and at the first temptation it was acknowledged that "God has said" (Gen. 3:1,3).

Since God is the Creator and everything is rooted in Him and His activities, it follows that God's mandates embodied the very principles of life. Failure to obey

would therefore result in the loss of life.

A realistic and symbolic expression of the creator-creature moral relationships is presented in Genesis 2:16-17: "And the Lord commanded the man, saying, 'From the tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'"

The meaning of the Fall of man depicted in Genesis chapter 3 with its consequences for God, man, and nature must be seen in the light of the principles expressed in the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2.

Man is a self-conscious moral being and the sacredness of individuality is at the center of biblical and religious ethics. From this it follows that man's constitutive relationship with God is one of freedom. The divine Lordship implies freedom. God tells us what is right and wrong. He pleads with us to follow what is right and warns us against what is wrong. When we sin He makes His atonement available, seeking to bring us into a new life-giving relationship with Himself again.

When it comes to the understanding of the consequences of the Fall it is of fundamental importance to realize that sin is disobedience, and the result means broken relationships. Further, God does not have a vindictive character. The "judgments" or "curses" ("curse" is the word used in connection with the serpent and the ground) expressed by God after the Fall are not commandments, but are predictive "judgments" pointing out that all transgressions represent the deliberate distortion of realities already in existence (Gen. 3:14-19). They describe a new life-situation within the framework of the consequences of the Fall. At the creation God blessed Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply" and

to “subdue the earth,” but after the Fall Eve experiences pain in childbearing, and Adam’s cultivation of the soil is with toil. (Compare Genesis 1:28 with 3:16 and 1:28; 2:15 with 3:17-19.)

The relationship between husband and wife established at Creation is now distorted by the Fall. To Eve it was said: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (3:16).

Originally male and female lived harmoniously (“one flesh” Gen. 1:24), but now they are in conflict. The creation order is disrupted; they accuse not only one another for the Fall, but also God (Gen. 3:16-23). Both the vertical and horizontal relationships are distorted.

The male headship of the order of creation—defined in the light of the Trinity—was likewise distorted. To Eve it was said: “He shall rule over you.” In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for “rule” implies subordination (See Gen. 37:8; Ex. 21:8; Deut. 15:6; Joel 2:17), but it also expresses the idea of protection and caring as in Genesis 1:16, where we read that “God made two great Lights” to “govern” or “rule” the day and the night. We will notice that in all the aspects of the “judgment” there is also a restraining influence.

God had said regarding the eating of the tree of knowledge that “in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Inherent in sin are the seeds of its own destruction. After the Fall the destructive power of death came into man’s very existence, and enmity was created (Gen. 3:15-19). This is symbolized in the use of the sword with power and authority over the subordinated. Eve’s first son made use of that power when he killed his brother. Yet, at the same time the sword can also have a restraining power. Paul writes: “For rulers are not a cause

of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise for the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil" (Rom. 13:3-4). Genesis 3:15 deals specifically with the tension or "the enmity" which comprises a judgment as well as a blessing because of circumstances. It is said that the serpent will bruise the seed of the woman (Christ) on the heel, but He in turn will bruise the serpent's head.

The relatedness of the order of creation, and all that it implies, is different from that depicted as a result of the Fall. While it is said man would "rule over" the woman, Eve was told "your desire shall be for your husband." This does not mean that the husband does not have the same "desire," just as the woman would also experience toil when she was engaged in cultivating the garden. The statement was made to the woman for she embodied unique creative powers, as implied in the name Eve (Gen. 3:20).

At the time of Creation "God said to them" (Man: male and female) "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). In the state of innocence this task was considered a delight, a perpetual "holiday." Being free from sin in their inner and outer world they were devoid of defect, disadvantages and burdens, and could, with ease, perform and accomplish fully the purposes God decreed for them. After the Fall the distinctive roles of man and woman became flawed and painful, and a constant reminder about the new conditions under which they lived.

It also seems that the most intimate relationship between man and woman was distorted as a result of the Fall. Without being dogmatic and only suggestive, it seems, however, from the content of chapter 3 that "the desire" must reflect a new content brought into the polarity of the sexes regarding sexuality.

The Creation story closes with the words: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25). After the Fall they recognized "that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings" (Gen. 3:7). We notice that it was "loin coverings." Did an added new element enter their beings which, in late twentieth-century terminology, could make man and woman "sex-objects" to one another? Sin distorted the relationship and the polarity of the sexes (the nudity included more than physical nakedness), but must also have distorted the most intimate sex relationship. With the danger of oversimplification it may be said that all male-female relationships before the Fall were fully controlled by *agape*, but after the Fall, among other aspects, a sensual (sexist) element came in and further distorted the original polarity. Seen from the perspective of secular and biblical history, including the twentieth century, it is obvious that the original polarity of the sexes has been greatly distorted and the original marriage concept and sexual relationship have been undermined in a most disturbing way. On the other hand, when a Christian home is established, the most intimate relationship between man and woman (husband and wife, father and mother) can restore a little "Eden" even in a sinful world.

We may summarize and close this part of our discussion by quoting Helmut Thielicke: "It is therefore cer-

tainly important that right at the beginning, when man is spoken of for the first time, the Bible does not speak of 'man' but of a man, a particular, specific man. God created him male and female, or more precisely, as man and woman. There is no such thing as a human being apart from a man or a woman." He continues by emphasizing: "This is far more than a matter of mere biological difference. Obviously, the polarity of the sexes affects all of the ultimate mysteries of life. It cannot be ignored in either the spiritual or the secular realm." Thielicke then makes the appeal: "Today let us do some thinking together of this mystery of the sexes. Besides hunger and the lust for power there is nothing that so fills our life and impels, torments, and delights us as does the mystery of our sexuality."²⁰

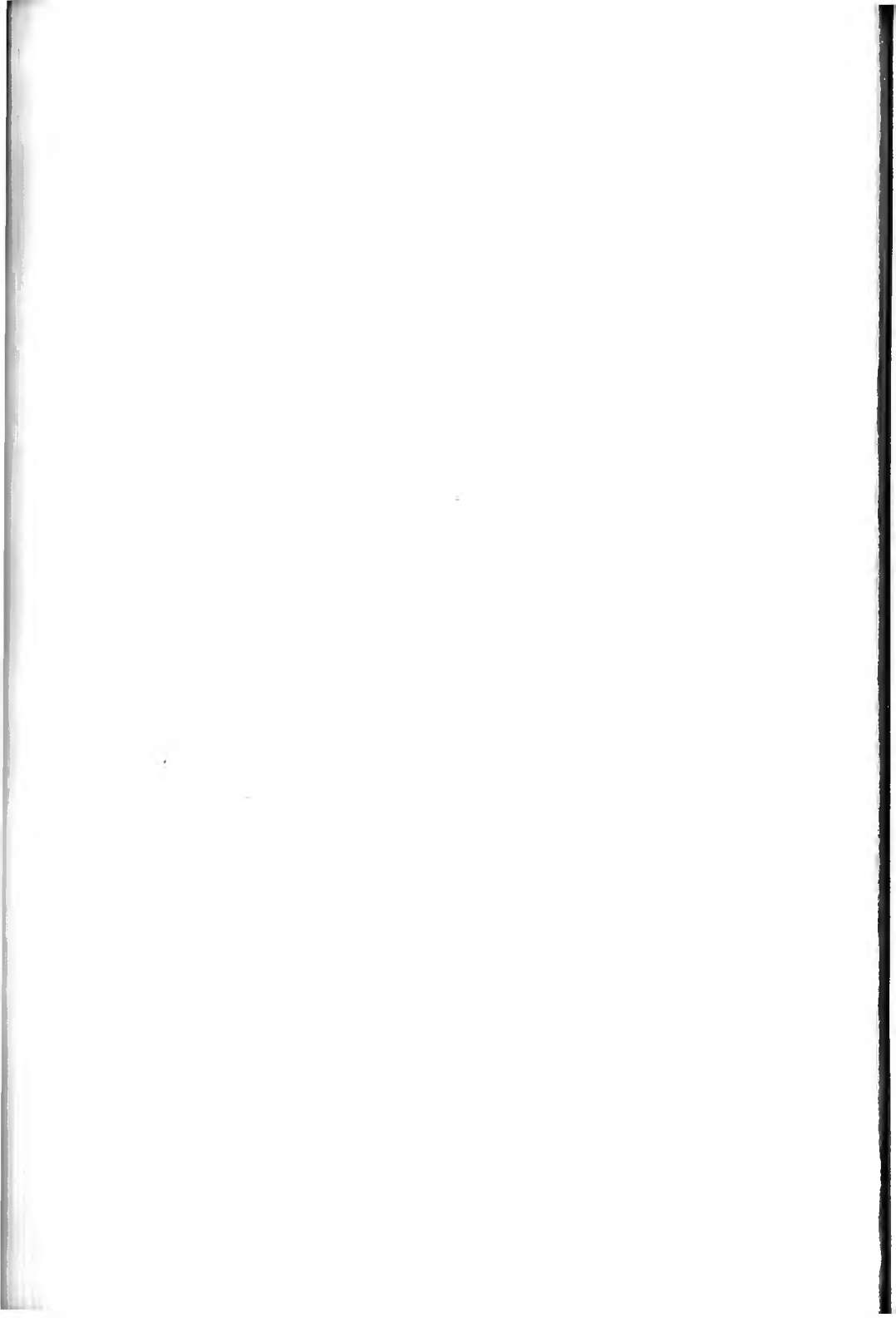
It is only by the restraining power of the Holy Spirit that certain aspects of the prognostic "judgments" of Genesis have a controlling influence within society. On the other hand, the kingdom of God is governed by love expressed in principles originated in the order of Creation and the covenant of redemption. However, in the earthly life there will always be a tension—in our inner and outward life—between the ideas and norms of the kingdom of God and the present world. That tension can only be endured by the help of the Holy Spirit, but should be used positively and creatively.

Summary

The different aspects we have dealt with in our study of the first three chapters of Genesis will be further illuminated when we turn to the apostle Paul's several discussions of the male-female relationships. It will be

observed that what we have dealt with so far has an overarching importance in the New Testament, not least in the Pauline discussions. Further, the different and also contrary interpretations of the writings of Paul (even among conservative and evangelical scholars) reflect in some cases the person's understanding of Genesis, and in other cases one's interpretation of Paul influences the explanation of Genesis.

Before we turn to the study of women in the New Testament, we will take note of some Greek and Roman concepts with which the apostolic church had to deal. We will also observe some representative Christian writers' concepts of male-female relationships and their use of the biblical material. The status of women within Judaism will be dealt with when we examine Christ's attitude to women.



*An Historical Backdrop:
The Subservience of Women*



Chapter 3

AN HISTORICAL BACKDROP: THE SUBSERVIENCE OF WOMEN

The more we know about the actual historical situation in which a biblical injunction is given—as well as the philosophical and religious concepts and the cultural situation which have influenced or created a given situation—the more obvious it becomes (as it will be noticed later) that the biblical writers are faithful to the eternal and divine verities. Accordingly, we will sketch an historical backdrop regarding attitudes toward the female sex and to a large degree let the sources speak for themselves.

Ancient Greek Concepts

Classical Greek learning has influenced Western culture throughout its history. The Roman world was Hellenized, and in turn, Greek philosophy and concepts were woven into the theological fabric of Western Christian thought. This can be observed in many areas; here we will note only some general concepts and attitudes regarding male-female relationships.

Homer, the blind epic poet of the ninth century B.C., to a large degree shaped ancient Greek civilization from 1200 to 800 B.C.; hence the designation the Homeric Age. Dealing with the positions of the Homeric woman, one historian writes: "If we look at the external position of women, we must place the Homeric age exceedingly low in civilization. Women have almost no rights; they are entirely under the power of man, and they live in continual uncertainty as to what their destiny may be. The woman may be a princess, brought up in a wealthy and happy home; but she knows that strangers may come and carry her off, and that she may therefore at some time be a slave in another man's house."¹

Seeing nothing wrong with polygamy, Homer describes the King of Troy in the palace of Priam: "He had fifty sons, nineteen from the same womb, and the rest were borne to him by women in his halls." The situation was such that "in fact, there was no clear line drawn between marriage and other associations of men with women in Homeric times."² King Solomon of Israel (c. 971 - c. 931 B.C.) did not fare better than the ancient Greeks. He built a harem housing about 1,000 women. The Old Testament tells us that "he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God" (1 Ki. 11:3-4).

Greek life was marked with three sharp divisions that had a significant bearing upon the subservience of women. First, we find that "hostility towards the outsider was one of the most marked features of Greek life, whether it was felt by the citizens of one city against all other Greeks, or

by Ionian against Dorian, or by all those who spoke Greek against 'barbarians' who babbled in unintelligible tongues." Then, within the city-state itself were two sharply defined divisions: "The natural difference between the sexes was widened by the inferior status and the seclusion of women. Between slave and free lay a gulf which most Greeks accepted as a fact of life just as unchangeable as sex or race." These divisions were sharper than "the antithesis within the citizen body itself between high and low, 'good' and 'bad.'"³

Democritus (c. 460-370 B.C.) tells us that slavery was part of common life: "Use slaves like parts of the body, each for his own work." The inferiority and subordination of women were also stated. In his book on administration of a household Xenophon (c. 435-355 B.C.), likewise took for granted "the inferiority of women and the subjection of slaves."⁴

While Plato (427-347 B.C.) "was no 'feminist' in the modern sense" and "always regards women in general as by nature inferior to men" he was, nevertheless, "most radical and original in dealing with the distinction between male and female." This is the evaluation of H. C. Baldry.⁵

In his discussion of the qualities in men and women Plato expresses the opinion that "there is no special faculty of administration in a state which a woman has because she is a woman, or which a man has by virtue of his sex, but the gifts of nature are alike diffused in both; all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them a woman is inferior to a man."⁶

Plato claimed that by nature there is no essential difference between male and female. He writes: "What I mean may be put into the form of a question, I said: Are

dogs divided into hes and shes, or do they both share equally in hunting and in keeping watch and in the other duties of dogs? Or do we entrust to the males the entire and exclusive care of the flocks, while we leave the females at home, under the idea that the bearing and suckling their puppies is labour enough for them?

"No, he said, they share alike; the only difference between them is that the males are stronger and the female weaker.

"But can you use different animals for the same purpose, unless they are bred and fed in the same way? You cannot.

"Then, if women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education? Yes."⁷

From this argument Plato concludes that "women must be taught music, gymnastic, and military exercises equally with men"⁸

The apparent "equality" between men and women was framed within a city-state where individuality meant nothing compared with the state to which all were subordinated for the "common good."

Book V of Plato's *The Republic*, from which our references have been taken, points out the possibility of a community of wives and children. The lawgiver will select guardians. Plato writes: "You, I said, who are their legislator, having selected the men, will now select the women and give them to them;—they must be as far as possible of like natures with them; and they must live in common houses and meet at common meals." From this follows that "none of them will have anything specially his or her own; they will be together, and will be brought up together, and will associate at gymnastic exercises. And so they will be drawn by a necessity of their natures

to have intercourse with each other—necessity is not too strong a word, I think?”

Regarding the offspring which were in the control of the state, we read: “The proper officers will take the offspring of the good parents to the pen or fold, and there they will deposit them with certain nurses who dwell in a separate quarter; but the offspring of the inferior, or of the better when they chance to be deformed, will be put away in some mysterious, unknown place, as they should be.”⁹

Without going into further details it suffices to notice a comment by Peter Ketter: “Plato himself must have felt what a terrible thing he was demanding in the destruction of family life by sexual promiscuity and the rearing of children in State-controlled nurseries.”¹⁰

Turning to the Cynics and Epicureans in the third century B.C. we find that the threefold division of Greek and barbarians, male and female, free and slave was ignored. They made the division of mankind between the few wise and the rest who were fools. Within the circle of the wise the common divisions were ignored and all could join in participation and friendship. In this connection the views of Zeno should be noticed. His views on male-female relationship were most radical and their influence was felt even at the time of the apostle Paul. We will therefore quote a summary of his thoughts.

H. D. Baldry writes: “Like both Plato and the Cynics, he saw one of the main sources of social conflict in the institution of the family, and put forward startling views on sex relations. . . . His proposal is often called ‘community of wives,’ but ‘freedom of intercourse between the sexes’ would be a better translation.” The result meant “complete promiscuity”; accordingly, Zeno said: “We shall

then have fatherly affection for all children alike, and there will be an end to jealousy arising from adultery." Baldry continues his evaluation saying: "For the same basic reason, Zeno gave a place to homosexual relationships in the ideal community: 'The wise man will love boys whose physical beauty shows the goodness innate in their character.' . . . Unity is to be promoted by the simple device of putting both sexes into the same uniform."¹¹

Zeno's "ideal was a one-class, or classless, society, attaining unity through uniformity. The common denominator of its citizens was not mere rationality, in which all human beings have some share, but the high ideal of wisdom. Like the Epicurean circle of friends, with which Zeno's Utopia had not a little in common, they might be drawn from any of the accepted divisions of the human race—men or women, Greeks or barbarians, free men or slaves: but wisdom they must have."¹²

We will conclude our bird's-eye view of Greek concepts by referring to Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), who reinforced the early and common Greek outlook. It has been summarized as follows: "The mental and physical differences between men and women are such that women are not only inferior, but fitted for a different role in life." Further, the woman is placed "in a category which has a distinct and subordinate place in the pattern of human society. . . . Woman's partnership with man, necessary for the procreation of children and the survival of the species, is the basis of the family unit; but the wife must be the subordinate partner, the husband lord and master." Aristotle categorically states: "The male is by nature superior in relation to the female, and the female inferior, the one rules and the other is subject."¹³

The influence of these negative Greek concepts is reflected in the interpretation of Paul by both Catholic and Protestant interpreters, but they are not in accord with the unique Pauline soteriological liberation available for all mankind in Christ—as it will be noted later.

The Roman Woman

At the beginning of the Christian era the Roman woman had, to a large degree, already been emancipated.¹⁴ She was the mistress of her own house and respected as such. Unlike her Greek sister she could freely move outside the home and attend religious services, theater, and public games. She had control of her own person and her own property. Girls had a good education, similar to that of boys. Even the study of philosophy attracted some Roman women; they also made their influence felt in the administration of the country.

Referring to the fact that parental authority “disappeared with the parent’s right to oppose a match desired by their children,” it is pointed out by Jerome Carcopino that “having shaken off the authority of her husband by adopting the marriage *sine manu*, the Roman matron was freed from the leading strings of guardianship by the free choice the times allowed her in contracting a union. She entered her husband’s home of her own free will and lived in it as his equal.” It is further stated: “Contrary to general opinion—which colours the conditions existing under the empire with memories of the early days of the republic and of long-lapsed republican customs—it is certain that the Roman woman of the epoch we are studying enjoyed a dignity and an independence at least

equal if not superior to those claimed by contemporary feminists.” The following observation illustrates this fact: “More than one ancient champion of feminism under the Flavians, Musonius Rufus for one, had claimed for women this dignity and independence on the ground of the moral and intellectual equality of the two sexes. The close of the first century and the beginning of the second include many women of strong character, who command our admiration. Empresses succeeded each other on the throne who were not unworthy to bear at their husband’s side the proud title of Augusta.”¹⁵

Unfortunately, Roman society also experienced a demoralization of family life, and divorce occurred on a large scale. Morton M. Hunt writes: “Divorce grew ever more common and marriage came to seem so unimportant that it was broken for any trivial excuse. . . all one needed to do was send the spouse an announcement, via a freedman, saying: ‘Take your things away.’”¹⁶

It is pointed out that one reason for the demoralization was that “some were not content to live their lives by their husband’s side, but carried on another life without him at the price of betrayals and surrenders for which they did not even trouble to blush.” The women in their struggle for equality—justifiable as it was—used methodologies “with a zeal that smacked of defiance” and were no better than their male counterparts; the result was demoralization of the family life.¹⁷

The Roman philosopher Seneca (d. A.D 65) wrote: “No woman need blush to break off her marriage since the most illustrious ladies have adopted the practice of reckoning the year not by the names of the consuls but by those of their husbands. They divorce in order to remarry. They marry in order to divorce.”¹⁸

Marriage had become legalized adultery. Accordingly, one historian writes: "Divorce was so common as to be almost inevitable. Husbands divorced their wives on the smallest pretexts, and wives divorced their husbands."¹⁹

It is tragic that adjustment of the male-female relatedness, which had begun so well within Roman society, should bear such negative results. The pendulum swung from one extreme to the other. Christ and the early church had to meet both extremes and at the same time re-establish the principle of divine relatedness. Before we turn to this we will observe the teaching of four theologians representing the ancient, the medieval, and the Reformation periods of the church.

We will close this section of our study with a transitional observation. Having described the freedom women had gained in the Roman Empire at the time Christianity was born, James Donaldson writes: "Christianity itself was one of the most daring revolutions which the world has ever seen. It defied all past customs, it aimed at the overthrow of the religions of the world, it overleapt the barriers of nationality, and it desired to fuse all mankind into one family and one faith. Necessarily, such a movement was accompanied by much excitement and agitation." As a result, in the early church women take "a prominent part in the spread of Christianity and all the activities of Christians. But in a short time this state of matters ceases in the Church, and women are seen only in two capacities—as martyrs and as deaconesses."²⁰

Church Father Augustine

The thinking regarding male-female relatedness in

the ancient church was, to a large degree, formulated by Augustine (354-430), bishop of Hippo in North Africa. We will first observe how he relates the subject to the doctrine of God.

In his treatise "On the Trinity" Augustine brings up the subject: "How man is the image of God. Whether woman is not also the image of God." His reply is, "The woman together with her own husband is the image of God, so that the whole substance may be one image." However, it is in her oneness with the husband that the woman shares the image of God. Accordingly, Augustine continues: "But when she is referred separately to her quality of *help-meet*, which regards the woman herself alone, then she is not the image of God." Here is the difference between man and woman, for "as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one."²¹ In other words, the man in himself is a complete image of God, but not so the woman.

Referring to three unions: "Christ and the Church, husband and wife, spirit and flesh," Augustine comments: "Of these the former consult for the good of the latter, the latter wait upon the former. All the things are good, when, in them, certain set over by way of pre-eminence, certain made subject in a becoming manner, observe the beauty of order."²²

The comparison of male-female with spirit-flesh led to a dualism which emphasized subordination of the woman to the man as the order of nature. It has been pointed out that the comparison also makes the woman "peculiarly the symbol of the Fall and sin, since sin is defined as the disordering of the original justice wherein the bodily principle revolts against its ruling spirit and

draws the reason down to its lower dictates." The same author states further: "In Augustine the stress falls decidedly on the side of woman's natural inferiority as body in relation to mind in the right ordering of nature."²³

Dealing with the story of the temptation of Eve by the serpent, Augustine speaks about Eve as "the weaker part" of the male-female unity. He writes that the serpent "first tried his deceit upon the woman, making his assault upon the weaker part of that human alliance, that he might gradually gain the whole, and not supposing that the man would readily give ear to him, or be deceived, but that he might yield to the error of the woman."²⁴

In his treatise, "On The Good Of Marriage," Augustine, as would be expected, points out that marriage was established "for the purpose of begetting."²⁵ George H. Tavard comments that according to Augustine the "woman's role and only purpose is to help man in this work of procreation. She is compared to the earth, which receives the seed that will grow into trees. Augustine repeats this often, adding that in all other matters a male friend is a more efficient helper than a woman. Sex is to the survival of the race what food is to that of the individual."²⁶

The latter gave, in the eyes of Augustine, justification for patriarchal polygamy; at the same time it points out the subservient status of the woman and her main role as that of begetting. Augustine writes: "And to the husbands was allowed the use of several wives living; and that the cause of this was not lust of the flesh, but forethought of begetting, is shown by the fact, that, as it was lawful for holy men to have several wives living, it was not likewise lawful for holy women to have intercourse

with several husbands living; in that they would be by so much the baser, by how much the more they sought what would not add to their fruitfulness.”²⁷

Augustine praised his mother as a Christian and saw in her the ideal wife. We are told that “when she had arrived at a marriageable age, she was given to a husband whom she served as her lord.” She submitted herself to him for procreation and while the husband “was earnest in friendship, so was he violent in anger; but she had learned that an angry husband should not be resisted, neither in deed, nor even in word.”²⁸

Augustine’s male-female relatedness has cast its shadow down through the centuries. As we turn to Thomas Aquinas we will find that the same can be said about his concepts.

Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) aimed to harmonize reason and revelation, to reconcile the doctrine of the church and rational philosophy, which classic learning had revived. The thirteenth century saw the rise of universities and a renewal of the philosophy of Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas was Aristotelian in his philosophical outlook. In passing we may notice that the theologian Reinhold Seeberg writes regarding his political theory: “The church attains its summit in the pope. With Aristotle, it was held: ‘But the best government of a multitude is that it be ruled by one.’”²⁹

Aquinas not only expressed the medieval concept of women, but also that of Roman Catholicism ever since. He is “foremost the typical exponent of what a recent historian has called the catholic mind.”³⁰ In 1567 Pope

Pius V declared Thomas Aquinas to be the "Doctor of the Church." As late as 1879 Pope Leo XIII pronounced, in his encyclical of that year, that the theology of Thomas Aquinas should be "enjoined on all theological students." Aquinas was also made patron of Catholic universities, and upon the celebration of his canonization in 1923 Pope Pius XI re-emphasized his authority as the theologian of the Roman Catholic Church.³¹

In his *Summa Theologica* Thomas Aquinas has a special section on creation of the woman. When we compare that with the one on man we find a sharp difference. Answering the Aristotelian argument that "the female is a misbegotten male," and should therefore not have been created "in the first production of things," Aquinas answers (rather in the form of an excuse): "It was necessary for woman to be made, as the Scripture says, as a helper to man; not, indeed, as a helpmate in other works, as some say, since man can be more efficiently helped by another man in other works, but as a helper in the work of generation."³²

Then the question comes up: "But woman is naturally of less strength and dignity than man, for the agent is always more honourable than the patient. Therefore woman should not have been made in the first production of things before sin." His reply reads: "Subjection is twofold. One is servile, by virtue of which a superior makes use of a subject for his own benefit, and this kind of subjection began after sin. There is another kind of subjection, which is called economic or civil, whereby the superior makes use of his subjects for their own benefit and good; and this kind of subjection existed even before sin." Accordingly, in the order of creation the man is the superior, and the woman is in subjection

to him. Aquinas continues by saying: "For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates. Nor is inequality among men excluded by the state of innocence."³³

The proof he refers to is found in his discussion of whether there was equality "in the state of innocence." He states: "We must admit that in the primitive state there would have been some inequality, at least as regards sex, because generation depends upon diversity of sex."³⁴

To the argument that "God foresaw that the woman would be an occasion of sin to man, therefore he should not have made woman," the reply reads: "If God had deprived the world of all those things which proved an occasion of sin, the universe would have been imperfect. Nor was it fitting for the common good to be destroyed in order that individual evil might be avoided, especially as God is so powerful that He can direct any evil to a good end."³⁵

The question is also raised "whether woman should have been made from man?" Aquinas gives the following affirmative reasons, among others: "First, in order thus to give the first man a certain dignity, so that just as God is the principle of the whole universe, so the first man, in likeness to God, was the principle of the whole human race. And so Paul says that *God made the whole human race from one* (Acts 17:26). Secondly, that man might love woman all the more, and cleave to her more closely, knowing her to be fashioned from himself."³⁶

We will close our brief discussion of Aquinas by making two observations. In his discussion of the creation

of man he asks the question: "Whether the image of God is found in every man?" In his answer he writes: "The image of God, in its principal signification, namely the intellectual nature, is found both in man and in women. Hence after the words, *To the image of God He created him*, it is added, *Male and female He created them* (Gen 1.27)." Having said that, he modifies it by stating: "But in a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman, for man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of every creature. So when the Apostle had said that *man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man*, he adds his reason for saying this: *For man is not of woman, but woman of man; and man was not created for woman, but woman for man.*"³⁷

Martin Luther

When expressing his views on women, Luther moves, to some degree, within a traditional Aristotelian framework and the concepts of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. This is evident from his comment on Genesis 2:18: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him,'" and on Genesis 3:16: "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"³⁸

Through the words of Genesis 2:18 "the household is set up. For God makes a husband of lonely Adam and joins him to a wife, who was needed to bring about the increase of the human race"; accordingly, "this sex was to be useful for procreation."³⁹

After the Fall God preserved the woman “both for procreation and also as a medicine against the sin of fornication. In Paradise woman would have been a help for a duty only. But now she is also, and for the greater part of that, an antidote and a medicine.” In other words, marriage is to serve as a treatment for concupiscence and sexual lust. Luther quotes Peter Lombard saying “that matrimony was established in Paradise as a duty, but after sin also as an antidote.”⁴⁰

Dealing with the curse of Genesis 3:16 Luther emphasizes that “there is also added to those sorrows of gestation and birth that Eve has been placed under the power of her husband, she who previously was very free and, as the sharer of all the gifts of God, was in no respect inferior to her husband. . . . The rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God’s command.”⁴¹

Before the Fall “Eve was not like the woman of today; her state was far better and more excellent, and she was in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind.”⁴²

Accordingly, “if Eve had persisted in the truth, she would not only not have been subjected to the rule of her husband, but she herself would also have been a partner in the rule which is now entirely the concern of males.”⁴³

However, it appears that Luther is not ready to give Eve full equality with Adam even before the Fall. Commenting on Genesis 1:27, “male and female He created them,” Luther writes: “In order not to give the impression that He was excluding the woman from all the glory of the future life, Moses includes each of the two sexes; for the woman appears to be a somewhat different being from the man, having different members

and a much weaker nature. Although Eve was a most extraordinary creature—similar to Adam so far as the image of God is concerned, that is, in justice, wisdom, and happiness—she was nevertheless a woman.” To prove his point, Luther uses the following example: “For as the sun is more excellent than the moon (although the moon, too, is a very excellent body), so the woman, although she was a most beautiful work of God, nevertheless was not the equal of the male in glory and prestige.⁴⁴

In one of his sermons Luther speaks very categorically about the subjection of the wife to the husband: “A woman should either be subject to her husband or should not marry. If she does not want a master, then let her keep from taking a man; for this is the order God has prescribed and ordained through His apostles and Scripture.”⁴⁵ Luther admits that “women are generally disinclined to put up with this burden, and they naturally seek to gain what they have lost through sin.” However, “In this way Eve is punished; but . . . it is a gladsome punishment if you consider the hope of eternal life and the honor of motherhood which have been left her.”⁴⁶

John Calvin

Calvin’s opinions on women are basically the same as Luther’s. In a sermon based on 1 Corinthians 11:4-10, he lets the Christian woman say: “I am not one of those who wanders so far off as to know neither my end nor my present lot; rather God has placed an obligation upon me. As married, I am to serve my husband and show him honor and reverence. As unmarried, I am to walk in the way of complete sobriety and modesty, acknowledging

that men hold a superior station and that they must be the rulers. Any woman who desires to exempt herself from this role forgets the very law of nature and perverts what God commands as necessary to observe.”⁴⁷

In his Commentary he writes similarly on the same text: “As regards spiritual connection in the sight of God, and inwardly in the conscience, Christ is the head of the man and of the woman without any distinction, because, as to that, there is no regard paid to male or female; but as regards external arrangement and political decorum, the man follows Christ and the woman the man, so that they are not upon the same footing, but, on the contrary, this inequality exists.”⁴⁸

Turning to chapter 14 of the same epistle where Paul says (verses 34-40) that women should not speak in the churches, Calvin comments: “The office of teaching is a superiority in the Church and is, consequently, inconsistent with *subjection*. For how unseemly a thing it were, that one who is under subjection to one of the members, should preside over the entire body!”⁴⁹

The same subject is taken up in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:12: “I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” Here he writes: “Not that he takes from them the charge of instructing their family, but only excludes them from the office of teaching, which God has committed to men only. . . . The very reason, why they are forbidden to teach, is, that it is not permitted by their condition. They are subject, and to teach implies the rank of power or authority.”⁵⁰

Dealing with the text of Ephesians 5:22-23: “Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head

of the Church," Calvin comments that "wives cannot obey Christ without yielding obedience to their husbands. *For the husband is the head of the wife.* This is the reason assigned why wives should be obedient."⁵¹ Calvin expresses himself in a similar way in his exposition of 1 Peter 3:1.⁵² Explaining the curse which came upon the woman after the Fall Calvin points out that "the second punishment which he exacts is *subjection*. . . . She should not be free and at her own command, but subject to the authority of her husband and dependent upon his will." Further, "Thus the woman, who had perversely exceeded her proper bounds, is forced back to her own position. She had, indeed, previously been subject to her husband, but that was a liberal and gentle subjection; now, however, she is cast into servitude."⁵³

In his comments on the relevant texts in Genesis Calvin is—as generally—less coarse and crude than Luther. He not only points out the purpose of marriage for procreation but for mutual association. Eve was added to Adam "as a companion that they both might be one."⁵⁴ From Calvin's notes on Genesis 2:18 we read: "Moses now explains the design of God in creating the woman; namely, that there should be human beings on the earth who might cultivate mutual society between themselves."⁵⁵

Commenting further on the same text, Calvin explains "suitable" as one "which may be like him" for Moses intended to note some equality." He also refutes the error of those "who think that the woman was formed only for the sake of propagation, and who restrict the word 'good,' . . . to the production of offspring. They do not think that a wife was personally necessary for Adam, because he was hitherto free from lust; as if she had been

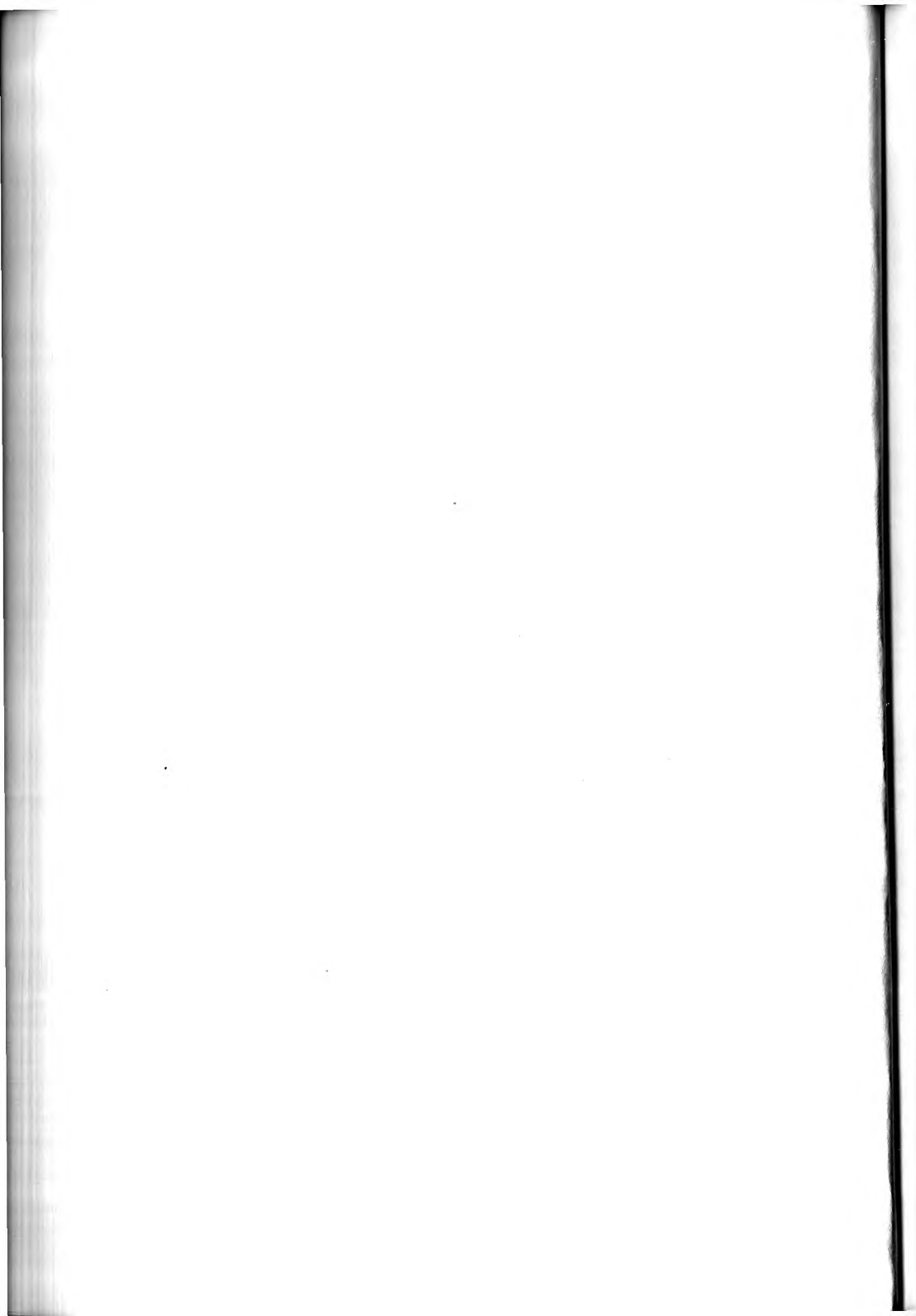
given to him only for the companion of his chamber, and not rather that she might be the inseparable associate of his life.”⁵⁶

While it falls outside the scope of our study to deal with the influence of women and the family during the sixteenth century, we will nevertheless take note of an observation by the renowned Reformation scholar, Roland H. Bainton, who asserts that “how greatly the Protestant Reformation affected the role of women in society and the Church is difficult to assess.” The influence of women had “to do with piety rather than with a ministerial role for women.” However, when seeking “to assess the impact of the Reformation on the social order,” Bainton is of the opinion that the Reformation “had greater influence on the family than on the political and economic spheres.”⁵⁷

Summary

In our study (chapters one and two) we have observed 1) the relatedness of the triune God and 2) the male-female relatedness as an image of the divine. In our historical bird's-eye view of philosophical and theological concepts of male-female relatedness (chapter three) it was found that the above two topics were in the main missing. It was also noticed that the male-female relatedness—expressed in oneness, equality, and functional complementarity—was distorted either by making women subservient and inferior or by substituting the distinctly male and female complementarity with sameness. In our further inquiry we will turn to the New Testament.

*Early Christian Attitudes
Toward Women*



Chapter 4

EARLY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN

Jesus Christ and Women

Jesus lived in a cultural milieu in which Jewish tradition and religious laws placed women in a position of subordination. The Jewish historian Josephus, who lived in the first century of the Christian era, is known for his history of the Jewish war which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He also authored a work on the Jewish concept of history, *Against Apion*. In the latter he summarizes the pervading concept of women within Judaism during his own time. He writes: "The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man."¹

In a detailed study of the status of women within Judaism during the period of the Second Temple, Leonard Swidler comes to the conclusion that it "was not one of equality with men, but rather, severe inferiority, and that even intense misogyny was not infrequently

present. Since the sacred and secular spheres of that society were so intertwined, this inferiority and subordination of women was consequently present in both the religious and civil areas of Jewish life." This is tragic when it is acknowledged that in other "societies, for all of the disabilities many women suffered, the status of women not only was significantly higher than in the then contemporary Judaism, but it also generally improved throughout the period." Among the negative aspects mentioned by Swidler are the "increasing restrictions of women in the temple and the synagogue."²

Having depicted the status of women among the Jews, another author writes that Israel had gone far "from the right path and fallen from that spiritual height whence it had jubilantly acclaimed a Debhora, a Judith and an Esther as saviours of the Chosen Race." It was therefore hoped that the Just One some day would "give back to the doubly-wronged female sex all that of which sin and the passions of man had robbed it! Truly, the soul of woman had need of a dual redemption: redemption from sin and redemption from the degrading denial of human rights. The women of Israel had manifold reason to call on the Messiah with longing hearts: 'Come, O come, Emmanuel, Make thy poor Israel Free!'"³

In the light of prevailing customs Christ's attitude toward women becomes rather unusual. Christ came as the Just One. First of all, Jesus affirmed the male and female oneness and equality of the order of creation as well as the sacredness of marriage. In ancient Israel and among the Jews at the time of Christ, divorce was an established custom. A wife could be divorced by her husband, but she, herself, could not divorce. The code of Deuteronomy reads: "When a man takes a wife and

marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled" (Deut. 14:1-4; see also Lev. 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num. 30:9; Deut. 22:9).

When the question of the legality of divorce was brought to Christ, He replied that the Mosaic law had been given because of the "hardness of heart. . . . But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. . . . And the two shall become one flesh; consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mark 10:5-9). Christ emphasized the pre-Fall condition as the norm for male-female relatedness.

The attention and regard given to women by Jesus is rather noticeable as expressed by the disciples when they discovered that He had spoken with the Samaritan woman at the well. The record reads: "They marveled that He had been speaking with a woman" (John 4:27). The surprise expressed by the disciples is understandable, for a prolonged conversation with a woman was not proper. Rabbi Ben Johanan of the second century B.C. said: "One who prolongs conversation with a woman does himself harm, and wastes the time he should be putting on the study of the Law, and in the end will occupy a place in hell." We are told that "rules of

propriety forbade a man to be alone with a woman, to look at a married woman, or even to give her a greeting. It was disgraceful for a scholar to speak with a woman in the street.”⁴

Luke in his Gospel points out that women were parts “of the crowd” and “multitude” who listened to Christ and “followed Him” (Luke 11:27; 23:27). In Christ’s ministry there seems no religious separatism contrary to the worship in the temple and the synagogue where there was a special woman’s court and a woman’s gallery. Regarding worship in the synagogue we are told: “Women could not be counted to make up a quorum (*minyán*) for public worship in the synagogue, for which ten free adult males were required. A woman might, however, take part as one of the seven in the reading of the Sabbath lessons, though this was disapproved on grounds of propriety and no instance is reported.”⁵

The three annual gatherings at the temple in Jerusalem were required only of the men (Ex. 23:17; 34:23). Peter Keller, dealing with the status of the Jewish woman at the time of Christ, points out that “least of all in her relations with God, that is to say, in her religious life, did woman get justice in Israel.”⁶

The limited role women played in religious life is also seen in their exemption from studying the Torah. We are informed that “there was general agreement that a woman was not obliged to study the Torah. As a result few women were learned. The saying that women acquire merit by sending their sons to study and by encouraging their husbands to study is very revealing in this connection.”⁷

The reason given why Eve was created from the rib of Adam is as follows: “God said: ‘I will not create her

from the head that she should not hold up her head too proudly; nor from the eye that she should not be a coquette; nor from the ear that she should not be an eavesdropper; nor from the mouth that she should not be too talkative; nor from the heart that she should not be too jealous; nor from the hand that she should not be too acquisitive; nor from the foot that she should not be a gadabout; but from a part of the body which is hidden' that she should be modest."⁸

Christ's friendship with women is illustrated in the well-known stories of Mary and Martha, and not the least in the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary (Matt. 26:6-13; John 11:5, 20-33; 12:1-8).

It should also be observed that in His parables and miracles Christ gives women equal standing with men. As examples we may refer to three parables in which man and woman are placed in juxtaposition. "What is the kingdom of God like, and to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden;" likewise it "is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened" (Luke 13:18-21). We have the man and his lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7) and the woman and her lost coin (Luke 15:8-10). At the coming of the Lord "there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left" (Luke 17:34, 35). There is also a certain parallel between the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) and the giving of talents (Matt. 25:14-30). Both stories deal with preparedness for the kingdom of heaven, which is vital for both women and men. In Christ's warning regarding preparation for the final judgment He makes use of

female imagery as examples (see Luke 23:27-29).

Making no distinction between male and female, Christ healed Peter's mother-in-law, Jairus' daughter, the woman with a hemorrhage, and a Greek woman, a Syrophenician (Mark 1:29-31; 5:21-43; 7:24-30). It should also be noticed that in the two healings on the Sabbath day, recorded by Luke, one was of a woman and the other of a man (Luke 13:10-16; 14:2-6).

We are told that Jesus, when he began to travel from town to town "proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God," was not only accompanied by the disciples, but by women who helped support him with their substance (Luke 8:1-3). In Christ's closing days, especially at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection, women had a prominent place. Witnessing the crucifixion were "the women who accompanied Him from Galilee" (Luke 23:49; Mark 15:41). After Christ was placed in the tomb "the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:55-56). Early Sunday morning the women "came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared" but found the tomb empty. These women were the first to whom the news of Christ's resurrection was spoken by two angels. "The women were terrified" but remembered that Christ Himself had told them that He would be resurrected on the third day. Then the women "reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest." It is repeated that the women "were telling these things to the apostles," but to the apostles the testimony seemed "as nonsense, and they would not believe them" (Luke 24:1-11).

The next event is that Christ, unrecognized, joins two disciples on the way to Emmaus. In their conversation the two disciples refer to the testimony of the women saying that “some women among us amazed us” but they “found it just exactly as the women also had said” (Luke 24:22, 24). A better testimony could not be given regarding the discipleship of the women who followed Christ. It epitomizes Christ’s relationship to women, and theirs to Him.

Women in the Early Apostolic Church

At His ascension Christ told those present: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). When those present on Mount Olivet returned to Jerusalem and gathered in the upper room they “all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women” (Acts 1:14).

Women were an integral part of the founding congregation. Peter said that the Pentecost event, as they experienced it, was a fulfillment of the words by the prophet Joel to whom God had said: “I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. . . . Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17-18).

Christ Himself had said: “I am sending you prophets” (Matt. 23:34), and on the day of Pentecost the gift of prophecy was given to “both men and women” (Acts 1:14; 2:17). Two decades later Paul tells us that both men and women were prophesying (1 Cor. 11:4-5). The four

daughters of the evangelist Philip were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9).

A number of women who made special contributions are mentioned by name. In the city of Joppa "was a certain disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity, which she continually did" (Acts 9:36). In the city of Thyatira a business woman by the name of Lydia, "a seller of purple fabrics," was baptized together with her household and made her home available as a guest house for Paul and his companions (Acts 16:14-15).

When Paul came to Corinth he became acquainted with Prisca (or Priscilla) and her husband Aquila (Acts 18:1-3). They worked together with Paul as tentmakers, but they were also actively engaged in evangelistic work. Later they settled in the city of Ephesus. Here they met Apollos, who "was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus" but was "acquainted only with the baptism of John." We are told that Apollos received instruction from Prisca and Aquila about "the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26).

Paul calls this husband-wife team "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 16:3-5). He includes their names in his greetings to the church in Corinth: "Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house" (1 Cor. 16:19). Years later Paul requested Timothy to "greet Prisca and Aquila" (2 Tim. 4:19).

Paul also makes reference to two other husband-wife teams: Andronicus and Junias, Philologus and Julia (Rom.

16:7, 15). Junia is a woman's name, while Junias is that of a man. Both forms are used in different versions. The New Revised Standard Version uses Junia in harmony with the oldest Greek manuscript of the New Testament (the Chester Beatty papyrus) and early church fathers.⁹ Paul considered Andronicus and Junia partners; he calls them "fellow prisoners" and "they were in Christ before me" (Rom. 16:7).

The only text where the word *diakonos* applies to a woman is in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans where some versions translate it as "servant" and others as "deaconess." The text says: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well" (Rom. 16:1-2). The help Phoebe gave is not mentioned, so it seems proper to use the word "servant." It should, however, be noticed that in many instances the word "minister" is used when *diakonos* refers to a male. We may think of Phoebe as a fellow worker like Prisca. Phoebe is described as "a helper" (Greek *prostatis*, a "leader," "champion," "patroness," "protectress"). In the New Testament the word is found only here and is in the feminine gender. As a verb it is used to express one who "leads," "has charge over," "manages," "rules" (Rom. 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17). Outside the New Testament the masculine form *prostatas* is used as a title for "the office bearer in a heathen religious association." In the Greek Old Testament *prostatas* is translated "chief," "ruler," and "chief officer" (1 Chr. 27:3; 9:26; 2 Chr. 8:10).¹⁰

In the closing chapter of Romans, Paul refers to several women who no doubt were "fellow workers in the Christ Jesus" (see Rom. 16:6, 12). Other women are mentioned by Paul; their service was significant enough to mention them by name. Thus in his Epistle to the Philippians Paul asks that help be given "these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel" (Phil. 4:3). Writing to the Colossians Paul asks them to greet "the Brethren at Laodicea, and also Nympha and the church that is in her house" (Col. 4:15). Likewise, writing to Philemon he mentions "Apphia our sister" (v. 2).

The Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles clearly tell us that women from various walks of life, cultures, and nationalities joined the early apostolic church and were drawn into a new life in which they experienced, as fellow workers, an active fellowship of service.

In Christ is Neither Male nor Female

In the current discussion on male-female relatedness Paul's statement that "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28), is the *locus classicus* and has become proverbial and aslogan. We will evaluate this text.

The Epistle to the Galatians became "the battle cry" of the Protestant Reformation because it is concerned with the right relationship between law and grace, emphasizing that salvation is by divine grace and faith alone apart from the works of the law (Gal. 2:16). Luther speaks about his personal relationship to this epistle with a reference to his wife: "The Epistle to the Galatians. . . is my epistle, to which I am betrothed. It is my Katie von Bora"¹¹ (the name of his wife).

The epistle is a polemic against the Judaizers who wanted Gentile Christians to be circumcised and follow the tradition of the Jews. Paul writes: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision mean anything, but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:1-6). Paul asserts that all people have the same status before God when it comes to salvation; accordingly, the epistle has been called the Magna Charta of Christian liberty. Luther and Calvin express themselves to that effect.¹²

There is no doubt that Paul's main thrust in Galatians 3:28 is to emphasize that before God all have the same salvific standing. The same is also the case in three parallel texts (Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11) where faith and/or baptism are mentioned, as in Galatians 3:26-28, indicating that Paul seeks to emphasize that all are equally eligible to be baptized and become members in the Christian community.

The equal status before God is christological, for we read that it is made possible by being "in Christ Jesus," "baptized into Christ," and "clothed...with Christ" (Gal. 3:26-28). Accordingly, in order to understand Galatians 3:28 the approach must be salvific and not social or ethical, even though the former has implications for the

latter.

The context of the Pauline statement under discussion reads: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:26-29).

The three contrasting pair-categories mentioned by Paul were, as previously noted, rather a common expression both among Jews and Gentiles. Paul's positive assertion is significant when compared with negative Gentile and Jewish categorization. We have also observed that at the time of Paul, liberating attitudes were found within the Roman empire. It is therefore one-sided to look only at the negative statements when we evaluate society at the beginning of the Christian era. While Paul uses terminology common to his time he is nevertheless unique and revolutionary because his equality originates and exists in Christ and has as its source and model the divine relatedness.

The categories "Jew nor Greek," "slave nor free man," "male nor female" of Galatians 3:28 are, with variations, listed by Paul in other epistles and for the same reason. They illustrate a Pauline hermeneutical and soteriological unity. Accordingly, the text under discussion must not be evaluated in isolation from these. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we read, "However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman, and all things originate from God"

(11:11-12). In the following chapter Paul deals with the subject of spiritual gifts and the Christian fellowship as the body of Christ. In this context he writes "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

The same theme is expressed to the Colossians: "Put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him, a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called one body; and be thankful" (Col. 3:10-15).

Paul then deals with relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves (Col. 3:16-4:1). The Epistle to the Ephesians deals with the same three categories (5:22-6:9) and 1 Corinthians (7:17-22) mentions the Jew-Gentile and slave-free man pairs. The Epistle to the Romans tells us that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for 'Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved'" (10:12-13). In language similar to that of Paul the apostle Peter deals with the question of rulers and subjects, servants and masters wives and

husbands (1 Peter 2:13-3:7).

There also seems to be a correlation between Galatians 3:28 and the apostle Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost when people from all parts of the Roman empire (of different nationalities, both Jews and proselytes) listened to his speech when the words of the prophet Joel were fulfilled: "Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My spirit. . . . And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:3, 21; compare also Rom. 10:12-15, quoted above). We will now observe how relatedness on the horizontal level is affected by the experience of "you are all one in Christ" (Gal. 3:28).

Neither Jew nor Greek. All nationalities have equal salvific standing before God and this in turn has social consequences. In the Epistle to Galatians Paul strongly rebukes Peter for not being willing to dine with the Gentile believers (Gal. 2:11-14). It is a miracle by the Holy Spirit that the universal church can be one and holy in spite of differences in culture, race, and nationality.¹³ The unity is rooted in apostolicity: faithfulness to apostolic teaching, and that means hermeneutical and soteriological unity; the relatedness of the triune God is at one and the same time the source and the model for that unity. The believers aim at the restoration of the original order, but there remains tension with another order: the kingdom of this world. In spite of being one in Christ, a Greek remains a Greek and a Roman remains a Roman. Following the instruction of Christ, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21), Paul and Peter speak about the Christian relationship to civil authorities (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

Before the Fall we find no nationalities and ethnic groups. The story of Babel (Gen. 11) reminds us of the restraining power of nationalities. In the interim period between Christ's first and second coming we find biblical instruction that contains principles regarding how to relate to the orders of this world. To speak humanly, God has instructed us how to walk a tightrope between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. Paul does not contradict himself when he speaks about there being "neither Jew nor Greek," yet they remain Jew and Greek. A unified hermeneutic must necessarily embrace both aspects, even with its inherited tension.

Neither Slave nor Free Man. With God there are no social class distinctions and the same should be the case in the Christian church. It is said that "there is neither slave nor free man." Paul expresses the same elsewhere when he writes: "For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave" (1 Cor. 7:22), and "there is no distinction. . . between slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11).

A runaway slave by the name of Onesimus was converted by Paul. Paul sent him back to the master Philemon with the words: "No longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord" (Phil. 16). Paul encouraged the slaves to be fruitful servants: "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to man,

knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.” Likewise, he encouraged the masters to be good to the slaves: “And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him” (Eph. 6:5-9; see also Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9-10). Paul is first and foremost dealing with a salvific concept: redemption is equally granted to all. At the same time he is also facing a social problem; if this is not kept in mind, then the texts just referred to would seem to express a contradiction.

At the time of Paul slavery was a complex issue in the Roman empire. It embraced all races, and it had many levels within society. Discussing the slave population in the Roman Empire, one historian points out that “the leading facts in the legal position of the Roman slave were two: 1) he was absolutely at the disposal of his owner, the law never interfering to protect him; 2) he had a fair prospect of manumission if valuable and well-behaved, and if manumitted he of course became a Roman citizen (*libertus* or *libertinus*) with full civil rights, remaining, however, according to ancient custom, in a certain position of moral subordination to his late master, owing him respect, and aid if necessary.”¹⁴

Another scholar dealing with the same subject writes: “The practical good sense of the Romans, no less than the fundamental humanity instinctive in their peasant hearts, had always kept them from showing cruelty toward the *servi*. . . . With few exceptions, slavery in Rome was neither eternal nor, while it lasted, intolerable.” It is also pointed out that from “the first century of the republic it had been recognized that the slave had a soul of his own,

and the free citizens had, in practice, permitted him to join them in the service of whatever cult he preferred.”¹⁵

Some slaves became freemen, others voluntarily became slaves. Paul, to a degree, dealt with an issue of employer-employee relationship. Samuel Dill, late professor at Oxford and an authority on Roman society, has described this situation in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. He helps us to better understand the actual historical situation in which Paul worked and wrote. Professor Dill tells us that “the rise of the emancipated slave was not only inevitable, but that it was, on the whole, salutary and rich in promise for the future. The slave class of antiquity really corresponded to our free labouring class. But, unlike the mass of our artisans, it contained many who, from accident of birth and education, had a skill and knowledge which their masters often did not possess.” It should also be noticed “that slaves were often treated as friends, and received freedom and a liberal bequest at their master’s death. Many educated slaves, as we have seen, rose to distinction and fortune as teachers and physicians. But the field of trade and industry was the most open and the most tempting.”¹⁶

In Paul’s time, as now, the employer-employee relationship took many forms. Today, not only in underdeveloped and developing countries but in highly industrialized countries, we find one form or another of “slavery” in employer-employee relation. Likewise, men and women are in the “chains” of the labor market, indicating that society, even in the twentieth century, is far from being liberated by the spirit and principles of the kingdom of God, yet the Christian has to live in the world.

Paul, like Peter (1 Peter 2:18-25), did not endorse slavery and clearly indicated that it was undesirable. They sought to mitigate a complex social malady in a world where the divine order is distorted by encouraging all involved to manifest a Christ-like character. This may be illustrated in two possible translations of 1 Corinthians 7:21. The first rendering of the Greek text reads in the New English Bible: "Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let that trouble you; but if a chance of liberty should come, take it." The footnote presents a second reading, "but even if a chance of liberty should come, choose rather to make good use of your servitude." Christ and the apostles taught us that the Christian's contribution to the solution of a wrong employer-employee relationship is the manifestation of Christian virtues. "But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example for you to follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:20- 21).

From the point of view of soteriology and eschatological realism (the two aspects included in the Pauline hermeneutical unity), there is no dichotomy between Paul's statement that in Christ "there is neither slave nor free man," and his advice on the social issue of employer-employee relationship, even when that took the form of a slave-master relationship.

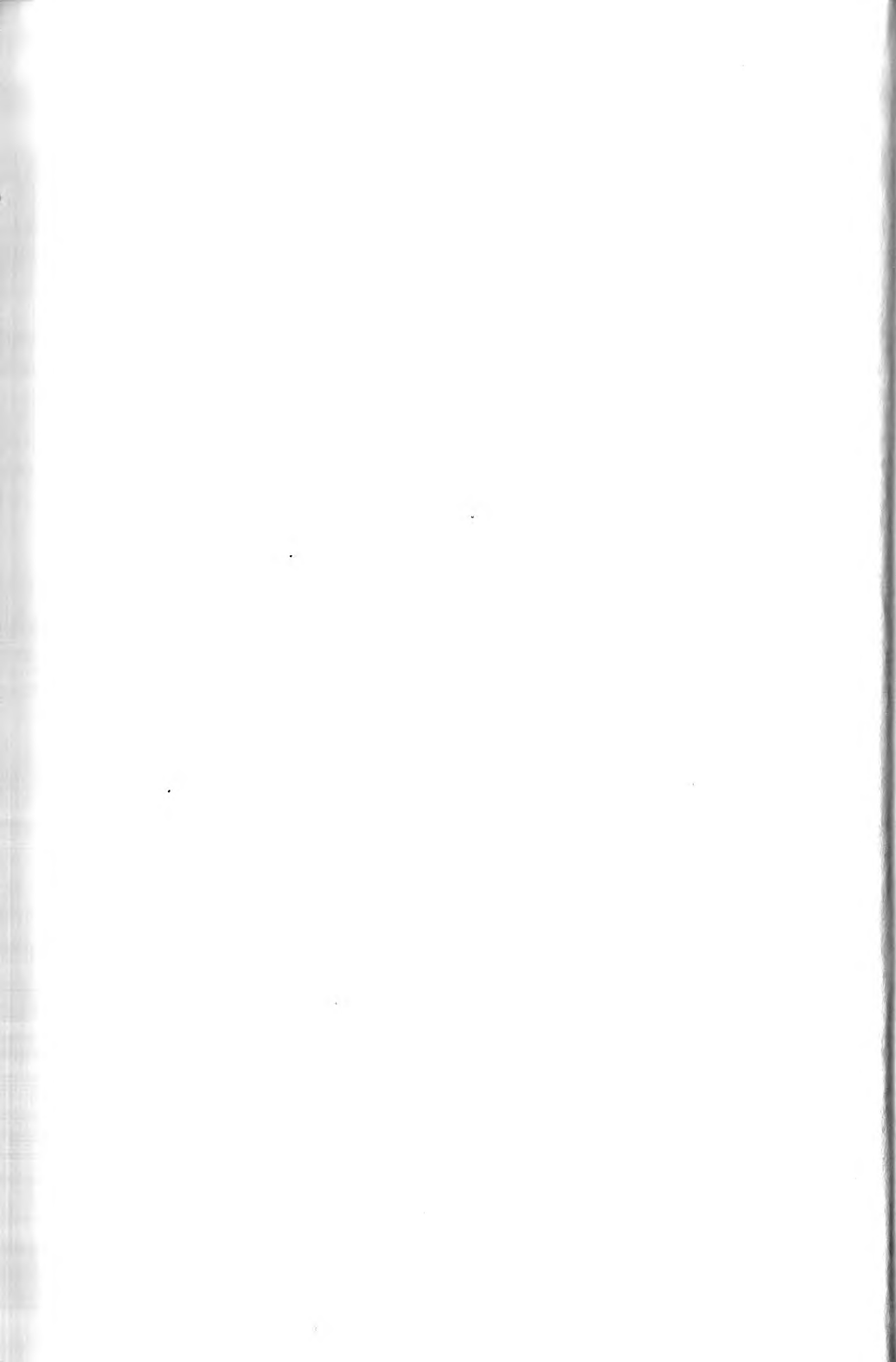
Neither Male nor Female. The last pair of the triad, "neither male nor female" is a direct reference to Genesis 1:27. The Greek construction of this phrase of Galatians 3:28 is exactly the same as in Genesis of the Greek Old Testament. This third pair-category: male and female, has its setting in the order of creation, while

the first two originated after the Fall. The words "male" and "female" emphasize gender differentiation. If we therefore, as Karl Barth has pointed out, in any way seek to neutralize the parity of the sexes we will dehumanize man (male-female, mankind). Man and Woman do not become male and female, they are born as such.¹⁷

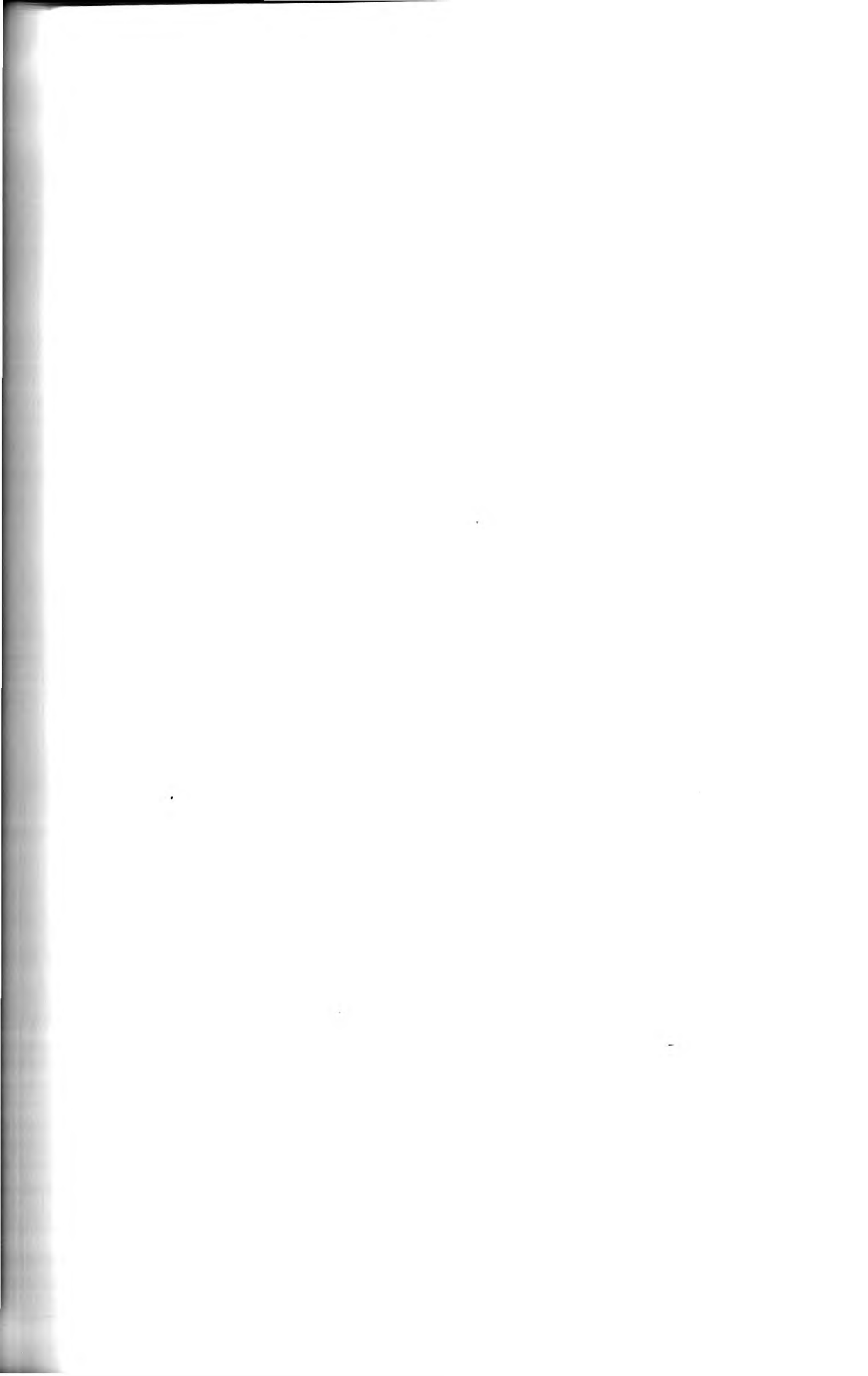
Paul's concept is rooted in the words of Christ: "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?'" (Matt. 19:4-5; also Mark 10:6-7). Referring to "the beginning" is not merely a reference to primeval time, but to an original condition and a constitutive principle.

Summary

We have observed that the primary thrust of Galatians 3:28, like other parallel passages by Paul, was to point out salvific equality. But "being in Christ" has also consequences for relatedness on the human horizontal level, and its model is the relatedness of the triune God. Genesis 1:27 (to which Galatians 3:28 refers) clearly states that man male and female was created in the image of God. We have at some length examined this topic. The principle of divine relatedness expressed in oneness, equality, and functional complementarity must be imitated in the male and female relationship if humankind male and female is to be an image of the triune God. Oneness and equality do not mean sameness, but exist in interdependence where a man remains male and a woman remains female.



Pauline Texts on Relatedness



Chapter 5

PAULINE TEXTS ON RELATEDNESS

The Pauline texts in question focus on two main topics: 1) headship of man (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23), and 2) a woman should not teach in the church (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:12). These two topics are related to the question of submissiveness on the part of the woman (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:24; 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11). We will appraise the relevant texts within the theological framework of divine relatedness, as Paul himself does.

The Question of Headship

The two pertinent texts regarding headship read: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3); "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body" (Eph. 5:22-23). The word "head" is a translation of the Greek *kephale*.

In general there are three ways in which expositors look at headship. The first follows the common meaning of being the chief, the ruler or commander, with inherited superiority and authority over the subservient. Within the ancient world and Judaism it has been understood in this way and recognized in a way which literally fulfilled the words of Genesis 3:16, "And he shall rule over you." As previously observed the same concept, with variations, has likewise been adhered to by the church throughout its history.

Another usage of the word "head" is that of "origin" or "source." Some expositors advocate this concept and refer to texts which seem to indicate that headship means something other than authority (see 1 Cor. 11:3; 12:22-27; Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:1-19).

A third possible meaning or emphasis is that of "the first," "the point," "the top" as a prominent or honored representative of the whole, rather than authority or source.

Whatever linguistic or technical sense the word *kephale* may have, Paul's statement on headship must first and foremost be seen in its theological meaning as derived from the meaning of "God is the head of Christ." Accordingly, we have at some length dealt with the theology of divine relatedness and the male and female relatedness as a image of the divine.

That "God is the head of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:3) does not mean authority as previously observed, for the members of the triune God are equal and one in being and acting. Equality and oneness likewise characterize the male and female relatedness. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, Paul deals with the intimate coitus relationship and expresses complete mutuality. In chapter 11 where Paul

speaks about the headship of man, equality and oneness between man and woman is clearly pointed out: "However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God" (1 Cor. 11:11, 12).

Headship is one of caring love (*agape*) manifested in representative responsibility and sacrificial service (John 3:16). "Christ is the head of every man" (1 Cor. 11:3), and as the "second Adam" he became "the first" of the "new man." Christ's headship is representative so that the sinner by faith and through grace can be counted righteous by being "in Christ." The centrality of the gospel illustrates the significance of the representative nature of Christ's headship.

By serving in love and exercising sacrificial responsibility Christ became "the top," "the first," "the head" of man and the church (see Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Keeping this in mind we can read: "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is head of the church. He Himself being the savior of the body." In this same connection mutual submission is expressed: "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. . . . Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. . . . Husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. . . just as Christ also does the church" (Eph. 5:21-22, 25-26, 28-29).

Christ has life in Himself, underived and original; thus the Father is not the head in form of a source or fountainhead. Likewise, man and woman are equally created in the image of God. Biblical headship both on

the divine and human levels is not "the first" or "the top" of a hierarchal structure, but of an organic unity and is therefore representative. The divine relatedness is characterized by equality in being and acting, with the result of oneness and identity in value judgment manifested in functional complementarity. This in turn leads to a "headship" (defined in terms of "the first" among equals), which is one of representativeness, responsibility, and love (*agape*) and does not create the categories of superiority and subordination. In the fallen human condition this is a contradiction, but not so in the divine order.

It is in the strength of the representative nature that headship has a certain "authority," but in the form of a caring and loving responsibility which represents the will and purpose of a common oneness, equality, and action.

Paul tells us that the head cannot "say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" On the contrary, those parts of the body which have no obvious function are the more essential to the health; and to those parts of the body which seem to us to be less deserving of notice we have to allow the highest honor of function. The parts which do not look beautiful have a deeper beauty in the work they do, while the parts which look beautiful may not be at all essential to life! But God has harmonized the whole body by giving importance of function to the parts which lack apparent importance, that the body should work together as a whole with all the members in sympathetic relationship with one another" (1 Cor. 12:21-25, Phillips).

Paul's picture of the church as a body points to a relationship of oneness and equality in which there are functional differences, and the principle of headship is defined by the divine. The same relatedness is also expressed in Paul's statement that man is the "glory of

God; but the woman the glory of man" (1 Cor. 11:7). "Glory" expresses the result of genuine relationship, while disgrace stands for the opposite (11:4-7). This is the setting for the statement: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (11:3). The text should be read in light of the meaning of glory and disgrace which result from genuine or false relatedness. The implication is that man can bring honor or disgrace to Christ, woman to man, but only Christ can bring glory to God; therefore the same should be the case with the first two pair-relationships. Paul closes the discussion by emphasizing mutual interdependence between man and woman, and their common dependence upon God (11:11-12).

Man-male, in his representative position as "head," must have a relationship with God like that of Christ on earth, so he like Christ may reveal the character of God (glory, John 1:14) and bring honor (glory) to God. Likewise the woman should be in a "one flesh" relationship with her husband and bring honor to him as the representative head, and thereby indirectly to herself as "one flesh" with him. We have observed that in horizontal relationships, both on the divine and human levels, headship is not that of autocratic superiority over the subservient and neither the "origin" or "source" but the first among equals, being representative in nature.

When it comes to the vertical relationship between God the Creator and man the creature, it must be acknowledged that God is the lawgiver and man's existence as a moral being is constituted in obedience to God. We must not confuse headship of the horizontal relationship whether divine or human with that of the divine-

human vertical relationship. In the latter, headship is that of authority and source, for God is the Lawgiver and Creator.

The first temptation was an appeal to be God (Gen. 3:1-5). Man, male-female, revolted against the headship of the Lawgiver (authority) and Creator (source) with the result that the vertical and horizontal relationships were disturbed together with the original meaning of headship. Mankind wanted to be its own lawgiver and creator, which meant being its own authority and source of life. In this we have in a nutshell the cause of the predicaments in which humanity has found itself since the Fall.

Before the Fall man's relationship to God was not that of a fearful subject to an autocratic lawgiver. Likewise, "in Christ" we are in a loving and trusting child-father relationship with God: "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father'" (Gal. 4:6; see also Rom. 8:15). The Holy Spirit renews us into the image of the triune God with the result of new vertical and horizontal relationships; the first being the source of the latter. In his incarnation Christ laid aside his divine prerogative. As the Son of Man He lived in the perfect Creator-creature relationship and demonstrated true human relatedness.

It is only by being in Christ that the divine relatedness of equality, oneness, headship, and functional complementarity can successfully operate on the human level. If man and/or woman being one flesh fails here, headship begins to operate (in the church and in society) on a different level, namely, the distorted level of the Fall.

Wherever there is functional relationship in life, headship is necessary, but if the divine headship is not

exemplified it will be that of the Fall. The "curse," under the circumstances may even have a certain restraining power, as already noticed in connection with the power of the state. This element should not be overlooked when we deal with the Pauline texts relevant to our topic.

The Pauline key to realization of true relatedness and headship is to be "in Christ," and the "old man" being conquered by the "new man." The question of headship for the Christian must be seen in the light of the redemptive acts of Christ in the heart of the "new man."

For Paul the overarching principle by which everything stands or fall is the "being in Christ" and "Christ in us." No manmade decision, planning, or structuring can accomplish it. Accordingly, we must bring the Pauline texts under discussion within a soteriological framework, where we believe the only solution is found in order to be true to the biblical material.

While Paul deals with timeless truths he is also concerned with time-bound local problems in man-woman relationships. Or to say it the other way around: When Paul has to solve local time-bound problems he also makes reference to timeless truths. At the same time we must also acknowledge that when Paul gives advice in a given situation he erects guideposts that have timeless value for the church universal if we clearly understand the time-bound circumstances, the principles involved, and the eschatological tension between the "now" and the "not yet." However, in every circumstance the relatedness of the triune God must be upheld and the male-female relationship must mirror the divine.

A Woman Should Not Teach

As we turn to the topic that a woman should “be quiet” and “not teach” we must, in our evaluation, keep in mind what has been said about relatedness in connection with headship. The two injunctions read: “Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them be subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor. 14:34-35). Next, “Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

When we move from 1 Corinthians 11:5 where Paul approves the prophesying of women to chapter 14 where he admonishes the women to keep silent and not speak in the church, there seems to be a contradiction, which becomes sharper when we add the prohibition of 1 Timothy 2:12 that women should not teach. The contradiction is further sharpened when it is acknowledged that women took an active part in the ministry of the early church (Acts 9:36; 12:12; 16:14; 18:26; Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:2, 3). They were endowed with the gifts of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:1-4, 17-21; 1 Cor. 11:5) of which the prophetic gift was a significant one, listed as the second, before pastor and teacher for “the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:10-14).

The context for 1 Corinthians 14:34 is found in a detailed consideration of the gifts of the Spirit, specifically prophecy and the speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12-14). One of Paul’s great concerns is expressed in his

statement, "God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33). It should also be noticed that prior to this admonition Paul had said that if someone spoke in "a tongue" but no interpreter was present, then the former should "keep silent in the church" (1 Cor. 14:27-28). Likewise, if someone had a new revelation while a prophet speaks, the latter should "keep silent" (1 Cor. 14:29-30). Paul closes his discussion by stating: "But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Cor. 14:40).

The two most common and plausible explanations of 1 Corinthians 14:34 are that Paul ordered silence of babblers in general or of those who questioned or expressed improper objections, as for example in relationship to prophecy and revelation. In Paul's request for silence he may also have had in mind tongue speaking or "enthusiasts." Outlining the order of a church service Paul says: "When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If any one speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and let one interpret; but if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church" (1 Cor. 14:26-28). In chapter 14 the verb "to speak"—in the Greek *lalein*—appears 23 times. Except in four instances *lalein* is used for "speaking in tongues."

The cultic background for those who had been converted from paganism may also have played a role in view of the fact that Paul describes the Corinthian church members in general as carnal and quarrelsome, creating divisions among themselves (1 Cor. 11:18-19; 3:1-4). One author writes: "Many Corinthians would have had a vivid memory of the orgiastic madness of much of their

previous worship. . . . It is almost inconceivable that the cultic frenzy, exchange of sex roles, including hair style, change of clothing, and authoritarian attitudes on the part of women would not have had some effect on the Corinthian church. With Paul's convictions regarding homosexuality, he must have viewed the exchange of sexual roles with horror."¹

It is well known that in the city of Corinth women had a prominent and demoralizing place in the worship of the goddess Aphrodite. Paul may not have wanted the women of the church to be compared with them. Paul may also have been concerned about the Christians' moral reputation in terms of honor and glory, in contrast with dishonor and disgrace as discussed in chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians.

When 1 Corinthians 14:34 says that women "are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves just as the Law also says," we find exegetes in disagreement. Some suggest that "Law" is a reference to Genesis 3:16, "He shall rule over you," but others find it doubtful that a descriptive "curse" could become prescriptive. "Law" may rather be a reference to Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." This is the case in two other Pauline passages (1 Cor. 11:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:13).

The divergent views (expressed by Bible-believing scholars, each of whom may have a valid point) would be harmonized if we read "Law" in the light of our discussion of headship and previous examination of Genesis 2:18 and 3:16.

Submissiveness
Comment on 1 Timothy 2:11-12

First Timothy 2:11-12 states: "Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."

This statement about submissiveness appears in other passages referred to as "household codes" or designated by the German *haustafeln*. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we read: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord." To the husbands it is said: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Further, he "shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. . . . Let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband" (see Eph. 5:22-33). To the Colossians Paul writes: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord" (3:18-20). Similar statements are found in Titus 2:1-5 and 1 Peter 3:1-8.

All these parallel passages speak about a functional relationship of husband and wife, who are "in Christ." Thus the statement quoted from Colossians has the following words as a preamble: "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. . . . and have put on the new self who is

being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him. . . . Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:1-3, 10, 11).

The injunction “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (1 Tim. 2:12) is parallel to the passage from 1 Corinthians 14:34, which we have examined. Paul, no doubt, deals with church activities which form the larger context of 1 Timothy 2:12. He at length gives instruction on overseers and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-13).

We have previously observed that women were teaching, but the teaching is here related to exercising authority, from the Greek verb *authentēin*. This text is the only place where the Greek verb *authentēin* appears in the New Testament. The Greek meaning is to “govern one, exercise dominion over one,” or “one who acts on his own authority, autocratic, an absolute master.”² Further, this authoritative teaching is related to false teaching.

At this point reference should be made to a detailed study of a classicist’s view of 1 Timothy 2:12. Catherine Clark Kroeger demonstrates the prominent role of women in the ancient religions of Ephesus (the place where Timothy worked). For example, “the Great Mother was considered the all-sufficient source of life and being. A male was apparently not thought necessary for the mighty Artemis. . . . Among the Lycian worshipers of Artemis, the generative role of the males was held to be unimportant.”³

Turning to Gnosticism we find that in “Gnostic cosmologies, female activity was often responsible for the creation of the material universe, and Eve was a potent force. She was said to possess the ability to procreate without male assistance.” It should further be

noticed that "Eve was involved in the creation activities of John 1:1-3 and became mother of everything in the world."⁴

The words Gnostic and Gnosticism are derived from the Greek *gnósis*, meaning knowledge. There are scholars who are of the opinion "that Gnosticism arose in the second century B.C. at Alexandria as rebellious Jews circulated myths which stood in direct opposition to the biblical accounts. By the late first century, Cerinthus had brought a form of Gnosticism to Ephesus. He was steeped in Egyptian lore and named the chief deity Authentia. . . . This name was based on the same root as *authentéō*, the verb in 1 Timothy 2:12 that is customarily translated 'to exercise authority.'" It is of interest to note that in the Pastoral Epistles "there is certainly a complicated mythology with a Jewish background and some highly controversial genealogies (1 Tim. 1:7; Tit. 1:10-14). The question of origins, who had issued from whom, was a topic of heated debate (Tit. 3:9). In a Jewish genealogy, Adam and Eve would hold a place; and Eve as source of Adam could not fail to be an inflammatory topic."⁵

In such a cultural background it is understandable that Paul emphasized that Adam was created first, and Eve deceived first (1 Tim. 2:13-14). In other places Paul says that "in Adam all die" (see Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22).

First Timothy 2:14 could be, or no doubt was, a reaction to Gnostic teaching. First Timothy 2:15 reads: "But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctify with self-restraint."

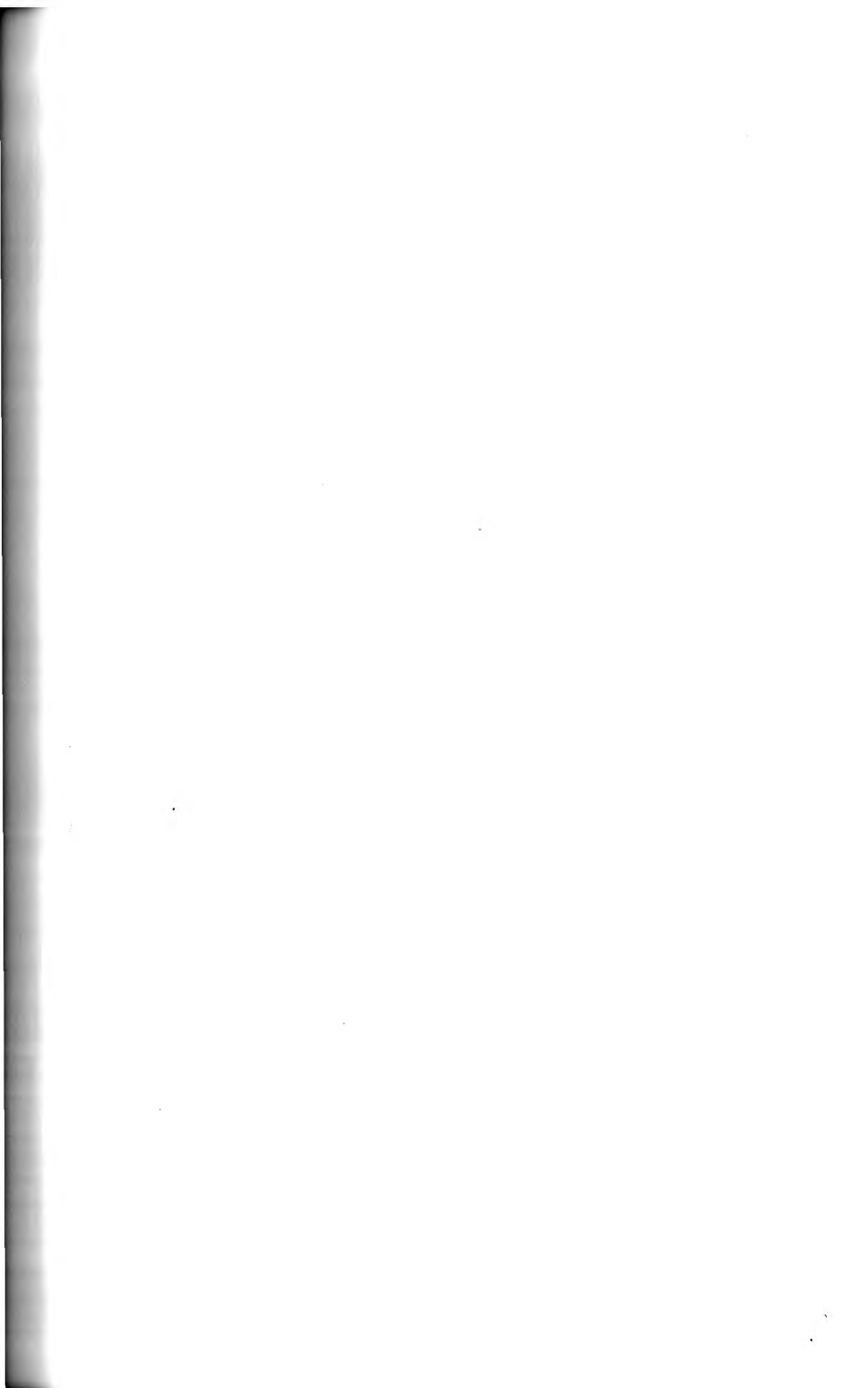
We are informed that among certain Gnostics marriage and childbearing were forbidden "because they pulled

the soul-atoms back into material bodies instead of liberating them to ascend to their ultimate source. The Gnostic Phibionites, who cherished a 'Gospel of Eve,' engaged in ritual promiscuity that ended in coitus interruptus." We are also told that "any woman found to be pregnant was forcibly aborted and the fetus consumed in a sacramental meal. According to the Gospel of the Egyptians, Jesus came to do away with the works of women, that is, childbearing. Only after women ceased from childbearing could the final consummation take place. Women must become men in order to be saved, according to the Naasene Gospel of Thomas."⁶

That Paul may have had such Gnostic groups in mind is confirmed by the fact that he speaks in the same epistle about "deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" who forbid marriage and having children (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 5:14-15). Likewise, he closes the epistle by warning against Gnostic philosophy: "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of which is falsely called 'knowledge' [*gnósis*] which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

We have referred to the cultural-religious background to indicate or illustrate that several strands may have been woven into Paul's discussion. But the significant fact remains that in the midst of different circumstantial situations Paul does not deviate from the divine relatedness as a model for the male-female relationship.

Reflections for Today



Reflections for Today

We have asserted that true and authentic humanness is found in an existence in which the divine relatedness is imaged in human relationships and social behaviors. Further, the foundation or source of ideal human horizontal relatedness is established or constituted in a vertical relationship with the triune God. When the divine-human relationship becomes nonexistent, it follows that the male-female unity will break up, resulting in a tragic human distortion of the divine design. We have seen the fabric of the family and society undermined with damaging results, and the quality of human life harmed beyond calculation. We will take note of some aspects which relate to the crisis of interrelatedness today.

Secularism

During the 19th and 20th centuries influential thinkers (for example, within Darwinism, Marxism, and Freudianism) have advocated a common anthropocentric view: man is the measure of all things. The emphasis on man's own inherent power means self-deification. Egoism and self-assertion have become the guiding principle, and materialism has been viewed as the savior of mankind. The belief in evolution and the survival of the

fittest negated the belief in a creator god; as a result many consider moral standards relative. They have been replaced by man's own impulses. The God of Christianity has become a myth and its religion a fable. Friedrich Nietzsche expressed what has become commonplace for a great part of mankind when he said, "God is dead."

Secular humanism has greatly influenced the so-called Christian world. Having grown up in a devout Danish Lutheran family, I found it sad news to learn that while 92 percent of the population are registered as members of the Lutheran state church, only 2 percent attend church services.¹ While church attendance appears to be better in some other countries, it falls far short of Christian expectations. Christianity does not exist in a Christian world. One-fifth of the world population is Muslim, and 3 billion people today are members of sociocultural groups in which there are but few practicing Christians.

The secularization of the Western world is tragically illustrated in the disintegration of the marriage relationship, which was intended as the divine-human badge of relatedness. In the United States every other marriage is expected to end in divorce. In 1981 the divorce rate was twice as high as in 1970, and more than 20 percent of all children under the age of 18 were being raised by a single parent. In 1981 the number of children (12.6 million) living with one parent was 54 percent higher than in 1970. Further, "While the number of children with a divorced mother doubled since 1970, the number with a never-married mother tripled."

A recent report tells us that now "one-fifth of all American children are born out of wedlock." Further, "about half of the children in America will be reared by

single parents at some time before they become 18.” Statistics regarding adolescent pregnancy are likewise discouraging. We are told: “Each year in the United States, there are over 1 million pregnancies, almost 500,000 births, and over 400,000 abortions to women less than 20 years old. Over one-half of these pregnancies are to unmarried women. Almost one-half of these pregnancies are to women less than 18 years old.” It has also been estimated “that over 50% of U.S. females age 15-19 were non-virgins.”

The same deterioration is occurring in Britain, where the divorce rate has increased 600 percent during a period of 25 years. In 1980 “there were 409,000 marriages (35 percent of which were remarriages) and 159,000 divorces. The previous year it was calculated that a marriage took place every 85 seconds and a divorce every 180.”²

To this tragic picture of the marriage situation could be added the grim scenario of child and spouse abuse, child molestation, abortion, unmarried couples living together, and homosexuals seeking recognition for marriage rights and forms. With sorrow we must admit that man has moved far away from God’s original design. The question must also be asked: How can we expect proper relationships in society and peace among people and nations when in so-called “Christian” countries (U.S.A. and Britain) one in every two or three marriages may end in divorce?

The ideal divine relatedness for the family has not failed, it is men and women of the world and secularized Christianity who have failed in applying the vertical and horizontal relationships of the divine order.

The Church as a Family

The Bible uses the picture of the family as a model for the church, specifically when it comes to the question of relatedness. In the biblical revelation the family and the church stand in juxtaposition. It all begins with the divine order of creation which established the “law” (principle) of relatedness for “humankind” as male and female. The first couple was in covenant relationship with God, and that made them the family of God. After the Fall the broken covenant relationship with God had the possibility of being restored through the covenant of redemption in Jesus Christ. Those who entered into that redemptive covenant relationship with God renewed the family of God and they became the people of God (the church). The Christian marriage covenant between husband and wife is, individually and collectively, in juxtaposition with the redemptive covenant relationship with Christ and in turn in juxtaposition with the family of God: the body of Christ (the church). The church is the bride of Christ, and He is the bridegroom (John 3:29; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9).

Paul tells us that he instructed the young Timothy so that he “may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15). Church members are called “the household of the faith” (Gal. 6:10). Peter likewise speaks about the church as “the household of God” and as “a spiritual house” (1 Peter 4:17; 2:5). This concept is constituted in the Fatherhood of God, which has been referred to as the essence of the gospel.

Christ told us to pray: “Our Father who art in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). Christians, among themselves, are designated

as brothers and sisters (see 1 Cor. 5:11; 7:15; 2 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 2:4); accordingly, the church is a brother-and-sisterhood filled with love (see 1 Peter 2:17; Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1). Christ Himself, who is "not ashamed" to be our brother (Heb. 2:11), said: "Whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister" (Mark 3:35).

Since the church and the family stand in juxtaposition and both are grounded in, and guardians of, true relatedness, the church became the healing family of God. The results of broken relationships have to be met by the church (single parents, children of single parents, etc.) in a ministry of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters. The church is the family of God by exemplifying in structure and life the principles of the divine relatedness. The gifts of the Spirit given both to men and women should be freely exercised.

The following prayer of the apostle Paul should be a salutary lesson for our time and situation: "This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name: Out of His infinite glory, may He give you the power through His Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God. Glory be to Him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to Him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:14-21, J.B.).

The Feminist Liberation Movement

Our historical and theological survey of male-female relatedness points out the gross injustices done to women. In the light of this the women's liberation movement is understandable. However, it also tells us that men need to be liberated. Men and women do not live in a relational vacuum or in an independent existence. The basic question is, "Freedom from what?—Freedom for what?"

Paul Tournier, a renowned Swiss physician, has authored a book, *The Gift of Feeling*. In it he has a significant chapter on "The Mission of Women in the World." He refers to a leading feminist, Claire Evans-Weiss, and her book *Le defi feminin*. She tells us that her father was a test pilot and that as a young feminist she aimed to be "the first woman to fly round the earth via the north and south poles." However, things did not turn out as expected and she began carefully to consider the meaning and purpose of the women's liberation movement. She writes that the list of liberation "is long and varied: from male exploitation, from economic exploitation, from slavery to taboos, from the servitudes of pregnancy, the monotony of housework, sex discrimination, and much more besides."

However, she adds, "'Free from what? . . . is easy to answer. But free for what is not so easy.' . . . 'What if we women decided first what is the goal for which we want to be free, a goal which will project us beyond ourselves and our limitations, a goal directly related to the contradictions of this present world?'" Paul Tournier then makes this observation: "That raises the question of the ultimate goal of the feminist movement, and the ques-

tion of a 'second wind' which might give it new strength if the liberty it claims for women were to make it possible for them to undertake a historical mission. . . . Man and woman are to build the world together—not a masculine history filled only with the vicissitudes of an endless race for power, nor a masculine civilization which asserts the priority of things over persons.”³

A similar sentiment, but from a different point of view, is expressed by Carl E. Braaton (Professor at Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago) in his book, *Eschatology and Ethics*. In his chapter, “Untimely Reflections on Women’s Liberation,” he expresses the necessity for a women’s liberation but points out the need for clarifying “for what?”. He makes the following observation: “First of all, women’s liberation is a misnomer. There can be no liberation of women without the liberation of men. It is not the case that the liberation of women will cost men some of their freedom. They will become free together or not at all. Women’s liberation sometimes implies that men are already free; women want only to go where freedom is. So they go to work. Of all the odd ideas, this is the oddest: freedom is getting a job. But it could be that to go where the men are is for most women only to enter the slave market, and bitterly to discover their men in ‘chains.’ Perhaps then we can have a new movement—human liberation.”⁴

Braaton emphasizes “that liberation will not come through disregard of essential theological-ethical perspectives on sex, love, marriage and the family. The conditions of enslavement in our society from which we seek liberation do not come from an overdose of faithfulness to the Christian vision of love and marriage.” He closes his discussion with the following paragraph: “Per-

haps liberation will come only when people are revolted enough to try some drastically new ways of realizing the human potential envisioned in the incomparably high Christian ethic of sex, love, marriage and the family. A clear vision of these goals can keep the liberation movement on the right road, and spare it from foolish deviations and sub-human adventures.”⁵

While there is a different outlook between the Christian feminist movement and the secular one, the Christian feminist has to be careful not to fall into the trap of the non-Christian, for then she will not be better off than the Christian male, who all too often, in his Christian vocation, has exhibited secular ambitions.

There are signs indicating that it may be possible to talk about “a second wind” within the feminist liberation movement. It is at least becoming apparent to many clinical psychologists, physicians, scientists, counselors, and educators that the question of equality transcends sociology, culture, and ethics. As an example reference could be made to a feature article in *Time* magazine. The question was asked, “Why are men and women different?” The answer was, “It isn’t just upbringing. New studies show they are born that way.”⁶

Dr. Toni Grant, a distinguished clinical psychologist and a pioneer in media psychology, has authored a book, *On Being a Woman: Fulfilling Your Femininity and Finding Love*. In her book she first points out ten big lies of liberation. Regarding “the belief that men and women are fundamentally the same” she says: “This is not true. Men and women are not only biologically and anatomically different, they are psychologically different as well.” She likewise points out that “self-sufficiency” is a myth and it is a lie that “doing is better than being.”⁷

Speaking about "bonding" Dr. Grant makes these observations: "Bonding is one of our most basic human drives. We are first bonded to our mothers; these bonds shift and change and are reestablished with other people, new partners, and children. . . . Bonding is the central issue of living, yet the feminist and sexual revolutions encourage women to 'break the bonds.'"⁸

Dealing with the subject "Love or Power: A Double Bind," Toni Grant notes: "This is a chronic dilemma for the modern woman. The more successful she is, the more intense her conflicts become. The more success she enjoys on the professional level, the less secure she often feels on the personal or emotional level. . . . I believe time has proven that these fears were not irrational; these women intuitively suspected that high levels of accomplishment in the impersonal world might be detrimental to their happiness on a personal level. . . . When a woman embraces power over love, she usually must negate some aspect of her femininity, since the drive for power and the drive for love are polar opposites."⁹

For the Christian and the church the question of "liberation" has to be asked within the framework of theology and Christian anthropology (order of creation). Connected with the question of women's liberation, it should be pointed out that among dedicated Bible-believing Christians the theological and exegetical problem seems to be twofold: 1) Those who believe that being in the image of God means equality and oneness often interpret this to signify sameness. From this it follows that the divine relatedness, expressed in representative headship (responsibility) and functional complementarity, is not adopted or merely lip service is paid to it. 2) In general, those who adhere to male

headship and functional differences place emphasis on authoritative headship and a submissive subordination. Even where the aspects of authority and submissiveness are softened or graded, it is still authoritative headship and submissive subordination. But as we have pointed out divine headship and functional complementarity are exercised as equals and none of the members of the triune God works in isolation but in oneness with one another. They are one in being and acting, including functional complementarity. It is in the image of the three-personed God that humankind originally was created as male and female.

Christian male and female equality is not a mechanical principle of sameness, but is rooted in an organic unity with complementarity and interdependence, and is manifested in love and oneness, both in being and acting. The Christian relatedness, like the divine, is manifested in self-forgetful service of love. A feminist movement cannot be a liberation movement except as man-male is also liberated. As relational beings man and woman must be liberated together; it is fundamentally a soteriological issue.

The inescapable conclusion is that true freedom (for something and from something) in the inner and outer world of both men and women can only find its full and true realization in Jesus Christ. It is a freedom from the result of the Fall and a freedom for the purpose of the order of creation. Jesus Christ said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:32-36).

The Eschatological Implication

Through the Christ events (incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension) Christ re-established true humanity, which in the present age is inaugurated in the lives and in the fellowship of the believers. However, perfect humanity will be fully realized only at the second advent of Christ.

When we speak about having the image of God there is a "yet to be," an eschatological implication which is part of the soteriological aspect. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Men and women, as individuals and as historical beings, are part of the linear movement of history toward the not-yet-completely-achieved new humanity. Paul could therefore say, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). Further, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

With the Bible as a whole Paul does not eliminate the tension between the "now" and the "not yet." He manifests a biblical-historical realism (rooted in theology and soteriology) and furnishes an eschatology with present and future dimensions as noted in the evaluation of several texts from his pen. The New Testament tells us that we are moving toward the ultimate, but still exist in the penultimate. Accordingly, the Christian is not a hopeless pessimist, but his optimism is rooted in the total

redemptive results of the first and second advents of Christ.

Different Levels of Relatedness

In the light of the eschatological implications of biblical theology it will be helpful to keep in mind that the biblical concepts and the realities of male-female relationships "operate" on different "levels." However, they are often brought together and can therefore create a certain tension, seemingly a contradiction or inconsistency in life and understanding.

First, we have the divine relatedness which the original human relatedness should reflect. In direct contrast to this we find the distorted human relatedness of the Fall with implications for the relationship with God, man, and nature. Thirdly, we have the experience of the renewal of the divine image in man by being in Christ, and as a result the divine relatedness is inaugurated in the male and female relationships with new vertical and horizontal dimensions for the divine and human relationships.

We use the word "inaugurated" because the new "element," which is "born" or brought in, has eschatological dimensions. There is a tension between the "old man" and the "new man" as well as between the present and what is yet to be fully realized and restored at Christ's second advent. The present tension can only be endured by being in Christ.

Dealing with the topic of relatedness theologically, soteriologically, Christologically, eschatologically, and ecclesiologically, Paul seems to bring these various strands together but often in the setting of a local situation with

specific social and religious problems. The latter we may not always completely understand because the text does not describe all the details and we do not know fully all the circumstances or social and cultural conditions; thus a certain ambiguity may arise. However, in each case the theological, soteriological, and Christological verities or timeless truths remain clear and undisturbed in contrast to time-related events and circumstances. This is the uniqueness of the Bible as a literary document, where topics rooted in creation and redemption transcend social, cultural, and ethnic conditions and limitations.

The eternal verities or timeless truths should be upheld by the expositor of Paul, as he himself does, and they should be used consistently as overarching control factors in all exposition, especially if the text seems unclear or ambiguous and therefore often interpreted in different ways, resulting in opposing and contradictory views as well as destructive divisiveness, even distortion of eternal verities or principles. However, it is on the latter that the Christian life and the structure of the church must be built.

Being in Christ

While examining the biblical material dealing with male-female relationships as a mirror of divine relatedness, it has been mentioned several times that this is only possible by "being in Christ" and "Christ in us." In order to give this experience its proper attention we will elaborate further on these two expressions.

"In Christ" is an expression often used by Paul. Words like "in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord," and "in Him," appear more than 150 times in his epistles. One

example reads, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). When a person is "in Christ" God sees only Christ. Christ's righteousness is the wedding garment covering the person and admits him to the wedding feast (cf. Matt. 22:1-14; Rev. 7:9, 13, 14). The vicarious humanity of Christ makes it possible that His righteousness is imputed to the believer. Accordingly, God considers the sinner guiltless and forgiven for "all manner of sin" (Matt. 12:31, KJV); thus the believer is born into a new life in Christ—in the Holy Spirit.

Christ said: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4, 5). The statements "you abide in Me" and "I in you" specify the two great experiences called justification and sanctification. In justification, grace is manifested as pardon, and in sanctification, as renewing power. In both instances the source is Christ, the means is grace, and the acceptance is by faith.

Christ in Us

Another common expression of the apostle Paul is "Christ in you," as expressed in the words, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Glory stands for the attributes of God (John 1:14). Paul claimed for himself, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). The moral result of "Christ in us" is that the Christian is to have the same "mind. . . , which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5, KJV). Christlikeness is both

a goal and a gift totally dependent upon the indwelling Christ in the Holy Spirit. It can only be achieved by the grace of Christ for man and in man.

In Jesus Christ the image of God has been renewed. In this truth the believer finds the basis for life as a Christian. Referring to "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ," Paul adds: "who is the image of God. . . For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4, 6). Likewise, Paul writes that God has "delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And He is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:13-15).

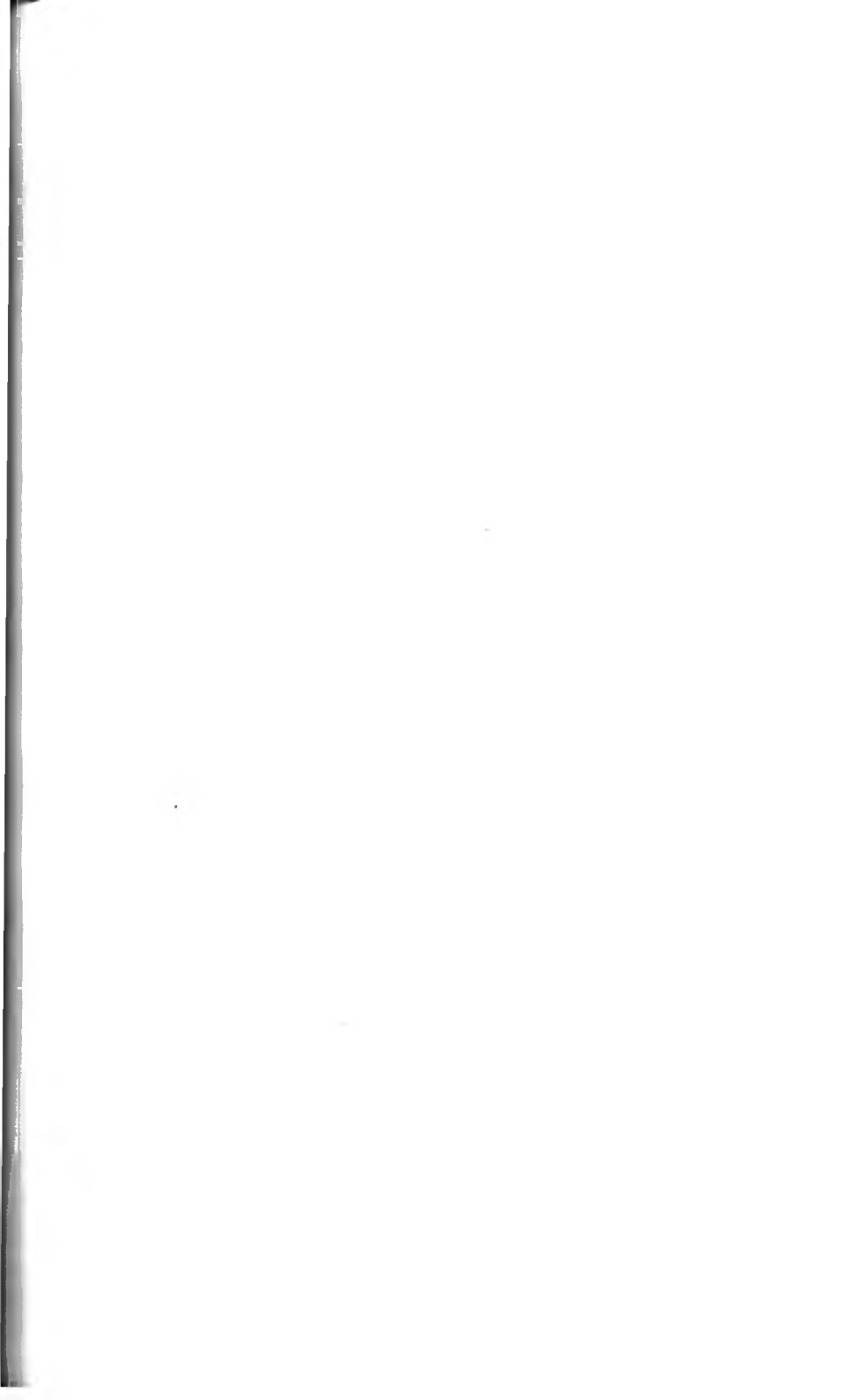
Jesus Christ Himself became the first of the new humanity and the archetype of the image of God; as such He is contrasted with the first Adam who transgressed (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:45-49). Likewise, there is a contrast between those who belong to the humanity of the fallen Adam and those who belong to Christ, the second and perfect Adam. The nature of the one belonging to the first Adam Paul describes as "carnal," "old self," "natural man," "old man," but the one belonging to the second Adam, Christ, is characterized as "the new man" and "spiritual man" with a "new self" and a "spiritual mind" (see Rom. 7:22-25; 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 3:9-11). The "new man" is said to be "created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17). The wholeness of God's redemptive activities means both reconciliation and restoration.

As Christians we give to Christ not only our inner life, but also our outward (social) life. In the redemptive unity with Christ (the Son of Man, the new and perfect Adam) our inner and outward life is renewed into the image of God, which reflects the trinitarian relatedness and the order of creation. The whole created order is contingent upon a practical demonstration of the divine-human relatedness.

Conclusion

We began our study by pointing out that in all our quest for the meaning, purpose, and conditions of life we must begin with the triune God and the constitutive principles of the order of creation. The present study has sought to verify this proposition. On account of the Fall the application of the order of creation is dependent upon the redemption (atonement) in Jesus Christ, we have therefore closed our inquiry by the assertion that the human imaging of the divine relatedness is only possible by “being in Christ” and “Christ in us.” In this relational experience with Christ in the Holy Spirit we enter into union with the dynamic and relational agape-fellowship of the triune God. It is a Christological and redemptive experience for man and woman—individually and together—to image the divine relatedness and thus be able to fulfill the meaning of “humankind,” and with the apostle Paul “walk in newness of life” and “serve in the newness of the Spirit” (Rom. 6:4; 7:6). This renewal recreates in man and woman the original relatedness of existing not only as “I” but also as “you” and “we” in love and singleness of purpose.

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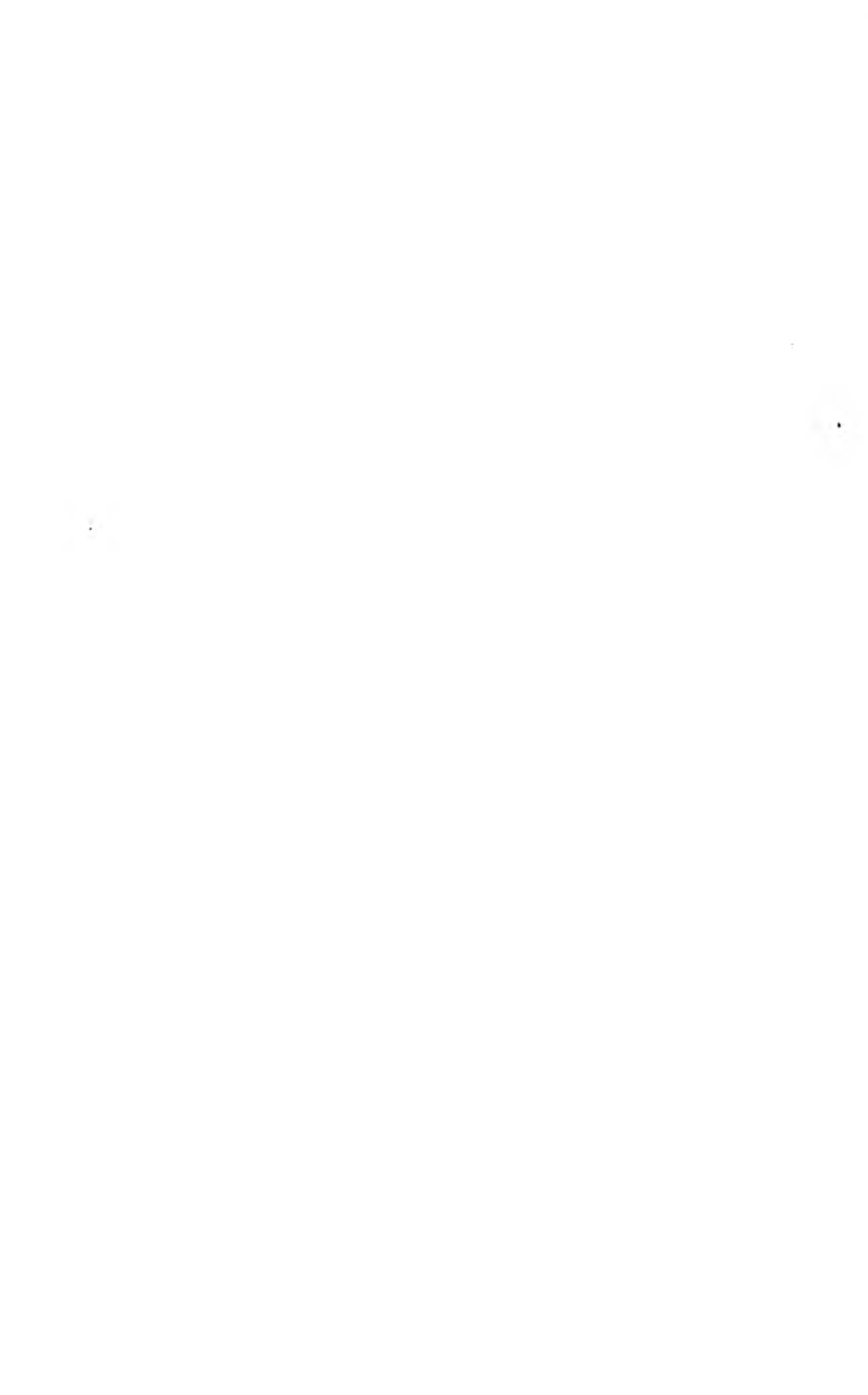
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About the Author

Born in Denmark, Dr. V. Norskov Olsen later obtained his B.A., M.A., and B.D. from Andrews University, Michigan; a M.Th. from Princeton Theological Seminary; a Ph.D. from the University of London in ecclesiastical history, and a D.Theol. from the University of Basel, Switzerland, in New Testament, Systematic Theology and Church History.

Dr. Olsen's extensive training and his desire to serve the work of Christ has made him an influential leader on two continents. In Europe, he served as a professor of church history, academic dean, and president at Newbold College, England. In the United States, he served as professor of church history, chair of the Department of Religion, academic dean, provost and from 1974-1984 president of Loma Linda University, California.

Since his retirement, he has been a Scholar in Residence in the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University, where he has continued his extensive work in research and writing.



Critical Acclaim for *The*

Dr. Olsen sees that we need to recover a proper, biblical, and relational understanding of humanity, of the human person in the light of a Christian understanding of the triune God of grace, and see in male-female relatedness a mirror of the triune God. What is needed today is a better understanding of the person, not just as an individual but as someone who finds his or her true being-in-communion with God and with others, the counterpart of a trinitarian doctrine of God, who has his true being as the Father of the Son and as the Son of the Father in the Spirit. We need to recover a "relational ontology" in order to have a better doctrine both of God and of the human person. It is for this that Dr. Olsen so rightly pleads. (From the Introductory Essay.)

James B. Torrance

Emeritus Professor of Systematic Theology
University of Aberdeen, Scotland

V. Norskov Olsen has gone back to the center to find how we shall live on the boundaries. In exploring the relationship between genders, he begins not by mapping or policing boundaries, as so much literature does, but by going to the heart of humanness as mirroring the image of God to and for each other in full partnership.

David Augsburg

Professor of Pastoral Care
Fuller Theological Seminary

Dr. Olsen evokes the realization that maleness and femaleness can find full expression in equality, unity, mutuality and complementarity only in communion with God and with one another. My thanks to Dr. Olsen for an arousal to the challenge of molding female-male relationships to become better mirrors of the triune God.

Alberta Mazat

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